

DIVERSIFIED HEALTH OCCUPATIONS

Seventh Edition

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**Diversified Health Occupations, Seventh
Edition**

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CHAPTER 4

Personal and Professional Qualities of a Health Care Worker

Observe Standard Precautions



Instructor's Check—Call Instructor at This Point



Safety—Proceed with Caution



OBRA Requirement—Based on Federal Law



Math Skill



Legal Responsibility



Science Skill



Career Information



Communications Skill



Technology



Chapter Objectives

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:

- ◆ Explain how diet, rest, exercise, good posture, and avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and drugs contribute to good health
- ◆ Demonstrate the standards of a professional appearance as they apply to uniforms, shoes, nails, hair, jewelry, and makeup
- ◆ Create a characteristic profile of a health care worker that includes at least eight personal/professional traits or attitudes
- ◆ Identify four factors that interfere with communication
- ◆ Explain the importance of listening, nonverbal behavior, reporting, and recording in the communication process
- ◆ Identify why teamwork is beneficial
- ◆ Identify six basic characteristics of leaders
- ◆ Differentiate among democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic leaders
- ◆ Differentiate between positive and negative stressors by identifying the emotional response
- ◆ List six ways to eliminate or decrease stress
- ◆ Explain how time management, problem solving, and goal setting reduce stress
- ◆ Define, pronounce, and spell all key terms

KEY TERMS

acceptance of criticism
autocratic leader
communication
competence
(kom'-peh-tense)
cultural diversity
democratic leader
dependability
discretion
empathy (*em'-path-ee"*)

enthusiasm
feedback
goal
honesty
laissez-faire leader
leader
leadership
listening
nonverbal communication
patience

personal hygiene
responsibility
self-motivation
stress
tact
team player
teamwork
time management
willingness to learn

INTRODUCTION

Although health care workers are employed in many different career areas and in a variety of facilities, certain personal/professional characteristics, attitudes, and rules of appearance apply to all health care professionals. This chapter discusses these basic requirements.

4:1 INFORMATION

Personal Appearance

As a worker in any health career, it is important to present an appearance that inspires confidence and a positive self-image. Research has shown that within 20 seconds to 4 minutes people form an impression about another person based mainly on appearance. Although the rules of suitable appearance may vary, certain professional standards apply to most health careers and should be observed to create a positive impression.

GOOD HEALTH

Health care involves promoting health and preventing disease. Therefore, a health care worker should present a healthy appearance. Five main factors contribute to good health:

- ◆ **Diet:** Eating well-balanced meals and nutritious foods provides the body with the materi-

als needed for optimum health. Foods from each of the five major food groups (milk; meat; vegetables; fruits; and bread, cereals, rice, and pasta) should be eaten daily. My Pyramid, discussed in Chapter 11:4, identifies the major food groups.

- ◆ **Rest:** Adequate rest and sleep help provide energy and the ability to deal with stress. The amount of sleep required varies from individual to individual.
- ◆ **Exercise:** Exercise maintains circulation, improves muscle tone, enhances mental attitude, aids in weight control, and contributes to more restful sleep. In addition, regular physical activity reduces the risk for coronary heart disease, diabetes, colon cancer, hypertension (high blood pressure), and osteoporosis. Individuals should choose the form of exercise best suited to their own needs, but should exercise daily.
- ◆ **Good posture:** Good posture helps prevent fatigue and puts less stress on muscles. Basic principles include standing straight with stomach muscles pulled in, shoulders relaxed, and weight balanced equally on each foot.
- ◆ **Avoid use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs:** The use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs can seriously affect good health. Tobacco affects the function of the heart, circulatory system, lungs, and digestive system. In addition, the odor of smoke is offensive to many individuals. For these reasons, most health care facil-

ties are “smoke-free” environments. The use of alcohol and drugs impairs mental function, decreases ability to make decisions, and adversely affects many body systems. The use of alcohol or drugs can also result in job loss. Avoiding tobacco, alcohol, and drugs helps prevent damage to the body systems and contributes to good health.

PROFESSIONAL APPEARANCE

When you obtain a position in a health career, it is important to learn the rules or standards of dress and personal appearance that have been established by your place of employment. Abide by the rules and make every effort to maintain a neat, clean, and professional appearance.

Uniform

Many health occupations require uniforms. A uniform should always be neat, well fitting, clean, and free from wrinkles (figure 4-1). Some agencies require a white uniform, but others allow pastel colors. In some facilities, the colors identify groups of workers. If white uniforms are required, white or neutral undergarments should be worn. A large variety of uniform styles is avail-



FIGURE 4-1 Uniform styles may vary, but a uniform should always be neat, well fitting, clean, and free from wrinkles.

able. Extreme styles in any type of uniform should be avoided. It is important that the health care worker learn what type and color uniform is required or permitted and follow the standards established by the place of employment.

Clothing

If regular clothing is worn in place of a uniform, the clothing must be clean, neat, and in good repair (figure 4-2). The style should allow for freedom of body movement and should be appropriate for the job. For example, while clean, neat jeans might be appropriate at times for a recreational therapist, they are not proper attire for most other health professionals. Washable fabrics are usually best because frequent laundering is necessary.

