

# Chapter

## THEMES OF CARE

By this point you may be wondering how you are going to meet all the needs of the residents you will care for. The tasks of caring for even one person can seem overwhelming. How will you ever handle caring for many at the same time? As you have learned, the key to success is balancing the art of caring with the science and skills of nursing. You must recognize that to give quality care while promoting residents' quality of life, you have to incorporate themes of care into all your activities.

A theme is something repeated over and over. It's like a song you cannot get out of your head. The words may change between verses, but the melody, the musical theme, stays the same and keeps repeating. The tasks you perform every day are like the words of the song. The specifics may change throughout the day, or they may be different for different residents because of their preferences, but the themes of care should always stay the same. In every interaction with a resident, these themes must be part of what you do. Weave them into every daily task. Themes of care help you balance the art of caregiving with the skills you use in your job.

This chapter focuses on how to provide the very best care. The 8 themes of care described here are a map for how to give the best care. You will learn about each of these themes and how to use them all when performing any skill as a nurse assistant.

### OBJECTIVES

- Define the themes of care
- List general questions you should consider when beginning a skill
- List the commonly used preparation and completion steps

*"You constantly amaze me.*

*You are so efficient and care  
for each of us as though we  
were your only focus."*

**D**o you know the saying “It’s not what you do, but how you do it”? Think of a simple task, like opening and closing a door. The fact of opening and closing is always the same, but how it is done time after time sends various messages. The door can be pushed open so hard that it bangs against the wall, or it can be opened so quietly that no one hears you come in. The door can be gently closed or slammed shut. How you do something even as simple as this can show your anger, frustration, or distraction—or it can show that you are considerate and caring. That is why you must pay attention to how you do even the simplest tasks. The themes of care are about how you do things. Incorporating them into all your activities helps you provide quality care in a timely, efficient manner.

## THEMES OF CARE

There are 8 **themes** of care that you should incorporate into your caregiving every day and with every resident. These themes of care involve both the art of caregiving and the science of nursing.

Caregiving themes include:

- communication
- **autonomy**
- **respect**
- **maximizing capabilities**

Nursing themes include:

- **safety**
- **infection control**
- **observation**

**Time management**, the eighth theme, is a general theme of care for performing all tasks in an efficient manner.

## Communication

In Chapter 7 you learned how we send and receive messages. You communicate with residents throughout the day. If you did not communicate with a resident, or if you failed to notice the resident’s nonverbal messages, how would you know if they were unhappy or in pain? How would a resident know that when you start to remove their clothes you are about to help them to bathe? Residents have the right to know what is happening to and around them. Communication is also important for developing a trusting relationship with residents and other staff (Fig. 13-1).



Fig. 13-1 – Communication is the foundation for creating a trusting relationship.



**Autonomy** – making decisions for oneself

**Infection control** – methods used to prevent the transmission of infection

**Maximizing capabilities** – working with a resident’s own capabilities to their fullest

**Observation** – recognizing and paying attention to details

**Respect** – to consider worthy of high regard

**Safety** – being free from harm or risk and secure from threats or danger

**Theme** – something practiced continually

**Time management** – ability to organize activities and perform them efficiently

## Autonomy

Autonomy means making decisions for oneself, including how to live one's life. Being autonomous means being independent. You must help each resident be as independent as possible (Fig. 13-2). Encourage them to take responsibility for their care by making their own choices. Then support residents in the choices they make, even when it means you have to change how you do a task. Residents are entitled to make their own decisions about how care will be given by themselves or by you. If you become too protective or do everything for a resident instead of letting them do it, you undermine their autonomy.



Fig. 13-2 – Residents should be encouraged to be as independent as possible.

## Respect

Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Simple courtesies show that you are respectful, such as knocking on the resident's door before entering, saying please, and asking permission. Ask yourself, "If I were this resident, how would I like to be treated?" Treating each resident with respect must be part of everything you do (Fig. 13-3). Remember that all residents are human beings and have their own feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. You must respect and never violate their basic human rights.



Fig. 13-3 – Maintaining the resident's privacy shows the resident you respect them.

