

Chapter

STARTING YOUR JOB: WHAT TO EXPECT

There are more opportunities for nurse assistants in long term care today than ever before. That is because, according to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, people in the United States are living much longer than ever before. Between now and the year 2030, the number of older people in this country will double, to over 70 million. One out of every 5 people will be elderly. Long term care is a part of our health care system designed for people of any age, but it mostly serves the elderly.

Long term care meets both residents' medical needs and their need for help with the activities of daily living. This care is usually given over a long period of time. Long term care facilities have many staff, but most care is given by nurse assistants. Therefore, you can have the greatest impact on residents in long term care facilities. Career opportunities in long term care are constantly growing. As you become involved today, you help shape the future of long term care.

This chapter introduces you to the role of nurse assistants in long term care. It has 3 main topics: caregiving, working with the interdisciplinary team, and job functions of the nurse assistant.

OBJECTIVES

- Explain what is meant by mindful caregiving
- List 10 questions to ask when learning about a resident's routine
- Define ethical decisions
- Describe the nursing team
- Explain the importance of developing a trusting relationship with the charge nurse and co-workers
- List 4 questions to ask when receiving an assignment
- Describe the 3 different approaches to care
- List at least 3 factors that influence care
- Describe 4 essential job functions common to nurse assistant job descriptions
- Describe 2 ways to take care of yourself

MEDICAL TERMS

- **Contracture** – deformity caused by a permanent shortening of a muscle or by scar tissue
- **Resuscitate** – to revive from apparent death

"I'm glad to be in a place where the people love what they do."



Fig 2-1 – Talking with the charge nurse will help you learn about other nursing roles.

Nurse assistants work in long term care for many reasons. Some of them plan to go on to become nurses someday, and working as a nurse assistant is great experience. Others like working with the elderly. Many have cared for family members in their homes and want to continue to care for others.

What are your reasons for wanting to be a nurse assistant? You should explore your own thoughts and feelings about this. Understanding why you want to be a nurse assistant will help you think about your role, seek guidance from other staff, plan your continuing education, and stay motivated.

For example, if you plan to become a registered nurse, you may pay special attention to the relationship between nurse assistants and the charge nurse. You may work on skills you can use both as a nurse assistant and later as a registered nurse (RN) (Fig. 2-1). If you are very interested in people, you can learn about residents' many experiences while giving them care. Learning about a resident's past helps you understand who they are now. You may want to become an expert in a type of care such as restorative nursing or wound care. You may want to be a senior nurse assistant who helps new staff in your facility. The key is to understand your own special reasons for working as a nurse assistant. This key will help unlock many opportunities for you.

PROVIDING CARE

What does it mean to provide care? Everyone has their own style of caregiving. As a nurse assistant, you will develop your personal caregiving style.

Nurse assistants help with about 80% of all residents' care. Other team members guide this care. For example, doctors write orders for treatments, and the charge nurse shows you how to give treatments and follow the plan of care. But you have more contact with residents than anyone else on the health care team. You have a very privileged role because you are in a position to give excellent care to residents.

If you or someone you love were ill, how would you want to be cared for? If you were with one person more than with anyone else, how would you want that person to behave or treat you? In long term care, residents rely mostly on nurse assistants. Think about how you would like to be treated yourself. Think about how you would want the most important person in your life to be treated. This is how you should care for residents, too. Your relationship with a resident can make a huge difference in how they view their quality of life and care.

Providing the Best Care Possible: Addressing Quality of Life and Care

You already know that a long term care facility is a place where people live and receive care. Your care should

balance the science and skills of nursing, which are the tasks you must perform, and the art of caregiving, which is your personal caregiving style. These two are equally important and must work together. If either is missing, you cannot give quality care and meet the residents' needs for quality of life.

For example, a nurse assistant who focuses only on skills may be efficient, but also may seem cold and uncaring. A nurse assistant who focuses only on the art of caregiving may be caring and compassionate, but may be slow and inefficient. Both skill and art are important in themselves, but balancing them makes you the best caregiver. With both you care for residents in a thoughtful, efficient way—**mindfully**. Balancing the science and skills of nursing with the art of caring helps ensure that you meet residents' needs (Fig. 2-2).



Fig. 2-2 – To give the best care possible you must balance the science of nursing with the art of caregiving.

Here are 2 examples of how you can achieve this balance:

While helping Mrs. Wallace prepare for breakfast, ask about her plans for the day. Ask how she's feeling, what she would like to wear today, and if she is expecting any visitors. By talking with her you show you care about Mrs. Wallace as much as you care about getting your job done.

Mr. Davis is sitting in his chair while you make his bed. You could say something like, "While I'm making the bed, will you tell me about your children who visited last night?" If Mr. Davis sees that you are really listening and truly interested while making the bed, he will feel that you care about him (Fig. 2-3).



Fig. 2-3 – Talking with residents while you do various tasks shows you care about them, not just about getting the job done.

These examples show the key to successful caregiving. They show that you can "do your job" and at the same time create a caring atmosphere.