Name Badge

Most health care facilities require personnel to wear name badges or photo identification tags at all times. The badge usually states the name, title, and department of the health care worker. In some health care settings, such as long-term care facilities, workers are required by law to wear



FIGURE 4-2 If regular clothing is worn in place of a uniform, the clothing should reflect a professional appearance.

identification badges. In addition, a health care facility's security regulations may require photo identification tags to gain access into the building or into certain areas inside the facility.

Shoes

Although white shoes are frequently required, many occupations allow other types of shoes. Any shoes should fit well and provide good support to prevent fatigue. Low heels are usually best because they help prevent fatigue and accidents. Avoid wearing sandals or open-toe shoes, unless they are standard dress for a particular occupation. Shoes should be cleaned daily. If shoelaces are part of the shoes, these must also be cleaned or replaced frequently. Women should wear white or beige stockings or pantyhose with dress uniforms; colored or patterned stockings should be avoided. White socks should be worn with white pants.

Personal Hygiene

Good **personal hygiene** is essential. Because health care workers typically work in close contact with others, body odor must be controlled. A daily bath or shower, use of deodorant or antiperspirant, good oral hygiene, and clean undergarments all help prevent body odor. Strong odors caused by tobacco, perfumes, scented hairsprays, and aftershave lotions can be offensive. In addition, certain scents can cause allergic reactions in some individuals. The use of these products should be avoided when working with patients and co-workers.

Nails

Nails should be kept short, clean, and natural. Many health care facilities prohibit the use of artificial nails. If fingernails are long and/or pointed, they can injure patients. They can also transmit germs, because dirt can collect under long nails and artificial nails. In addition, health care workers are now required to wear gloves for many procedures. Long nails can tear or puncture gloves. The use of colored nail polish is discouraged because the color can conceal any dirt that may collect under the nails. Further, because frequent handwashing causes polish to chip, germs can collect on the surfaces of nails.

Finally, the flash of bright colors may bother a person who does not feel well. If nail polish is worn, it should be clear or colorless, and the nails must be kept scrupulously clean. Hand cream or lotion should be used to keep the hands from becoming chapped and dry from frequent hand-washing.

Hair

Hair should be kept clean and neat. It should be styled attractively and be easy to care for. Fancy or extreme hairstyles, hair ornaments, and/or unnatural hair colors should be avoided. If the job requires close contact with patients, long hair must be pinned back and kept off the collar. This prevents the hair from touching the patient/resident, falling on a tray or on equipment, or blocking necessary vision during procedures.

Jewelry

Jewelry is usually not permitted with a uniform because it can cause injury to the patient and transmit germs or pathogens. Exceptions sometimes include a watch, wedding ring, and small, pierced earrings. Earrings with hoops or dangling earrings should be avoided. Body jewelry, such as nose, eyebrow, or tongue-piercing jewelry, detracts from a professional appearance and is prohibited in many health care facilities. When a uniform is not required, jewelry should still be limited. Excessive jewelry can interfere with patient care and detracts from the professional appearance of the health care worker.

Makeup and Tattoos

Excessive makeup should be avoided. The purpose of makeup is to create a natural appearance and add to the attractiveness of a person.

Tattoos that are visible and/or offensive detract from a professional appearance and are prohibited in many health care facilities. An example is a tattoo on a hand or lower arm that promotes gang membership. Some health care facilities require that any tattoo be covered by clothing at all times. Learn and follow the policies established by your place of employment.

4:2 INFORMATION

Personal Characteristics

Many personal/professional characteristics and attitudes are required in the health occupations. As a health care worker, you should make every effort to develop the following characteristics and attitudes and to incorporate them into your personality.

◆ **Empathy:** Empathy means being able to identify with and understand another person's feelings, situation, and motives. As a health care worker, you may care for persons of all ages—from the newborn infant to the elderly adult. To be successful, you must be sincerely interested in working with people. You must care about others and be able to communicate and work with them. Understanding the needs of people and learning effective communication techniques is one way to develop empathy. This topic is covered in greater detail in Chapter 4:3 of this text.

◆ **Honesty:** Truthfulness and integrity are important in any career field. Others must be able to trust you at all times. You must be willing to admit mistakes so they can be corrected.

◆ **Dependability:** Employers and patients rely on you, so you must accept the responsibility required in your position. You must be prompt in reporting to work, and maintain a good attendance record (figure 4-3). You must perform assigned tasks on time and accurately.



FIGURE 4-3 A health care worker must report to work on time and maintain a good attendance record.

◆ **Willingness to learn:** You must be willing to learn and to adapt to changes. The field of health care changes constantly because of research, new inventions, and technological advances. Change often requires learning new techniques or procedures. At times, additional education may be required to remain competent in a particular field. Be prepared for life-long learning to maintain a competent level of knowledge and skills.

◆ **Patience:** You must be tolerant and understanding. You must learn to control your temper and "count to ten" in difficult situations. Learning to deal with frustration and overcome obstacles is important.

◆ **Acceptance of criticism:** Patients, families, employers, co-workers, and others may criticize you. Some criticism will be constructive and allow you to improve your work. Remember that everyone has some areas where performance can be improved. Instead of becoming resentful, you must be willing to accept criticism and learn from it.

◆ **Enthusiasm:** You must enjoy your work and display a positive attitude. Enthusiasm is contagious; it helps you do your best and encourages others to do the same. If you do not like some aspects of your job, concentrating on the positive points can help diminish the importance of the negative points.

◆ **Self-motivation:** Self-motivation, or self-initiative, is the ability to begin or to follow through with a task. You should be able to determine things that need to be done and do them without constant direction. You set goals for yourself and work to reach the goals.

