

## The healing power of presence

Being there.

Presented by  
Vareen O'Keefe- Domaleski  
Ed.D RN NEA, BC

### Objectives: The learner will

1. Articulate the difference in patient's perceptions of care when the nurse provides authentic presence.
2. Define intersubjectivity
3. State 3 changes in practice that will enhance the patient's lived experience of care.
4. Name 3 benefits that the nurse will receive when practicing mindfully in the present

### Definitions

Heal: to restore or regain health or soundness; to set right or repair; to make whole.

Presence: the state of being with or in the same place as a person or thing; attendance association. Area immediately surrounding a person or object.

Close your eyes and think about how you feel when in the presence of someone that cares for you?  
Take some deep breaths and think about your most loving relationship

Do you feel relaxed? Is your stress relieved?  
What's happening in your body?  
Relaxation decreases the adrenaline in our bodies and allows heart rate and breathing to slow down (relaxation response 1999)

### What a healing presence is not?

"The nurse's presence is perceived as minimal presence--- being physically present. The nurse is only there because it is a job and not there to assist the client or answer his needs---- the interaction that never happened is labeled as a non caring interaction. The nurse is too busy, too hurried, to listen to the clients concerns- **client feels devalued as a unique human being** because the client feels treated as a non human being leading to feelings of frustration, fear, depression, anger and distress." (Riemen)

I am so exhausted!



I'm so sad today



Frustration!



Too much to do?



Going through the motions.

We all have these days or times do you notice anything different in your communication with your patient? In their eyes? Tone of voice? Physical manifestations? Affect and mood? How do you feel about yourself when you have this kind of day? Does this kind of day give meaning to your work?

**Resilience**— what do you do to keep yourself refreshed and energized? What keeps you coming back? How do you create balance?

## Human relationships

- This has been shown to be one of the best predictors of human harmony, a defense against depression—friendships, love relationships, camaraderie, support groups—
- If this works for us as caregivers- why be surprised that it is the nature of the caring nurse patient relationship that makes the difference for our patients.

## So let us move to what this relationship is.

This is really a philosophical as well as a practice construct.  
There may be more questions than answers today  
Here are a few philosophers that addressed presence, healing and connection  
Heidigger      Rogers  
Sartre          Buber

- **Martin Heidegger** (1889-1976) German philosopher asked the question, "What is being?"

Existentialism is a philosophy about experience. In qualitative research you will often hear the term, "Lived experience"  
What was the experience like for the person that lived it?  
Some ponderables are:

What is it to be human? (Dasein- or being there)  
Dasein is defined as caring.  
**Authenticity**, or truthfulness in our relationship with and to time( we are finite beings)

## Heidigger continued

Decisions have consequences  
Personal responsibility and self discipline  
One fights for ones life  
Traditional rules of religious and secular society are arbitrary  
Worldly desire is futile.  
What is the nature of truth?

## Existentialism continued,

What is a lived experience?

How does this connect with nursing presence?

How does this impact on people that we care for as nurses?

Do you make a **conscious decision** about how you will "be" when in the presence of a patient?  
Does this decision have consequences?

Lived experience changes us.



**Jean-Paul Sartre** (French existentialist/philosopher 1905-1980)

**Authentic way of being**

Atheist

In order to be awake in our lives we must experience death consciousness

Ideas are the result of real life experiences

Morality is derived from our ability to make choices that we can live with.

Alienation and objectification separate us from truly "being"

Consciousness and emotion—awareness of inner self

What does it mean to be conscious and awake in your life?

**Intersubjectivity**

Who am I?

Who are you?

Who are we in relation to one another?

Agreement/divergence

How do we answer such questions?

Intersubjectivity



Brene Brown



**Martin Buber**-Austrian existential poet and philosopher(1878-1965)believed in God or creator  
Honor or objectification  
I- thou relationship cannot be measured but is **real** and perceivable.  
I-it relationships treats other as an object  
Dialogical relationships- entering into **authentic** dialogue with other  
Spiritual connections. Essence of self connects with essence of other

### Self knowledge: finding your authentic self

**Carl Rogers** "I am not perfect. I am capable of any thought emotion act that has ever been had.—I am one with all I meet!" Rogers promoted the idea of **unconditional positive regard**. We call it a non judgmental attitude

Letting go of the past and opening yourself to your full potential- your future existence. Not letting your past sorrows, hurts, disappointments, resentments transform you into negative ways of thinking and being. **You can be the inner person you want to be**, and your connections to others, in this case patients are then free to be **real** and **authentic**, not bound by past experiences and judgments.

### Perceptions and judgments



### What is nursing? Many definitions and theories

**Ida Jean Orlando**: identifying and meeting the patient's immediate needs for help in order to reduce distress. Managing the patient's presenting behavior.

**Jean Watson**: we are reminded that we have a human connection with our patients and with each other that has a spiritual dimension. It implies focus on the uniqueness of self and other coming together (I-Thou)---trans personal is the unique individuality of each human that transcends to deeper connections that all humans share(intersubjectivity)with their deeper selves, "Other", environment, nature and the universe

### A caring interaction

"In a caring interaction the nurse existential presence is perceived by the client as more than just a physical presence There is the aspect of the nurse giving of oneself to the client. The giving of oneself may be in response to the client's request but it is more often a voluntary effort and is unsolicited by the client. The nurses willingness to give of oneself is primarily perceived by the client as an attitude and behavior of sitting down and really listening and responding to the unique concerns of the individual as a person of value. The relaxation, comfort and security that the client experiences both physically and mentally are an immediate and direct result of the clients stated and unstated needs being heard and responded to by the nurse" (Riemen)



## On being real

"Real isn't how you are made "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."  
 "Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.  
 "Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."  
 "Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"  
 "It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out, and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. (Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Howe)

## Your truest self

Authenticity  
requires self-  
awareness.

Self-awareness  
requires reflection.

## Pulling it all together

Elements of a healing nurse patient relationship as related to the philosophical constructs discussed?

Self knowledge

Existentialism (lived experience)

**Authenticity**

Presence

Healing

Intersubjectivity

Being real

Love, actually!

## Actualizing all of this- every encounter is an opportunity to heal

Introduce yourself

Make eye contact

Touch as appropriate

Ask "what is the most important thing I can do for you today?"

Be mindful of what you say.

Let the art come before the science.

Be deliberately conscious of being in the moment with the patient.

Show up with each patient encounter ready to be nowhere else.

Talk to the patient NOT the computer

## Conclusions

Today we reviewed essential healing and human connection

We related this to complex philosophical issues

We defined what a caring presence is and is not.

We hopefully re commit to bringing our healing presence, our real and loving selves, our therapeutic use of ourselves to every encounter suspending all judgments.

## "In a true healing relationship, both heal, and both are healed"

Thanks you for your **authentic** presence and interest in this topic.

Questions?