While you do your daily duties, remember to act mindfully and to balance the science and skills of nursing with the art of caregiving. This way you give the best care possible.



Mindful – continually being aware

Mindful Caregiving

What is mindful caregiving? It means paying attention to details, looking at situations openly, being observant, and being willing to change. When you care every day for the same residents, you may expect that everything about them will always be the same. Your actions might become automatic, and your caregiving may suffer. Consider this situation:

You have been caring for Mr. Jones for the last month. You know he likes to eat breakfast, then shave, and then bathe and dress. Every day is the same. Today, you get his breakfast tray and prepare his shaving supplies. Later, you return to help him prepare for his shower and put away his shaving equipment. You help him take his shower and dress. Then suddenly you notice that he did not shave (Fig. 2-4).



Fig. 2-4 – Paying attention to residents helps you identify changes in them.

Today Mr. Jones found out that his son is very ill and has been admitted to a hospital. He is so unhappy that he did not eat or shave. You mindlessly assumed that today was the same as every other day. You didn't even notice at first that he hadn't eaten his breakfast or shaved and that he was quieter than usual. You are the person Mr. Jones spends the most time with. To Mr. Jones you are a friend, but today you were so busy, or so mindless, you didn't even notice him.

How would you feel if the person you spend most of your time with didn't notice something important to you? You might feel that person doesn't care for you after all.

In a long term care facility you will care for several residents. Pay close attention to all your actions. Think about Mr. Jones again. One of your daily tasks is to help Mr. Jones shave. What should you have noticed that would show you something was wrong?

You had 2 chances to notice changes in Mr. Jones that should have alerted you that something was wrong. First, you should have seen the change in Mr. Jones' eating habits. You could have asked, "Mr. Jones, you didn't eat your breakfast today. Is there something wrong?" Second, you should have noticed that Mr. Jones, who shaves every day and cares about how he looks, didn't shave today. Paying attention to a resident's routine and noticing any changes help you to be a better caregiver. You can see signals that something is wrong. This is part of mindful caregiving.

You could also miss important signs and symptoms if you do not pay attention as you do your job. Mr. Jones might have skipped his breakfast and shaving because he felt ill rather than sad. What if you did not really look at him but just automatically removed his tray and shaving equipment? You would miss seeing that he is flushed and his skin feels hot. This information is very important, and you should report it right away. Mr. Jones could have a serious infection.

Whether he was sad or ill, either way you missed important signals from this resident. Mr. Jones needed you to listen to him, or to notice his condition and report it so that he could receive treatment.

Be mindful when you provide care. Never let **routine** care, such as eating, bathing, and dressing, become automatic or "routine." This helps you to be aware of problem situations like Mr. Jones'. Residents have a right to have their needs met. A nurse assistant who mindlessly does tasks for residents strips them of their independence and dignity and misses important clues and signals. Mindless caregiving leads to residents having a lower quality of care and a lower quality of life. But mindful caregiving leads to residents having a higher quality of care and a higher quality of life.

Understanding Residents' Routines

New nurse assistants often wonder how they can know what a resident likes or dislikes. It is your responsibility to understand how residents and their families want to be cared for.



Routine – pattern of activities you set with each resident individually; something repeated on a schedule

The best way to learn about residents is to ask questions (Fig. 2-5). Ask the resident, family, and other health care workers, especially the charge nurse. You can also review a resident's care plan and medical records to learn more about their preferences. Here are some questions you can ask residents:

- How do you like to start your day?
- Do you like to get up early and be ready for breakfast?
- How do you like to bathe?
- What do you need help with?
- What can I do to help make you more comfortable?
- What do you do in your spare time? Read? Watch television? Walk? Visit with friends?
- Describe the kind of day you like.
- Do you like to nap during the day?
- Does anything give you trouble when getting dressed?
- How much would you like me to help with your personal care?



Fig. 2-5 – Taking the time to ask residents questions helps you learn about their likes and dislikes.

Think of other questions you would want someone to ask you if they were caring for you. You'll learn that all residents have preferences for their care. Every resident wants to be treated respectfully, but that may mean different things. For example, one resident feels that privacy is very important and thinks questions about their family are disrespectful. Another wants you to be interested in their family and to ask about them. Remember, no 2 people are the same. Everyone has different habits, preferences, and beliefs.

Asking questions is important also when you work together with residents to make a daily routine. This

includes dressing, bathing, and grooming. Think about your own morning routine. Do you first drink coffee, or brush your teeth, or take a shower? You probably have a routine that you've followed for years. Think about times when your routine was disrupted. The coffee maker was broken, or you missed your bus, or one of your children was sick. At such times you miss the comfort of your personal routine.

The same is true for residents. They, too, like to do certain things at certain times and in certain ways. Remember that a change in routine can be very disruptive and upsetting to a resident. Routines involve residents' personalities. You might think it would be easier if you set the routine for residents, but that would take away their individuality and their choice.