◆ **Tact:** Being tactful means having the ability to say or do the kindest or most fitting thing in a difficult situation. It requires constant practice. Tactfulness implies a consideration for the feelings of others. It is important to remember that all individuals have a right to their respective feelings, and that these feelings should not be judged as right or wrong.

◆ **Competence:** Being competent means that you are qualified and capable of performing a task. You follow instructions, use approved procedures, and strive for accuracy in all you do. You know your limits and ask for help or guidance if you do not know how to perform a procedure.

◆ **Responsibility:** Responsibility implies being willing to be held accountable for your actions. Others can rely on you and know that you will meet your obligations. Responsibility means that you do what you are supposed to do.

◆ **Discretion:** You must always use good judgment in what you say and do. In any health care career, you will have access to confidential information. This information should not be told to anyone without proper authorization. A patient is entitled to confidential care; you must be discreet and ensure that the patient's rights are not violated.

◆ **Team player:** In any health care field, you will become part of a team. It is essential that you become a team player and learn to work well with others. Each member of a health care team will have different responsibilities, but each member must do his or her part to provide the patient with quality care. By working together, a team can accomplish goals much faster than an individual.

Each of the preceding characteristics and attitudes must be practiced and learned. Some take more time to develop than do others. By being aware of these characteristics and striving constantly to improve, you will provide good patient/resident care and be a valuable asset to your employer and other members of the health care team.

4:3 INFORMATION

Effective Communications

 Communicating effectively with others is an important part of any health career. The health care worker must be able to relate to patients and their families, to co-workers, and to other professionals. An understanding of communication skills will assist the health care worker who is trying to relate effectively.

Communication is the exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings. It can occur through *verbal* means (spoken words), written communications, and *nonverbal* behavior such as facial expressions, body language, and touch.

COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The communication process involves three essential elements:

- ◆ **Sender:** an individual who creates a message to convey information or an idea to another person
- ◆ **Message:** information, ideas, or thoughts
- ◆ **Receiver:** an individual who receives the message from the sender

Without a sender, message, and receiver, communication cannot occur.

Feedback is a method that can be used to determine whether communication was successful. This occurs when the receiver responds to the message. Feedback allows the original sender to evaluate how the message was interpreted and to make any necessary adjustments or clarification. Feedback can be verbal or nonverbal.

Even though the communication process seems simple, many factors can interfere with the completion of the process. Important elements of effective communication include:

◆ *The message must be clear.* The message must be in terms that both the sender and receiver understand. Health care workers learn and use terminology that is frequently not understood by those people who are not employed in health care. Even though these terms are familiar to the health care worker, they must be modified, defined, or substituted with other words when messages are conveyed to people not employed in health care. For example, if a health care worker needs a urine specimen, some patients can be told to urinate in a container. Others, such as very small children or individuals with limited education, may have to be told to "pee" or "do number one." Even a term such as *apical pulse* is not understood by many individuals. Instead of telling a patient, "I am going to take your apical pulse," say, "I am going to listen to your heart." It requires experience and constant practice to learn to create a message that can be clearly understood.

◆ *The sender must deliver the message in a clear and concise manner.* Correct pronunciation

and the use of good grammar are essential. The use of slang words or words with double meanings should be avoided. Meaningless phrases or terms such as "you know," "all that stuff," "um," and "OK," distract from the message and also must be avoided. In verbal communications, the tone and pitch of voice is important. A moderate level, neither too soft nor too loud, and good inflection, to avoid monotone, are essential. Think of the many different ways the sentence "I really like this job" can be said and the different meanings that can be interpreted depending on the tone and pitch of the voice. The proper rate, or speed, of delivering a message is also important. If a message is delivered too quickly, the receiver may not have enough time to hear all parts of the message. In written communications, the message should be spelled correctly, contain correct grammar and punctuation, and be concise but thorough.

◆ *The receiver must be able to hear and receive the message.* Patients who are heavily medicated or are weak may nod their heads as if messages are heard, when, in reality, the patients are not receiving the information. They may hear it, but it is not being interpreted and understood because of their physical states. Patients with hearing or visual impairments or patients with limited English-speaking abilities are other examples of individuals who may not be able to easily receive messages (figure 4-4). Repeating the message,



FIGURE 4-4 In communicating with a person who has a hearing impairment, face the individual and speak slowly and distinctly.

changing the form of the message, and getting others to interpret or clarify the message are some ways to help the receiver receive and respond to the message.

◆ *The receiver must be able to understand the message.* Using unfamiliar terminology can cause a breakdown in communication. Many people do not want to admit that they do not understand terms because they think others will think they are dumb. The health care worker should ask questions or repeat information in different terms if it appears that the patient does not understand the information. The receiver's attitude and prejudices can also interfere with understanding. If a patient feels that health care workers do not know what they are talking about, the patient will not accept the information presented. Receivers must have some confidence and belief in the sender before they will accept and understand a message. It is important that health care workers are willing to say, "I don't know, but I will try to find out that information for you," when they are asked a question about which they do not have correct knowledge. It is also important for health care workers to be aware of their own prejudices and attitudes when they are receiving messages from patients. If health care workers feel that certain patients are lazy, ignorant, or uncooperative, they will not respond correctly to messages sent by these patients. Health care workers must be aware of these feelings and work to overcome them so they can accept patients as they are.