## Maximizing Capabilities

Maximizing capabilities means that you work with the resident's capabilities and support them to their fullest. You emphasize what the resident can still do—not what they cannot do. When you incorporate this theme into your care, you become a coach. You work with the resident to help them be the best they can be (Fig. 13-4). Check the care plan for information about what a resident can do.



Fig. 13-4 – Always work with the residents to help them achieve their goals.

## Safety

Safety means being free from harm or risk and secure from threats or danger. The facility's environment is designed to be a safe place where the entire staff can focus on giving care in a home-like setting. But if care becomes a quick and careless routine, injuries and accidents are likely. Both residents' safety and your own depend on acting thoughtfully in every situation (Fig.13-5).



Fig. 13-5 – Locking the wheels on the wheelchair helps ensure safety.

## Infection Control

Using the infection control procedures described in Chapter 9 helps prevent the transmission of infection. The transmission of microorganisms can be kept to a minimum if everyone follows these principles (Fig. 13-6). Incorporate this theme in all your caregiving actions.



Fig. 13-6 – Using proper infection control procedures minimizes the spread of infection.

## Observation

You have already learned that observation means to watch and pay attention to details. You must pay close attention to any changes in a resident and report those changes immediately. Remember, since you spend the most time with residents, you will see changes before anyone else on the caregiving team does (Fig. 13-7).



Fig. 13-7 – Paying attention to the resident will help you notice any changes that may need to be reported.

## Time Management

Time management is the skill of organizing your activities and performing them efficiently. Take control and prioritize your tasks by deciding what is most important. This helps you become more efficient (Fig. 13-8).

All 8 of these themes are important, and you should work to incorporate them all into your everyday caregiving.



Fig. 13-8 – Gathering supplies you need to do the resident's care before you begin helps you to be organized.



## HOW TO USE THEMES IN YOUR WORK

You can incorporate the themes of care into your daily work if you think of each task as having 4 parts:

1. You consider the resident's capabilities and get their permission.
2. You prepare to do the task.
3. You do the task or carry out the procedure.
4. You complete the task.

Remember to think about the themes of care as you do the steps of each task. How you perform these steps is as important as finishing the task. Ask yourself these 6 questions every time you begin:

- What about the resident do I need to know or consider?
- Did I get permission to do the task?
- How should I do this task?
- What do I need to do before I get started?
- What supplies or equipment do I need to get to complete the task?
- How can I incorporate the themes of care in this task?

Consider the following example. Helping a resident to take a shower is a common task for nurse assistants. If you consider the questions above, your preparation for the shower will include the following steps:

1. Knock on the resident's door, and wait for their permission before entering. Knocking shows your respect for the person's privacy).
2. Introduce yourself and identify the resident. Introducing yourself is respectful. Identifying the resident ensures you are helping the correct person, which is a safety issue.
3. Check with the resident to be sure they want to take a shower. Explain what you would like to do and ask if this is a convenient time.
4. Schedule the shower room. Be sure it is clean. Hang an "Occupied" sign outside the shower.
5. Gather all supplies needed for the shower, such as a washcloth, towels, and bath blanket. Having things ready before you start is good time management.

6. Ask the resident how much help they need and what their preferences are. When you ask the resident about what they can do, you are maximizing their capabilities. You may have to determine this for the resident if they cannot communicate this information to you. These steps involve several themes of care: communicating, showing respect, promoting autonomy, and maximizing the resident's capabilities.
7. As needed, prepare the resident's own supplies, such as soap, deodorant, and lotions. This step is good time management and promotes autonomy.
8. Help the resident to the shower. Be sure they are completely covered during the transfer. This ensures the resident's safety and shows respect by protecting their privacy.
9. Help the resident get ready. Encourage them to do as much as they are able to do. This encourages them to be as independent and autonomous as possible. This also involves the theme of observation. Observing a resident's capabilities helps you encourage them to maintain or improve on that level.



10. Turn on the water and check the water temperature.
11. Ask the resident if the water temperature feels OK to them. This safety measure ensures the resident is not burned.