Values and Culture

People's **values** guide how they choose to live their lives. Everyone's values are individual and very personal. Values are beliefs that come from a person's family, upbringing, religion, friends, education, and individual experience. Following are some examples of values:

- being healthy and active
- respecting persons with authority, such as parents, teachers, and police officers
- being able to take care of oneself
- making a lot of money
- practicing religious beliefs
- being useful
- having close friends

Try to understand the values of each resident you care for. Although this takes time, it's worth it. Residents' values help you understand what gives meaning to their lives and why they act the way they do (Fig. 2-6). For example, a resident who does not visit with other residents or take part in social events may value privacy more than friendship. You may feel the person is lonely because you would be lonely if you spent so much time alone. But that is your own value, not this resident's. A resident may simply enjoy their solitude, or time alone.

To learn a resident's values, ask questions like these:

- What is important to you?
- What did you do for a living?



Values – beliefs people have about what is important to them

- What was special about your job?
- Do you go to religious services?
- Is your family important to you?
- How do you like to spend your free time?



Fig. 2-6 – You need to learn about the resident’s interests and how they like to spend their free time.

Sometimes a resident’s values are very different from their friends’ or family members’, yours, and society’s. But we cannot say that one person’s values are right and another’s are wrong. Values are not matters of right and wrong. It is very important to your job that you are able to accept the values of others, even if you do not agree with them.

Culture has a strong influence on values. Culture influences one’s food preferences, personal care practices, clothing choices, and family relationships. For example, in some cultures, a “laying on of hands” is believed to cure illness. Some cultures expect women to dress in a certain way. Other cultures have special rituals for personal care practices like cutting hair or bathing.

Remember that your own values and culture might influence how you give care, just as residents’ values and culture affect their preferences for care. You are not expected to know everything about every culture. But try to understand how the resident’s culture influences their values. Ask the resident about any cultural preferences they have that might affect your caregiving. Some areas to consider are personal care, nutrition choices, pain management, spirituality, and end of life issues and concerns.



Culture – the customary beliefs, social forms, and traits of a racial, religious, or social group

Ethics

There are no right or wrong values, although sometimes a decision must be made that favors one value over another. Decisions may also involve **ethics**. Ethical issues often arise in relation to values about the quality of life. People may value life differently, and make different ethical decisions based on those values. Table 2-1 presents examples of this.

Most decisions about care do not involve conflicting values. A resident and family usually make ethical decisions about care along with their doctor without any conflict. However, if you ever feel someone is making a wrong decision on behalf of a resident, talk to the charge nurse. Never argue with a resident or family member about their values or ethics. It is important for you to support residents and family members, especially in how they make decisions about important issues such as the end of life.

TABLE 2-1 ETHICAL DECISIONS BASED ON INDIVIDUAL VALUES

VALUE	ETHICAL DECISION
Life is worth living only if there is some hope that you can take care of yourself.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To choose not to be resuscitated if cardiac arrest happens, if you are bedridden with severe contractures and a lot of pain • To choose not to have a feeding tube if you can no longer eat • To choose to remain in the facility if seriously ill, and not be moved to a hospital
Life is worth living no matter whether or not you can ever take care of yourself again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To choose to be resuscitated if cardiac arrest happens, regardless of your functional ability or amount of pain • To choose to have a feeding tube if you can no longer eat • To choose to go to the hospital for treatment of a life-threatening illness



Contracture – deformity caused by a permanent shortening of a muscle or by scar tissue

Ethics – knowledge, awareness, or study of good and bad, right and wrong, and moral duty

Resuscitate – to revive from apparent death

Developing Trust

It takes time to learn about residents. Some openly tell you about themselves and what they like and don't like. Others are slow to share this information with you. Try to develop a trusting, respectful relationship with all residents, even though with some of them this will take a little longer. Trust is the basis for any relationship: A relationship cannot grow without it. To develop a trusting relationship with a resident, follow these guidelines:

- Make sure residents feel safe. Support them when walking. Help them when they ask you. Answer their call lights.
- Listen to what residents want you to do and how they want things done (Fig. 2-7). Follow their exact instructions, unless those instructions will endanger you or them.
- Be clear with residents about what you can and cannot do for them. Be courteous at all times.
- Be honest and open with residents. If a resident calls you for help when you are on your way to help another resident, ask if they can wait 10 minutes until you finish helping the other. If the resident can wait, be sure to come back in 10 minutes as you promised. Be reliable.
- Be consistent. Help each resident with morning care and routines at the same time every day, based on their preferences. Remind residents who you are—give your name and say what you're going to do. Treat each resident respectfully.
- Dress professionally. This conveys your respect for residents. Residents will feel that if you do a good job taking care of yourself, you will also do a good job taking care of them.

Gaining a person's trust also involves keeping their confidence. When caring for and talking with a resident, you learn many personal things about them. An important part of being a caregiver is keeping this information confidential. Do not talk about a resident with other residents or with anyone not connected with a resident's care.