◆ *Interruptions or distractions must be avoided.* Interruptions or distractions can interfere with any communication. Trying to talk with others while answering the phone or writing a message can decrease the effectiveness of spoken and/or written communication. Loud noises or distractions in the form of bright light or uncomfortable temperature can interrupt communication. When two people are talking outside in freezing temperatures, for example, the conversation will be limited because of the discomfort from the cold. A small child jumping around or climbing up and down off a mother's lap will distract the mother as she is getting instructions from a health care worker. A loud television or radio

interferes with verbal messages, because receivers may pay more attention to the radio or television than to the person speaking to them. It is important to eliminate or at least limit distractions if meaningful communication is to take place.

LISTENING

Listening is another essential part of effective communication. Listening means paying attention to and making an effort to hear what the other person is saying. Good listening skills require constant practice. Techniques that can be used to learn good listening skills include:

- ◆ Show interest and concern for what the speaker is saying
- ◆ Be alert and maintain eye contact with the speaker
- ◆ Avoid interrupting the speaker
- ◆ Pay attention to what the speaker is saying
- ◆ Avoid thinking about how you are going to respond
- ◆ Try to eliminate your own prejudices and see the other person's point of view
- ◆ Eliminate distractions by moving to a quiet area for the conversation
- ◆ Watch the speaker closely to observe actions that may contradict what the person is saying
- ◆ Reflect statements back to the speaker to let the speaker know that statements are being heard
- ◆ Ask for clarification if you do not understand part of a message
- ◆ Keep your temper under control and maintain a positive attitude

Good listening skills will allow you to receive the entire message a person is trying to convey to you. For example, if a patient says, "I'm not worried about this surgery," but is very restless and seems nervous, the patient's body movements may indicate fear that is being denied by words. The health care worker could reflect the patient's statement by saying, "You're not at all worried about this surgery?" The patient may respond by saying, "Well, not really. It's just that I worry about my family if something should happen to me."

Good listening allowed the patient to express fears and opened the way to more effective communication. In this same case, the entire pattern of communication could have been blocked if the health care worker had instead responded, "That's good."

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Nonverbal communication involves the use of facial expressions, body language, gestures, eye contact, and touch to convey messages or ideas (figure 4-5). If a person is smiling and sitting in a very relaxed position while saying, "I am very angry about this entire situation," two different messages are being conveyed. A smile, a frown, a wink, a shrug of the shoulders, a bored expression, a tapping of fingers or feet, and other similar body gestures or actions all convey messages to the receiver. It is important for health care workers to be aware of both their own and patients' nonverbal behaviors because these are an important part of any communication process. A touch of the hand, a pat on the back, a firm handshake, and a hug can convey more interest and caring than words could ever do. When verbal and nonverbal messages agree, the receiver is more likely to understand the message being sent.



FIGURE 4-5 What aspects of listening and nonverbal behavior can you see in this picture?

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

A communication barrier is something that gets in the way of clear communication. Three common barriers are physical disabilities, psychological attitudes and prejudice, and cultural diversity.

Physical Disabilities

◆ *Deafness or hearing loss:* People who are deaf or hearing impaired have difficulty receiving messages. To improve communication, it is essential to use body language such as gestures and signs, speak clearly in short sentences, face the individual to improve the potential for lip reading, write messages if necessary, and make sure that any hearing aids have good batteries and are inserted correctly (figure 4-6). At times, it may be neces-



FIGURE 4-6 To be effective, hearing aids must be inserted correctly and have good batteries.

sary to obtain the assistance of a sign language interpreter to communicate with a deaf individual.

- ◆ *Blindness or impaired vision:* People who are blind or visually impaired may be able to hear what is being said, but they will not see body language, gestures, or facial expressions. To improve communication, use a soft tone of voice, describe events that are occurring, announce your presence as you enter a room, explain sounds or noises, and use touch when appropriate.
- ◆ *Aphasia or speech impairments:* Aphasia is the loss or impairment of the power to use or comprehend words, usually as a result of injury or damage to the brain. Individuals with aphasia or speech impairments can have difficulty with not only the spoken word but also written communications. They may know what they want to say but have difficulty remembering the correct words, may not be able to pronounce certain words, or may have slurred and distorted speech. Patience is essential while working with these individuals. Allow them to try to speak, encourage them to take their time, ask questions that require only short responses, speak slowly and clearly, pause between sentences to allow them to comprehend what has been said, repeat messages to be sure they are correct, encourage them to use gestures or point to objects, provide writing materials if they can write messages, or use pictures with key messages to communicate (figure 4-7).

Psychological Barriers

Psychological barriers to communication are often caused by prejudice, attitudes, and personality. Examples include closed-mindedness, judging, preaching, moralizing, lecturing, overreacting, arguing, advising, and prejudging. Our judgments of others are too often based on appearance, lifestyle, and social or economic status. Stereotypes such as "dumb blonde," "lazy bum," or "fat slob" cause us to make snap judgments about an individual and affect the communication process.

Health care workers must learn to put prejudice aside and show respect to all individuals. A homeless person deserves the same quality of health care



FIGURE 4-7 Picture cards make it easier to communicate with a patient who has aphasia or a speech impairment.

as the president of the United States. It is important to respect each person as an individual and to remember that each person has the right to good care and considerate treatment. At times, this can be extremely difficult, and patience and practice are essential. When individuals have negative attitudes or constantly complain or criticize your work, it can be difficult to show them respect. The health care worker must learn to see beyond the surface attitude to the human being underneath.