Because you prepared in advance, you can complete the shower without having to stop to get other supplies—this saves time. Nurse assistants who plan each task also enjoy their work much more. Residents are happier, and the whole experience is more enjoyable for both of you. This is a good example of how to balance the skills and art of caregiving.

Let's look at a different example. Suppose you are supposed to give Mrs. Jones a shower. Without thinking, you follow these steps:

1. You walk into Mrs. Jones' room.
2. You say hello to her.
3. You tell her what is going to happen.
4. You help her out of bed and to the shower.



5. You open the shower room door and find that another resident's used towels and supplies are still there. You leave Mrs. Jones waiting while you clean up the mess.
6. You tell Mrs. Jones you forgot her supplies and leave to get them. You leave Mrs. Jones sitting on a chair in the shower room. While you are gone, Mrs. Jones needs to go to the bathroom. She gets up, slips on a wet spot on the floor, and falls. You come back and find her on the cold, wet floor.

If you had been thinking of the themes of care and planned the shower carefully and mindfully, you would have prevented this situation.

Much of your job involves preparation. Preparing in advance for all tasks reduces your workload and helps you get the job done efficiently. All nurse assistant skills—whether bathing a resident, making a bed, or moving a resident from bed to chair—involve preparation. Often you will use the same preparation steps over and over each time you do the task. However, because different residents have different needs and preferences, and because the environment changes, small variations in preparation are often necessary.

The examples above show the importance of mindful preparation. Being mindful and incorporating the 8 themes of care are important in all steps of the task as well, not just preparation. Most of the chapters in the rest of this book describe the specific steps for doing tasks.

How you complete tasks, like how you prepare for them, is similar for most of the tasks you will do daily. These completion steps let the resident know you are done with the caregiving task, help them to get safe and comfortable, and give them a chance to ask questions (Fig. 13-9).



Fig. 13-9 – Completion steps include making the resident safe and comfortable.

Tables 13-1 and 13-2 list the common steps of preparation and completion. The rationale for each step is given, explaining the reason for performing each step. The themes of care incorporated in the steps are also listed.

*(text continued on page 232)*

**TABLE 13-1 COMMON PREPARATION STEPS**

STEP	RATIONALE	THEMES
Check the care plan.	The care plan gives you information about the resident.	Maximizing capabilities
Knock on the door and wait for permission to enter.	This respects the resident's right to privacy.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Introduce yourself by name and say you are the nurse assistant caring for them.	The resident has a right to know who is entering their room.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Check the resident's identification according to your facility's policies.	You must be sure you are providing care to the correct resident.	Safety
Tell the resident what you would like to do and ask if this particular time is OK.	The resident has a right to know what care they are receiving and to decide if this is a good time.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Determine the resident's abilities so you can maximize their capabilities. Ask yourself whether the necessary equipment is available to help you with this task.	You must know what the resident can and cannot do so you can give quality care. Always promote their capabilities and never call attention to their limitations. Whenever possible, use special equipment to ensure both the resident's safety and your own.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect, Maximizing capabilities, Safety
Explain what you are about to do.	This explanation helps gain the resident's cooperation and makes them feel involved and in charge of their plan of care.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Gather supplies located outside a resident's room.	This saves you time, helps you plan the task, and prevents injuries that could occur if you left the resident unattended.	Safety, Time management
Gather supplies that belong to the resident.	This saves you time, helps you plan the task, and prevents injuries that could occur if you left the resident unattended.	Autonomy, Safety, Time management
Prepare the equipment and environment. Lock the wheelchair or bed wheels, adjust the height of the bed, lower side rails if used, and move things aside to provide adequate space to work. Make sure equipment and the rooms needed are reserved and clean. Make sure the equipment is working.	This saves you time, helps you plan the task, and prevents injuries to both the resident and you.	Safety, Time management