If you are uncomfortable or embarrassed about giving certain kinds of care (like helping with toileting), tell the charge nurse about your feelings. The resident may also feel uncomfortable, and discussing this might help the resident. If you are not open about your feelings, you may send mixed messages to a resident. For example, when a resident asks for help with toileting, you may frown even though you try to answer positively, and the resident will see this. Work to overcome any negative feelings so that you do not react to a resident in ways that hurt your trusting relationship with them. You will learn more about nonverbal communication in Chapter 7, Communication.



Fig. 2-7 – Listening to the resident helps you to create a trusting relationship.

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

In Chapter 1 you learned that many different people provide services for residents in long term care. The largest department is the nursing department, led by the director of nursing. Nursing departments are typically organized as shown in Figure 2-8. All team members work together to provide the service. You will spend more time with nursing team members than anyone else on the interdisciplinary team.

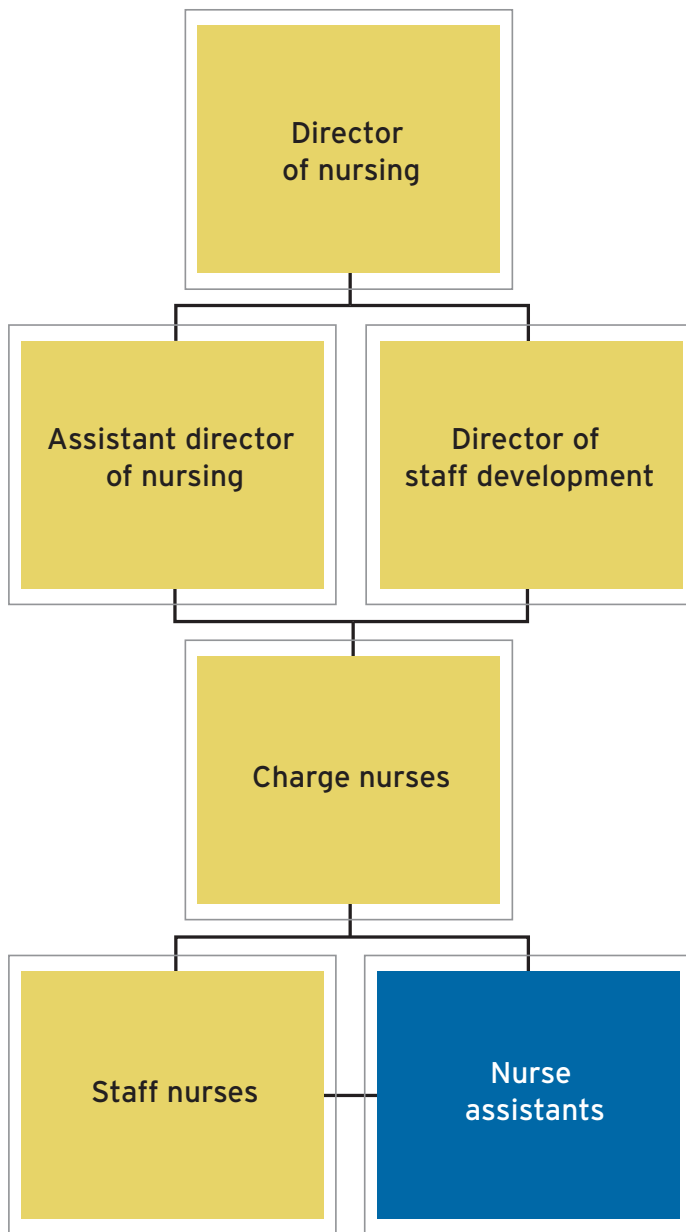


Fig. 2-8 – Typical organizational chart of nursing services.

- The **director of nursing** develops the philosophy (a belief about quality care) and approach for care. The nursing staff follows this approach. The director also determines staffing requirements.
- The **assistant director of nursing** helps the director of nursing put into action the philosophy and approach to care.

- The **director of staff development** usually reports directly to the director of nursing. This person oversees staff education in the philosophy and approach to nursing care.
- **Charge nurses** report directly to either the director or assistant director of nursing, depending on the facility. They have the day-to-day responsibility for supervising resident care. Charge nurses give the specific care assignments. They may also have some responsibility for staff education.
- The number of **staff nurses** depends on the facility's staffing needs. Staff nurses are responsible for special treatments and medications. A staff nurse may act as a charge nurse on some **shifts**.
- **Nurse assistants** report directly to charge nurses or staff nurses. Nurse assistants give 80% of all resident care.

Developing a Relationship with the Charge Nurse

Your relationship with the charge nurse is important to help you give quality care. You need to feel you are partners in order to reach the caregiving goals for all residents. The charge nurse can also help you understand how best to give care. They are a resource for problem solving and teaching, and they can help you with inservice education (Fig. 2-9). To develop a good relationship with the charge nurse, be reliable and trustworthy, and communicate openly.



Fig. 2-9 – The charge nurse or the director of staff development may provide formal or informal inservice education.



Shift – scheduled period of work for a group of people (day shift, evening shift, night shift)

Follow these guidelines to develop a good relationship with the charge nurse:

- Be on time for work every day (Fig. 2-10).