Frequently, fear is the cause of anger or a negative attitude. Allow patients to express their fears or anger, encourage them to talk about their feelings, avoid arguing, remain calm, talk in a soft and non-threatening tone of voice, and provide quality care. If other health care workers seem to be able to communicate more effectively with patients, watch these workers to learn how they handle difficult or angry patients. This is often the most effective means of learning good communication skills.

Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity, discussed in detail in Chapter 9, is another possible communication barrier. Culture consists of the values, beliefs, attitudes,

and customs shared by a group of people and passed from one generation to the next. It is often defined as a set of rules, because culture allows an individual to interpret the environment and actions of others and behave appropriately. The main barriers created by cultural diversity include:

- ◆ **Beliefs and practices regarding health and illness:** Individuals from different cultures may have their own beliefs about the cause of an illness and the type of treatment required. It is important to remember that they have the right to determine their treatment plans and even to refuse traditional treatments. At times, these individuals may accept traditional health care but add their own cultural remedies to the treatment plan.
- ◆ **Language differences:** Language differences can create major barriers. In the United States, English is a primary language used in health care. If a person has difficulty communicating in English, and a health care worker is not fluent in another language, a barrier exists. When providing care to people who have limited English-speaking abilities, speak slowly, use simple words, use gestures or pictures to clarify the meaning of words, and use nonverbal communication in the form of a smile or gentle touch. Avoid the tendency to speak louder because this does not improve comprehension. Whenever possible, try to find an interpreter who speaks the language of the patient. Frequently, another health care worker, a consultant, or a family member may be able to assist in the communication process. In addition, many health care facilities provide written instructions or explanations in several different languages to facilitate the communication process (figure 4-8).
- ◆ **Eye contact:** In some cultures, direct eye-to-eye contact while communicating is not acceptable. These cultures believe that looking down shows proper respect for another individual. A health care worker who feels that eye contact is important must learn to accept and respect this cultural difference and a person's inability to engage in eye contact while communicating.
- ◆ **Ways of dealing with terminal illness and/or severe disability:** In the United States, a traditional health care belief is that the patient



FIGURE 4-8 Many health care facilities provide written instructions or explanations in several different languages to facilitate communication with individuals who have limited English-speaking abilities.

should be told the truth about his or her diagnosis and informed about the expected outcome. Some cultural groups believe that a person should not be told of a fatal diagnosis or be burdened with making decisions about treatment. In these cultures, the family, the mother or father, or another designated individual is expected to make decisions about care, treatment, and information given to the patient. In such instances, it is important for health care workers to recognize and respect this and to involve these individuals in the patient's care. At times, it may be necessary for a patient to use legal means, such as power of attorney for health care, to designate responsibility for his or her care to another person.

- ◆ **Touch:** In some cultures, it is inappropriate to touch someone on the head. Other cultures have clearly defined areas of the body that can be touched or that should be avoided. Even a simple handshake can be regarded as showing a lack of respect. In some cultures, only family members provide personal care. For this reason, health care workers should always get permission from the patient before providing care and should avoid any use of touch that seems to be inappropriate for the individual.

Respect for and acceptance of cultural diversity is essential for any health care worker. When beliefs, ideas, concepts, and ways of life are different, communication barriers can result. By making every attempt to learn about cultural differences and by showing respect for an individ-

ual's right to cultural beliefs, a health care worker can provide quality health care.

RECORDING AND REPORTING

In health care, an important part of effective communication is reporting or recording all observations while providing care. To do this, it is important to not only listen to what the patient is saying, but to make observations about the patient. All senses are used to make observations:

- ◆ **Sense of sight:** notes the color of skin, swelling or edema, the presence of a rash or sore, the color of urine or stool, the amount of food eaten, and other similar factors
- ◆ **Sense of smell:** alerts a health care worker to body odor or unusual odors of breath, wounds, urine, or stool
- ◆ **Sense of touch:** used to feel the pulse, dryness or temperature of the skin, perspiration, and swelling
- ◆ **Sense of hearing:** used while listening to respirations, abnormal body sounds, coughs, and speech

By using all senses, the health care worker can learn a great deal about a patient's condition and be able to report observations accurately.

Observations should be reported promptly to an immediate supervisor. There are two types of observations:

- ◆ **Subjective observations:** These cannot be seen or felt, and are commonly called *symptoms*. They are usually statements or complaints made by the patient. They should be reported in the exact words the patient used.
- ◆ **Objective observations:** These can be seen or measured, and are commonly called *signs*. A bruise, cut, rash, or swelling can be seen. Blood pressure and temperature are measurable.

For example, the health care worker should not state, "I think Mr. B. has a fever." The report should state, "Mr. B. is complaining of feeling hot. His skin is red and flushed, and his temperature is 102°."