**TABLE 13-1 CONTINUED**

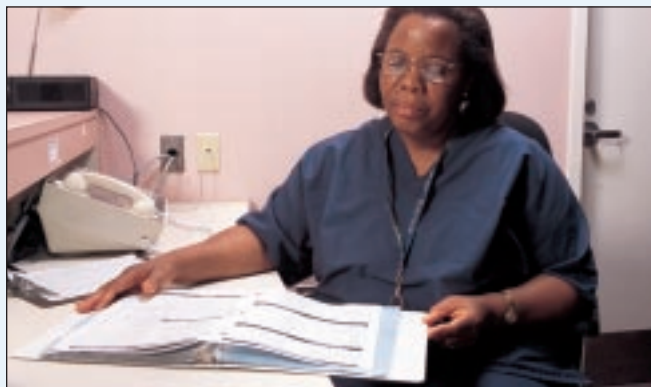
STEP	RATIONALE	THEMES
Provide privacy by closing the door or pulling the curtain completely around the bed and closing the shades.	Each resident has a right to privacy.	Respect
Wash your hands.	Handwashing helps prevent the transmission of infection.	Infection control
Wear gloves, goggles, mask, and gown when needed.	When needed, these items protect residents and staff from the transmission of infection.	Infection control
Offer help with the task but only as needed. Encourage each resident to do the task themselves. Offer (if needed) to get supplies from the bedside table or other storage area. Offer (if needed) to get supplies ready: Remove the toothpaste cap and open containers. Offer (if needed) to do the task. Encourage residents to do as much as possible for themselves.	Giving residents choices helps them feel in control and independent.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Use the proper container, such as a plastic trash bag, to dispose of dirty items.	Using the proper container reduces the transmission of infection and helps ensure the proper disposal of contaminated items.	Infection control
Observe the resident and ask yourself about anything you observe: Is this normal for the person? Is this part of the resident's routine? Ask the resident if they would like any changes in the way the task is performed.	In this way you are more likely to notice changes in the resident. This helps you ensure you are meeting the resident's needs. A resident can choose to change the routine at any time.	Autonomy, Observation
While performing the task, talk to the resident about their plans for the day or evening.	Courtesy and politeness are important in your relationship with the resident.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect
Talk to the resident about anything they may need or want.	This helps each resident feel involved and in charge of their plan of care.	Communication, Autonomy, Respect



(text continued from page 229)

The exact steps of care may differ somewhat from task to task and even from movement to movement, because tasks are not exact routines done the same for all residents at all times. Quality care involves meeting the individual's needs. You must be flexible and adapt your caregiving to each resident's preferences. Different equipment and settings may also require that you adjust your preparation steps.

The most common preparation steps you will use are:



1. Check the care plan.
2. Knock on the door and wait for permission to enter.



3. Introduce yourself.



4. Identify the resident.
5. Explain what you would like to do and ask if it is a good time.
6. Ask yourself, "What do I need to do before I begin the skill?"
7. Get supplies from outside the resident's room.
8. Get all supplies ready.
9. Prepare the environment. Lock the wheelchair or bed wheels, move things out of the way, raise or lower the bed, and lower the side rails if used. Provide for the resident's privacy.
10. Wash your hands. Note that you should wash your hands and put on gloves if needed before preparing the environment. Always wash your hands before you touch the resident.



11. Prepare the resident by asking what they can do and what they would like you to do. Help with clothing removal and so on.

Always perform these steps before you begin. Add other steps from Table 13-1 based on the resident's preferences and needs.