Fig. 2-10 – Being on time for work helps show you are a reliable team member.

- Be open-minded and flexible in accepting your assignment.
- Ask questions about things you do not understand. Make sure you understand what the charge nurse expects of you.
- Be patient when you need the charge nurse’s help. Remember, the charge nurse has many other responsibilities, too.
- Report any resident changes immediately to the charge nurse.
- Talk about any problems or concerns you may have.
- Be accountable and honest.

Developing Relationships with Co-workers

A positive relationship with your co-workers is also important. Every nurse assistant has their own assignment, but you should help each other and work together. For example, sometimes residents you are not assigned to will ask you for help with something. Residents expect their needs to be met when they ask. You must never say, “I can’t do that. I’m not your nurse assistant.” Instead, help the resident with their request and then report this to the nurse assistant assigned to them.

If the request is something you cannot do, simply tell the resident, “I cannot do that. Let me get the nurse assistant caring for you.” You then can offer the assigned nurse assistant your help. Some tasks, such as moving a very weak resident, require help from another nurse assistant to prevent injury to you and the resident. You can do many nurse assistant skills on your own, but some others require help from your co-workers (Fig 2-11).



Fig. 2-11 – Before you begin your day, plan with the other nurse assistants when you can help each other.

Therefore, develop a good working relationship with your co-workers. Remember that working together with others on the caregiving team improves your ability to give residents good care. Here are some actions that help develop positive relationships:

- Offer your help to co-workers.
- Be supportive and available to help co-workers when needed, as long as it doesn’t interfere with immediate care that you are giving to another resident.
- Go to lunch together (if staff scheduling allows).
- Share ideas about caregiving (but remember, respect residents’ rights to confidentiality).
- Call in sick only when you are ill.

- Attend inservice education classes together.
- Be honest and reliable.
- Be open to learn about and accept cultural differences.
- Respect others' opinions and beliefs.

Remember that although the charge nurse guides your activities, your co-workers are the ones who help you when needed. Try to get along with them. A supportive work environment is also a more pleasant one.

When everyone on the care team cooperates and works together, residents receive quality care.

Daily Assignments

At the start of your shift every day, you will receive your assignment from the charge nurse. This assignment includes the residents you will care for that day. You might also meet with staff on the previous shift to hear their report about these residents, or you may get this information from the charge nurse. For example, you may learn that a resident who usually sleeps all night was awake and pacing the floor. You also learn about residents' treatments and medication status.

Carefully review your assignment and ask the charge nurse any questions. Always have all the information you need before you begin giving care. This includes the following:

- Do any residents have special needs today?
- Do I need help from the charge nurse at any time to give a resident a treatment?
- Does the charge nurse want any particular activities done first?
- Do any residents have any special appointments today?



Fig. 2-12 – Be sure to ask any questions you may have when the charge nurse gives you your assignment.

Review your assignment with the charge nurse (Fig. 2-12). This is a good time to talk about and ask questions about anything you feel uncomfortable doing. Always be honest with the charge nurse about this. Talking openly with the charge nurse about your assignment lets them know when you need help and when you can be independent. For example, a resident needs to go to the hospital for an X-ray, but you have never done this, and so you do not know about all the tasks that are involved in sending the resident.

The charge nurse can teach you about the tasks you will be doing. Never try to do anything you have not learned to do. For example, if you do not talk with the charge nurse about how to send a resident for an X-ray, you might forget to send the resident's chart. Then the X-ray might not get taken and the resident will have to go back again later. You will find the charge nurse to be a great resource and educator.

APPROACHES TO CARE

Different approaches to nursing care are used in different facilities. The director of nursing usually determines the facility's approach based on a philosophy of caring, the residents' needs, available staff, and costs.

Team nursing is a common approach in long term care. The charge nurse is the team leader and makes assignments based on the needs for the shift. The team cares for a whole group of residents in a unit or a **wing**. The charge nurse assigns team members to specific residents, but you work with other nurse assistants as a team to give care. For example, nurse assistants may discuss how to feed a large number of residents. They may decide to change their own lunch breaks so everyone can help with feeding, regardless of who is assigned. They talk to the team leader about any problems or concerns they have about residents. With team nursing, a group of nursing team members is assigned to care for a group of residents, and together all the care is provided.

Another nursing approach is called functional nursing. With this approach, you have specific tasks rather than specific residents as the focus of care. For example, you might have the responsibility of helping with all the showers one day, while another nurse assistant makes all the beds. Sometimes this approach is used when there is a staffing shortage. If a nurse assistant calls in sick, the charge nurse may assign tasks to other nurse assistants so



Wing – separate section of a building attached to the central section

that all care activities are completed on a shift.

A third nursing approach is called primary nursing. With this approach, a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse has the primary responsibility for residents' needs. You work with the nurse and care for the same residents each day. Together, you are responsible for residents' care 24 hours a day. On other shifts, other staff members carry out the plan of care that has been set by you, the nurse, and each resident. This approach is more common in hospitals and facilities where residents are assigned to nurse assistants for a long time.