In some health care facilities, observations are recorded on a patient's health care record. Effec-

tive communication requires these written observations to be accurate, concise, and complete (figure 4-9). The writing should be neat and legible, and spelling and grammar should be correct. Only objective observations should be noted. Subjective observations that the health care worker feels or thinks should be avoided. If a patient's statement is recorded, the statement should be written in the patient's own words and enclosed in quotation marks. All information should be signed with the name and title of the person recording the information. Errors should be crossed out neatly with a straight line, have "error" recorded by them, and show the initials of the person making the error. In this way, recorded communication will be effective communication.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) has established strict standards for maintaining confidentiality of health care records. Under this act, patients have total control on how information in their medical records is used. Patients must be able to see and obtain copies of their records. They can set limits on who can obtain this information. They can

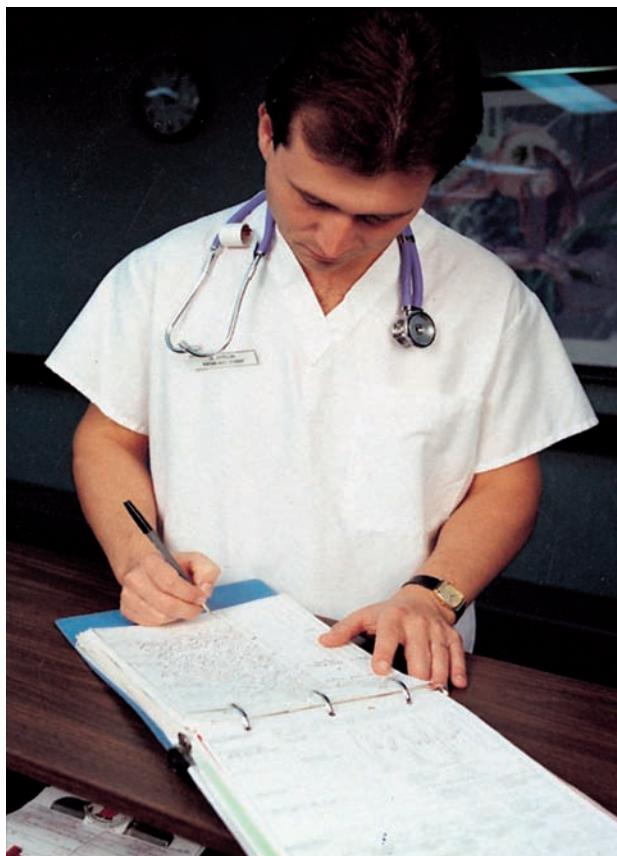


FIGURE 4-9 Information recorded on health care records must be accurate, concise, and complete.

even prevent other family members from seeing the information. If any health care provider allows information to be released from a medical record without the patient's permission, the patient can file a complaint that the privacy act has been violated. This act is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5:1. It is important for every health care provider to be aware of all parts of this act and to make every effort to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health care records.

SUMMARY

Good communication skills allow health care workers to develop good interpersonal relationships. Patients feel accepted, they feel that others have an interest and concern in them, they feel free to express their ideas and fears, they develop confidence in the health care workers, and they feel they are receiving quality health care. In addition, the health care worker will relate more effectively with co-workers and other individuals.

4:4 INFORMATION



Teamwork

In almost any health care career, you will be a part of an interdisciplinary health care team. The team concept was created to provide quality holistic health care to every patient. **Teamwork** consists of many professionals, with different levels of education, ideas, backgrounds, and interests, working together for the benefit of the patient. For example, a surgical team might include the following people:

- ◆ *Admitting clerk:* collects admission information
- ◆ *Insurance representative:* obtains approval for the surgery
- ◆ *Nurses or patient care technicians:* prepare the patient for surgery
- ◆ *Surgeons:* perform the operation
- ◆ *Anesthesiologist:* administer anesthetics, medications that decrease pain and/or consciousness
- ◆ *Operating room nurses:* assist the surgeon
- ◆ *Surgical technicians:* prepare and pass instruments

- ◆ *Housekeepers:* clean and sanitize the area
- ◆ *Sterile supply personnel:* sterilize the instruments
- ◆ *Recovery room personnel:* care for the patient after surgery

After the surgery is complete, a dietitian, social worker, physical therapist, occupational therapist, home health personnel, and other team members might be needed to assist the patient as he/she recuperates. Each team member has an important job to do. When the team members work well together, the patient receives quality care.

Teamwork improves communication and continuity of care. When a team is assigned to a particular patient, the patient knows his/her caregivers and support staff. All the team members can help to identify the needs of the patient, offer opinions on the best type of care, participate as decisions are made on options of care, and suggest additional professionals who might be able to assist with specific needs. This allows a patient to become more educated about health care options and to make informed decisions regarding treatment and care.

For a team to function properly, every person on the team must understand the role of each team member. This knowledge provides a picture of the patient's total care plan. It also helps clarify each person's responsibility and establishes the goals that the team wants to achieve. Most teams have frequent patient care conferences, and in many instances, the patient is an active participant (figure 4-10). Opinions are shared, options are discussed, decisions are made, and goals are established. During the conference, each team member must listen, be honest, express his/her own opinion, and be willing to try different solutions.

A leader is an important part of any team. The leader is responsible for organizing and coordinating the team's activities, encouraging everyone to share ideas and give opinions, motivating all team members to work toward established goals, assisting with problems, monitoring the progress of the team, and providing reports and feedback to all team members on the effectiveness of the team. A good team leader will also allow others to assume the leadership role when circumstances indicate that another person can handle a particular situation more effectively.



FIGURE 4-10 Most health care teams have frequent patient care conferences to establish team goals.

Leadership is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4-5.