**TABLE 13-2 COMMON COMPLETION STEPS**

STEP	RATIONALE	THEMES
Complete the skill without any distractions or interruptions. Always use good body mechanics.	The resident has the right to be cared for in a focused, directed way. Following the principles of body mechanics helps prevent injury to the resident and yourself.	Safety, Time management
Provide for the resident's comfort. First ask the resident if they want any of these comfort measures: Fluff pillows. Position small pillows behind the resident's lower back and under their feet. Offer to get a footstool. If preferred, put a blanket on their lap and a sweater over their shoulders. Put personal items close by. Make sure lighting is adequate.	Making the resident comfortable is part of your responsibility.	Autonomy, Respect
Make sure the resident is in proper body alignment.	Proper positioning of all body parts prevents injury to the resident's joints and skin.	Respect, Safety
Check with the resident to be sure everything is satisfactory.	This gives the resident the opportunity to ask for something else or request a change. You also get feedback about what you have done.	Communication, Observation
Put the call light or other call device close to the resident.	Residents must be able to reach you throughout your shift.	Safety
Make sure the bed is lowered.	The bed should always be in its lowest position to make it easier for residents to move in and out.	Safety
Dispose of all used items in their proper containers.	All facilities have separate containers for items like linens and contaminated disposable and reusable supplies. Proper disposal prevents the transmission of infection to residents and other staff members.	Infection control
Remove your gloves and dispose of them in the proper container.	Changing gloves and disposing of dirty gloves properly helps prevent the transmission of infection to residents and other staff members.	Infection control
Wash your hands.	Handwashing helps prevent the transmission of infection.	Infection control
Record the completed procedure in the resident's facility records.	The record helps staff identify the resident's normal patterns.	Communication, Observation
Report any changes in a resident or in their environment to the charge nurse.	This helps the charge nurse take action to identify potential problems with a resident. Remember that often you are the first person to notice when something is wrong with a resident.	Communication, Observation

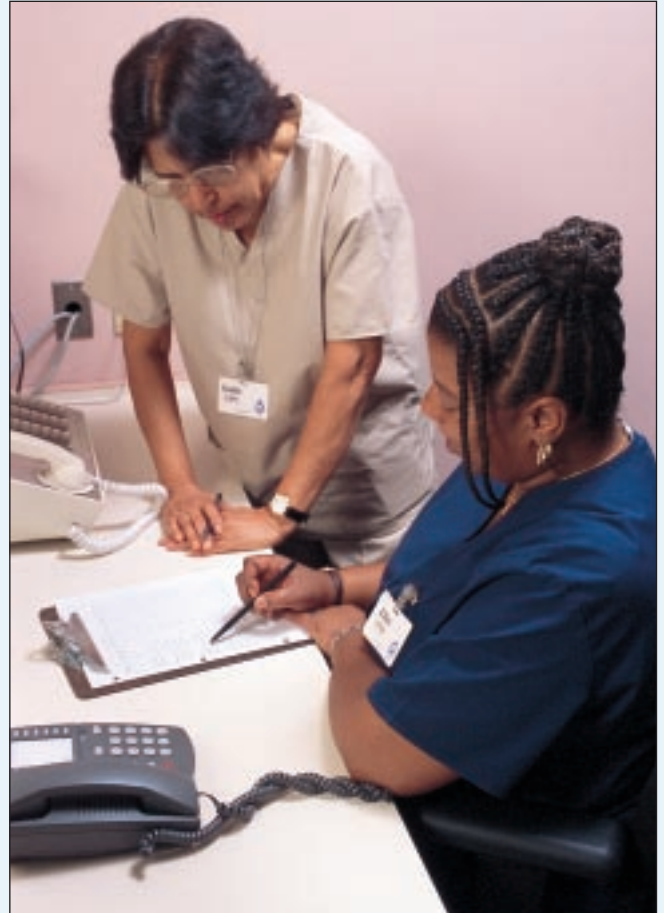
Like the preparation steps, the exact completion steps used at the end of a task may vary. The most common completion steps you will use are the following:

1. Ask yourself, "What do I need to do to complete the skill?"



2. Make each resident comfortable. Position them properly, place pillows correctly, make personal items available, and provide proper lighting for reading.
3. Ask the resident if they need anything else.

4. Check the resident's environment. Clean supplies and put them away, throw away disposable items, raise the bed's side rails if ordered, place the bed in the lowest position, and position the call light or other call device within reach.



5. If necessary, record and report that you have completed the procedure and any unusual observations you have.

Become familiar with these preparation and completion steps and use them daily with all tasks you perform. You can change the order of some steps because of a resident's needs, but always prepare for and finish the skill. These steps help you incorporate all 8 themes of care: communication, autonomy, respect, maximizing residents' capabilities, safety, infection control, observation, and time management. If you incorporate the themes of care in everything you do, you will be successful as a nurse assistant.