You will learn which approach your facility uses when you start work. But regardless of which approach is used at your facility, you always focus on giving quality care to residents. If you are unclear about which approach is being used, ask the charge nurse. Many factors influence caregiving. Be open to all approaches, and always keep residents' needs your primary concern.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE CARE

In addition to the facility's approach, these other factors influence care:

- **The resident's needs.** A resident's needs are always the primary focus of care. Always ask yourself, "Is this what this resident wants or needs?"
- **Philosophy of caring.** The director of nursing sets the direction for care activities. Different directors have different ideas about how to do things. You will learn your director of nursing's emphasis for care in the facility where you work.
- **New treatments and equipment.** Facilities are always looking for better ways to give care. Your facility may try new things, such as new products to treat skin break-downs or new back-protection devices.
- **Federal and state regulations.** Federal and state regulations provide a framework for caregiving. These include the Code of Federal Regulations and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. These rules and regulations influence how much care you give, and how often. This helps ensure that residents receive quality care. For example, facilities are required to display the Residents' Bill of Rights. In many facilities, posters are displayed in bathrooms to remind staff to wash their hands.
- **Staffing.** The reliability of staff is a major influence on caregiving. If staff members often call in sick or resign, the team does not function as well and residents' care may suffer. The attitude of the nursing staff influences all the factors above.

These factors sometimes lead to changes in caregiving. You may not always know the reason for a change. But if you keep an open mind, ask questions, and keep residents' well-being the highest priority, you will be more comfortable with changes.

JOB FUNCTIONS

As a nurse assistant, you are a member of the nursing team. You work closely with other nurse assistants the charge nurse, and other members of the interdisciplinary team. Usually the facility gives you its written personnel policies as well as your job description, which includes this information:

- your department
- your title
- overview of your job
- list of your responsibilities
- description of your specific functions
- qualifications needed for your job

Carefully read your facility's job description for nurse assistants. Talk with the charge nurse about any questions or concerns you have. An example of a job description is shown here. Notice that it describes the qualifications needed for the job and outlines the job functions and requirements for being successful. Future chapters in this book will fully describe all the job functions listed here.

NURSE ASSISTANT JOB DESCRIPTION

Department: _____

Name: _____

Date of Hire: _____

GENERAL PURPOSE

To perform direct care duties under the supervision of nursing personnel and to assist in maintaining a positive physical, social, and psychological environment for the residents.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Pass the state competency evaluation.
- Be a state registered nurse assistant (certified or licensed) in good standing according to all applicable federal and state certification requirements, or be in training to become a state registered nurse assistant.
- Be at least 16 years of age.
- Be able to read, write, and follow oral and written directions, and have successfully completed elementary education.
- Speak and understand English.
- Have a positive attitude toward the elderly.

ESSENTIAL JOB FUNCTIONS

A. PERSONAL CARE FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Assist residents with: daily bath, dressing, grooming, dental care, and bowel and bladder functions; preparation for medical tests and exams; ear and eye care; and transferring into and out of beds, chairs, bathtubs, etc.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Walking; reaching; bending; lifting; grasping; fine hand coordination; pushing and pulling; and ability to distinguish smells, tastes, and temperatures.

B. NURSING CARE FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Provide nursing functions as directed by supervisor, including daily perineal care and catheter care; change dressings; turn residents in bed; give sponge baths; measure and record temperature, pulse, and respirations; weigh and measure residents; perform restorative and rehabilitative procedures; observe and report presence of skin breakdowns; review care plans daily; report changes in resident conditions to supervisor; record all necessary charting entries; and report all accidents and incidents.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Bending; lifting; grasping; fine hand coordination; ability to communicate with residents; ability to distinguish smells, tastes, and temperatures; and ability to hear and respond to resident requests.

C. FOOD SERVICE FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Prepare residents for meals and snacks; identify food arrangement, and assist in feeding residents as needed; record food and fluid intake; and perform after-meal resident care.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Lifting; grasping; fine hand coordination; ability to distinguish smells, tastes, and temperatures; and ability to write or otherwise record intake.

D. RESIDENTS' RIGHTS FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Maintain resident confidentiality; treat residents with kindness, dignity, and respect; know and comply with Residents' Bill of Rights; and promptly report all resident complaints, accidents, and incidents to supervisor.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Ability to communicate with residents and to remain calm under stress.

OTHER JOB FUNCTIONS

A. SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Assist as directed in proper admission, transfer, and discharge of residents; inventory residents' possessions and report food articles and medications found in residents' rooms; and report defective equipment to administration.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Ability to communicate with residents and to read and write in English.

B. SAFETY AND SANITATION FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Understand and use Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Standard Precautions, OSHA's Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens standard, and follow established infection control, hazardous communication, and other safety rules; ensure cleanliness of assigned residents' rooms; properly maintain and record residents' restraints; and promptly report all violations of safety and sanitation rules to supervisor.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Walking; bending; lifting; grasping; fine hand coordination; ability to read and write in English; and ability to distinguish smells.