Good interpersonal relationships are also essential. Poor interpersonal relationships among team members can harm the quality of care and prevent the team from meeting its goals. In the same way, good interpersonal relationships can improve the quality of care. Members of a team will have different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, sexes, ages, socioeconomic statuses, lifestyle preferences, beliefs, and levels of education. Each team member must understand that these differences affect the way a person thinks and acts. Each person must be sensitive to the hopes, feelings, and needs of other team members. The Golden Rule of "treat others as you would want to be treated" should be the main rule of teamwork. Some ways to develop good interpersonal relationships include:

- ◆ Maintain a positive attitude and learn to laugh at yourself
- ◆ Be friendly and cooperate with others
- ◆ Assist others when you see that they need help
- ◆ Listen carefully when another person is sharing ideas or beliefs

- ◆ Respect the opinions of others even though you may not agree with them
- ◆ Be open-minded and willing to compromise
- ◆ Avoid criticizing other team members
- ◆ Learn good communication skills so you can share ideas, concepts, and knowledge
- ◆ Support and encourage other team members
- ◆ Perform your duties to the best of your ability

Conflict among individuals with different personalities is a problem that can occur when a group of people is working as a team. When conflict occurs, it is essential for each person to deal with the conflict in a positive way. The people involved in the conflict should meet, talk with each other to identify the problem, listen to the other person's point of view, avoid accusations and hostility, try to determine a way to resolve the problem in a cooperative manner, and put the agreed-upon solution into action. If a situation occurs where two people do not feel comfortable talking privately with each other, a mediator may be able to assist with finding a solution to the problem. Some health care facilities have grievance committees to assist with conflicts that may occur. If a team is to meet its goals, conflict must be resolved.

 Legal responsibilities are another important aspect of teamwork. Each member of a team must be aware of the legal limitations on duties that can be performed. All members must function within legal boundaries. No team member should ever attempt to solve a problem or perform a duty that is beyond the range of duties legally permitted.

Effective teams are the result of hard work, patience, commitment, and practice. When each individual participates fully in the team and makes every effort to contribute to the team, the team achieves success.

4:5 INFORMATION

Professional Leadership

Leadership is an important concept in health occupations. **Leadership** is the skill or ability to encourage people to work together and do their best to achieve common goals. A **leader** is frequently defined as an individual who leads or guides others, or who is in charge or in command

of others. A myth exists that leaders are born. In fact, leaders develop by their own efforts. Leaders combine visions of excellence with the ability to inspire others. They promote positive changes that benefit their professions and the people they serve. Anyone can learn to be a leader by making an effort to understand the principles of leadership. In a group, every member who makes a contribution to an idea can be considered a leader. The leadership in the group passes from person to person as each individual contributes to the achievement of the group's goals.

Many different characteristics are assigned to a leader. All the characteristics can be learned. In this way, leadership becomes a skill or function that can be learned, rather than an inherited set of characteristics.

Some common characteristics may include:

- ◆ Respects the rights, dignity, opinions, and abilities of others
- ◆ Understands the principles of democracy
- ◆ Works with a group and guides the group toward a goal
- ◆ Believes that changes and improvements can be accomplished
- ◆ Participates in continuing education and professional development, and understands the concept of lifelong learning
- ◆ Understands own strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Displays self-confidence and willingness to take a stand
- ◆ Communicates effectively and verbalizes ideas clearly
- ◆ Shows self-initiative, a willingness to work, and completes tasks
- ◆ Shows optimism, is open-minded, and can compromise
- ◆ Praises others and gives credit to others
- ◆ Dedicated to meeting high standards

Leaders can often be classified into broad categories. Some of the categories include: religious, political, club or organizational, business, community, expertise in a particular area, and even informal or peer group. Leaders in these categories often develop based on their involvement with the particular category. An individual who joins a club or organization may

become a leader when the group elects the individual to an office or position of leadership within the group.

Leaders are frequently classified as one of three types based on how they perform their leadership skills. The three main types of leader are *democratic*, *laissez-faire*, and *autocratic*.

- ◆ **Democratic leader:** encourages the participation of all individuals in decisions that have to be made or problems that have to be solved. This leader listens to the opinions of others, and then bases decisions on what is best for the group as a whole. By guiding the individuals to a solution, the leader allows the group to take responsibility for the decision.
- ◆ **Laissez-faire leader:** more of an informal type of leader. This leader believes in noninterference in the affairs of others. A laissez-faire leader will strive for only minimal rules or regulations, and allow the individuals in a group to function in an independent manner with little or no direction. This leader almost has a “hands-off” policy, and usually avoids making decisions until forced by circumstances to do so. The term *laissez-faire* comes from a French idiom meaning “to let alone” and can be translated to mean “allow to act”; therefore, it is an appropriate term to use for this type of leader.
- ◆ **Autocratic leader:** often called a “dictator.” This individual maintains total rule, makes all of the decisions, and has difficulty delegating or sharing duties. This type of leader seldom asks for the opinions of others, emphasizes discipline, and expects others to follow directions at all times. Individuals usually follow this type of leader because of a fear of punishment or because of an extreme loyalty.

All types of leadership have advantages and disadvantages. In some rare situations, an autocratic leader may be beneficial. However, the democratic leader is the model frequently presented as most effective for group interactions. By allowing a group to share in deciding what, when, and how something is to be done, members of the group will usually do what has to be done because they want to do it. Respecting the rights and opinions of others becomes the most important guide for the leader.