## THE FORMAT OF SKILL PROCEDURES

In the following chapters you will learn many skills. The steps in these skills are numbered to help you learn what to do first, second, third, etc. At the beginning of each skill is a reminder that looks like this:

**Remember: Prepare yourself, the resident, and the environment by obtaining and organizing your equipment. Follow the care plan, the resident's preferences, and common preparation steps.**

This is to remind you of what you need to do in preparation before beginning the procedure. The skill is then described, step by step. Learn the steps of procedures in the order given, but remember that you may need to be flexible in some steps based on a resident's preferences. At the end of each procedure you will see a reminder that looks like this:

### **Finish the skill and remember:**

- Meet the resident's needs
- The common completion steps

This is to remind you of what to do to complete the skill and to follow the standard completion steps. These include putting away all items used, washing your hands, disposing of dirty items, making the resident comfortable, checking if anything else is needed, and reporting and recording information when necessary.

For easier reference, the common preparation steps and common completion steps are repeated at the very end of this book.

## IN THIS CHAPTER YOU LEARNED:

- The themes of care
- General questions you should consider when beginning a skill
- Commonly used preparation and completion steps

## SUMMARY

This chapter discusses how you can meet all your residents' needs. You learned the key to your successful nursing care involves balancing the art of caregiving with the technical skills you perform to help residents. The way to achieve this balance is to incorporate the 8 themes of care in your practice. The common steps for beginning and ending any task also incorporate the 8 themes of care.

## PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Remember the saying "It's not what you do but how you do it." You may also know the saying "Anything worth doing is worth doing right." These sayings sum up the message of this chapter. If you are going to care for residents, then do it properly. Do it with compassion, respect, and understanding. The 8 themes of care should become your guide for delivering care. The themes will guide you as you perform all skills, from beginning to end. They will help you always give quality care.

Imagine you are a resident with a chronic disease. Every day is a challenge just to function. Perhaps the only thing you can count on is the staff giving you tender loving care. This means everything to you because every day truly is a challenge.

## CHECK WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

**1. Effective communication includes paying attention to a resident's:**

- A. Vital signs.
- B. Nonverbal messages.
- C. Sleeping hours.
- D. Holiday card list.

**2. Which theme of care encourages residents to make choices and be independent?**

- A. Safety.
- B. Autonomy.
- C. Observation.
- D. Self-actualization.

**3. When you maintain the resident's privacy during all aspects of personal care, which theme of care are you paying attention to?**

- A. Safety.
- B. Respect.
- C. Communication.
- D. Infection control.

**4. Time management involves:**

- A. Organizing activities and performing them efficiently.
- B. Noticing changes in a resident early on.
- C. Supporting residents in the choices they make about how they will spend their time.
- D. Emphasizing tasks that residents can still do for themselves.

**5. What does maximizing capabilities mean?**

- A. You help the resident exercise hard every day.
- B. You trust the resident to stay in the tub room alone.
- C. You coach the resident to do all they can for themselves.
- D. You always seek approval from the charge nurse before giving care.

**6. When should infection control practices be followed?**

- A. Whenever you feel you may be catching a cold or flu.
- B. In all caregiving actions.
- C. With residents known to be sick.
- D. When the charge nurse requests it.

**7. Whenever you prepare to do a task, you should ask yourself a number of questions, including which of the following?**

- A. Is this task in my job description?
- B. Should I call the resident's family to check whether they want me to do this task?
- C. Will the charge nurse respect me more for doing this task?
- D. Did I get the resident's permission to do the task?

**8. Common preparation steps include:**

- A. Washing your hands.
- B. Writing into the resident's medical record what you are about to do.
- C. Disposing of dirty items from a previous task.
- D. Putting all supplies away.

**9. Common completion steps include:**

- A. Rewarding the resident with a cookie or candy for cooperating with you.
- B. Checking the resident's wristband.
- C. Raising the resident's bed to its highest level.
- D. Making the resident comfortable.

**10. Which of these statements about the theme of observation is true?**

- A. Since you spend the most time with residents, you will see changes first.
- B. You observe only for things the charge nurse directs you to observe at the beginning of your shift.
- C. You should pay attention to large, dramatic changes in a resident, not details.
- D. The medical record tells you exactly what to look for in the resident.

(Answers to "Check What You've Learned" are in the Instructor's Manual.)