C. STAFF DEVELOPMENT FUNCTIONS

Duties:

Attend and participate in orientation, training, educational activities, and staff meetings.

Physical and sensory requirements:

Ability to understand and apply training and inservice education.

D. ALL OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED

Once you are on the job you will learn your specific job responsibilities. You will learn the facility's 24-hour routine and what happens during each shift: the day shift (usually 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.), evening shift (3 p.m. to 11:30 p.m.), and night shift (11 p.m. to 7:30 a.m.). These shifts ensure residents receive care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including holidays, all year.

Your general responsibilities to residents and your employer include the following:

1. Recognize residents as individuals.
 - Find out residents' likes and dislikes.
 - Ask how they want things done. Get to know their routine.
 - Learn about their culture (Fig. 2-13).



Fig. 2-13 – Learning about a resident's cultural background helps you understand their needs and give the best possible care.

- Find out if they have cultural preferences regarding their care, and follow their preferences.
2. Promote residents' autonomy (self-determination).
 - Understand residents' rights.
 - Respect their rights when giving care.
 - Encourage residents to maintain their highest level of functioning.
 - Support their choices in personal care.
 - Involve residents in all decisions about their care.
 - Maintain their privacy.
 3. Provide mindful caregiving.
 - Balance the science and skills and the art of caregiving (Fig. 2-14).



Fig. 2-14 – Take advantage of every opportunity to talk with your residents.

- Observe residents closely.
 - Watch for any changes in their attitude or behavior.
 - Report any changes to the charge nurse.
4. Be a good employee.
 - Be reliable.
 - Be healthy: Get enough sleep, eat a balanced diet, exercise.
 - Be considerate of others.
 - Cooperate with other team members.
 - Be efficient with your time and supplies.
 - Follow all personnel policies.
 - Dress appropriately: neat and clean.
 - Pay attention to personal hygiene.
 - Do not use drugs or drink alcohol during work hours or before coming to work.
- Box 2-1 lists tasks nurse assistants commonly perform.

BOX 2-1. COMMON TASKS OF NURSE ASSISTANTS

ASSISTING WITH PERSONAL CARE FOR RESIDENTS:

- bathing
- oral hygiene
- grooming (hair and nail care)
- dressing and undressing

ASSISTING RESIDENTS WITH MOBILITY (FIG. 2-15):

- walking
- positioning
- range-of-motion exercises

ASSISTING RESIDENTS WITH MEALS:

- transporting to dining room
- preparing the environment
- preparing residents
- feeding residents
- caring for residents after meals
- recording intake and output

PROVIDING PHYSICAL COMFORT TO RESIDENTS:

- back rubs
- pillow fluffing
- hand-holding (if a resident desires)
- touching gently (if a resident desires)

PROVIDING EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR RESIDENTS:

- listening carefully
- working with family members
- holding a resident (if they desire)
- being with residents when they receive bad news
- sharing experiences

MAINTAINING EACH RESIDENT'S ENVIRONMENT:

- practicing infection control procedures
- cleaning residents' rooms
- making residents' beds
- preventing injuries



Fig. 2-15 – Helping residents stay mobile is an important nurse assistant task.

As you start your job, you will see that taking care of yourself is also important in order to be a successful employee. Chapter 27 discusses the skills and knowledge you need to be successful employee.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Your role as a caregiver makes it important to learn to take care of yourself both physically and emotionally. Your work can be very demanding at times. You may feel you have too much to do or that residents ask for too much. You may feel stress.

Coping with Stress

If you are worried about things, not sleeping well, eating poorly or overeating, feeling moody, or drinking too much, these conditions could be signs that you are feeling stressed. Sometimes it is hard to cope with stress.

Sometimes you do not even know what is causing your stress. Often people think that their job is causing stress when actually it is something else. To be able to deal with stress in your life, you must first figure out what is causing it. It might be:

- financial concerns
- your children
- a significant other, friend, or family member
- your job
- a combination of several factors

Thinking about these things will help you find the cause of your stress. If you conclude that your job is causing you stress, try these tips:

- Make a list of what you need to do. Start with the most important task, and cross off each task as you do it.
- Explain to a resident why you cannot spend more time with them. Say something like, "Mr. Jones, I want to hear what you are saying, but right now I have a lot to do. May I come back a little later? Let's set a time."
- Make time daily to do something relaxing for yourself, like reading, taking a walk, or spending time with a friend.
- Talk to a friend or spouse about your job and how you are helping others. It always feels good to talk about your work and things you experience, whether good or bad.
- If something besides your job is causing you stress, such as a death in your family or your marital problems, talk with your supervisor. In some cases you may need to take some time off to handle personal problems.

Here are some other things you can do to reduce the stress you feel:

- Spend time with a friend.
- Treat yourself to your favorite dessert.
- Exercise with a co-worker (Fig. 2-16).
- Do not abuse alcohol or other drugs.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Get a good night's sleep.



Fig. 2-16 – Exercise with friends can help you manage your stress.

Coping With Your Emotions

Some residents you care for may become like family. If they get sick, move away, or die, you may miss them and feel sad about losing them. To cope with your feelings of grief, you can:

- Talk about your feelings with co-workers or family members.
- Take time to think about why you miss that person and what they meant to you.
- Let yourself feel sad. This is a normal reaction when something bad happens to someone you care about.
- Sometimes when you're feeling sad or stressed, you need to get away from the situation for a while. You may need to be alone to cry or scream.

In your job as a nurse assistant, you will not have to decide about resuscitating residents, starting tube feeding, or sending residents to the hospital. Even so, you will feel these things should be done or should not be done because of your own values. Sometimes you may be uncomfortable with a decision or feel it is wrong. To manage your feelings of discomfort, you can:

- Talk to your supervisor, who may give you information that helps you to better understand the decision (Fig. 2-17).



Fig. 2-17 – Talking with your supervisor will help you understand different decisions about residents.

- Talk to your minister, priest, rabbi, or religious leader about your feelings.
- Remember that although you need to talk about your feelings about a situation, all residents have a right to privacy. Once a decision has been made, do not try to talk a resident or their family member into changing their mind.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU LEARNED:

- What mindful caregiving means
- Ten questions to ask when learning about a resident's routine
- How to make ethical decisions
- How the nursing team works together
- The importance of developing a trusting relationship with the charge nurse and co-workers
- Four questions to ask when receiving an assignment
- Different approaches to care used in facilities
- Factors that influence care
- Four essential job functions common to nurse assistant job descriptions
- Two ways to take care of yourself

SUMMARY

This chapter concerns your general role as a nurse assistant. It includes information you need to know to be successful in this role and important information about the philosophy you should adopt about mindful caregiving.

Creating positive relationships with your supervisor and other staff you work with is important as you grow as a nurse assistant. You will be learning a wide range of tasks to perform your job well.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Think about why you want to be a nurse assistant. This will help you be successful in your work. Being a nurse assistant is a career, not just a job. You should look forward to doing it because you can make a difference in residents' quality of life and care.

The keys to quality caregiving include adopting a philosophy of mindful caregiving; being open, observant, caring, and willing to change; and balancing the art of caregiving with the skills of nursing care.

In addition to creating your own style of caregiving, think about the skills you will be learning for your work, such as creating positive relationships and learning about your facility's organizational structure.

CHECK WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. What is “mindful caregiving?”

- A. Wearing comfortable shoes and clothing to work.
- B. Storing soiled equipment and supplies in the clean supply room.
- C. Paying attention to details and being open, observant, and flexible.
- D. Sharing your opinions about a resident’s care with their family members.

2. What is an example of mindful caregiving?

- A. Being on time for work.
- B. Encouraging residents to wear clothing you like.
- C. Observing changes in a resident’s mood or routine.
- D. Requiring a resident to stick with the facility’s schedule.

3. Which of the following statements about values is true?

- A. Some cultural groups have better values than others.
- B. Nurse assistants should teach their values to residents.
- C. Residents must accept that they cannot bring their own values along when they move into a long term care facility.
- D. It is important to respect the values of other people, even if we don’t agree with those values.

4. Which of these behaviors will help you develop a good relationship with the charge nurse?

- A. Ask questions about things you do not understand.
- B. Always make it look like you know what you are doing.
- C. To show the charge nurse your eagerness, demand help for things immediately.
- D. Do not waste the charge nurse’s time by reporting changes in residents.

5. Which of the following is important for developing and maintaining a trusting relationship with a resident?

- A. Hiding any mistakes you make from them.
- B. Making all important decisions for them.
- C. Providing care when they need it.
- D. Discussing the resident’s business with other residents.

6. How do you create a good relationship with a co-worker?

- A. Call in sick if you think they would like some extra overtime work.
- B. Promise them you’ll never tell the charge nurse if they accidentally hurt a resident.
- C. Tell them funny stories you learn about residents you care for.
- D. Offer them your help when needed.

7. Mrs. Davies is a new resident with special needs you’ve never handled before. You should:

- A. Simply do the best you can for her.
- B. Let Mrs. Davies take care of herself.
- C. Discuss your concerns with the charge nurse.
- D. Ask another nurse assistant to handle Mrs. Davies for you.

8. What is “functional nursing”?

- A. Nurse assistants are responsible for specific tasks, such as bathing or bedmaking, rather than for specific residents.
- B. Nurses and nurse assistants work in pairs to provide care each day.
- C. A group of nursing team members are assigned to care for a group of residents.
- D. Another term for primary nursing.

9. What is a common task for a nurse assistant?

- A. Taking residents out to the movies.
- B. Removing stitches from an incision.
- C. Helping a resident with personal care.
- D. Changing light bulbs in the dining room and hallways.

10. Which strategy can help you deal with stress?

- A. Call in sick for work as often as possible.
- B. Take time for yourself each day, to just relax.
- C. Exercise no more than an hour each month.
- D. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, never make a list of everything you need to do.

(Answers to “Check What You’ve Learned” are in the Instructor’s Manual.)