4:6 INFORMATION



Stress

Stress can be defined as the body's reaction to any stimulus that requires a person to adjust to a changing environment. Change always initiates stress. The stimuli to change, alter behavior, or adapt to a situation are called *stressors*. Stressors can be situations, events, or concepts. Stressors can also be external or internal forces. For example, a heart attack is an internal stressor, and a new job is an external stressor.

No matter what the cause, a stressor will cause the body to go into an alarm or warning mode. This mode is frequently called the “fight or flight” reaction because of the physical changes that occur in the body. When the warning is received from a stressor, the sympathetic nervous system prepares the body for action. Adrenaline, a hormone from the adrenal glands, is released into the bloodstream. It dilates blood vessels to the heart and brain to increase blood circulation to these areas. At the same time, it constricts blood vessels to the skin and other internal organs, resulting in cool skin, decreased movement in the digestive tract, and decreased production of urine. The pupils in the eyes dilate to improve vision. Saliva production decreases and the mouth becomes dry. The heart beats more rapidly, blood pressure rises, and the respiratory rate increases. These actions by the sympathetic nervous system help provide the body with a burst of energy and the stamina needed to respond to the stressor.

After the individual responds to the stressor and adapts or changes as needed, the parasympathetic system slowly causes opposite reactions in the body. This results in fatigue or exhaustion while the body returns to normal and recuperates. If the body is subjected to continual stress with constant “up and down” nervous system reactions, the normal functions of the body will be disrupted. This can result in a serious illness or disease. Many diseases have stress-related origins. Examples include migraine headaches, anxiety reactions, depression, allergies, asthma, digestive disorders, hypertension (high blood pressure), insomnia (inability to sleep), and heart disease.

Everyone experiences a certain degree of stress on a daily basis. The amount of stress felt

usually depends on the individual's reaction to and perception of the situation causing stress. For example, a blood test can be a routine event for some individuals, such as a diabetic who performs three or four blood tests on a daily basis. Another individual who is terrified of needles might feel extreme stress when a blood test is necessary. Many different things can cause stress. Examples include relationships with family, friends, and co-workers; job or school demands; foods such as caffeine, excessive sweets, and salt; illness; lifestyle; financial problems; family events such as birth, death, marriage, or divorce; over-work; boredom and negative feelings; time limitations (too much to do and not enough time to do it); and failure to achieve goals.

Not all stress is harmful. In fact, a small amount of stress is essential to an individual's well-being because it makes a person more alert and raises the energy level. The individual is able to make quick judgments and decisions, becomes more organized, and is motivated to accomplish tasks and achieve goals. The way in which an individual responds to stressors determines whether the situation is helpful or harmful. If stress causes positive feelings such as excitement, anticipation, self-confidence, and a sense of achievement, it is helpful. If stress causes negative feelings such as boredom, frustration, irritability, anger, depression, distrust of others, self-criticism, emotional and physical exhaustion, and emotional outbursts, it is harmful. Negative stress can also lead to substance abuse. An individual may smoke more, drink large amounts of alcohol, take drugs, or eat excessively to find comfort and escape from the negative feelings. Prolonged periods of harmful stress can lead to burnout or a mental breakdown. For this reason, an individual must become aware of the stressors in his/her life and learn methods to control them.

The first step in learning how to control stress is to identify stressors. Recognizing the symptoms of "fight or flight" can lead to an awareness of the factors that cause these symptoms. By keeping a list or diary of stressors, an individual can begin to evaluate ways to deal with the stressors and/or ways to eliminate them. When stressful events occur, note what the event was, why you feel stress, how much stress you experience, and how you deal with the stress. Do you tackle the cause of the stress or the symptom? This type of information allows you to understand the level

of stress you are comfortable with, the type of stress that motivates you effectively, and the type of stress that is unpleasant. If a chronic daily stressor is heavy traffic on the road to work, it may be time to evaluate the possibility of finding a new way to work, leaving earlier or later to avoid traffic, or finding a way to relax while stuck in traffic. Stressors are problems that must be solved or eliminated. One way to do this is to use the *problem-solving method*. It consists of the following steps:

- ◆ *Gather information or data.* Assess the situation to obtain all facts and opinions.
- ◆ *Identify the problem.* Try to identify the real stressor and why it is causing a reaction.
- ◆ *List possible solutions.* Look at all ways to eliminate or adapt to the stressor; include both good and bad ideas; then, evaluate each of the ideas and try to determine how effective it will be.
- ◆ *Make a plan.* After evaluating the solutions, choose one that you think will have the best outcome.
- ◆ *Act on your solution.* Use the solution to your problem to see if it has the expected outcome. Does it allow you to eliminate or adapt to the stressor?
- ◆ *Evaluate the results.* Determine whether the action was effective. Did it work or is another solution better?
- ◆ *Change the solution.* If necessary, use a different solution that might be more effective.

Learning to manage a stress reaction is another important way of dealing with stressors. When you become aware that a stressor is causing a physical reaction in your body, use the following four-step plan to gain control:

- ◆ *Stop:* immediately stop what you are doing to break out of the stress response
- ◆ *Breathe:* take a slow deep breath to relieve the physical tension you are feeling
- ◆ *Reflect:* think about the problem at hand and the cause of the stress
- ◆ *Choose:* determine how you want to deal with the stress

The brief pause that the four-step method requires allows an individual to become more aware of the stressor, the physical reaction to the

stressor, and the actual cause of the stress. This awareness can then be used to determine whether a problem exists. If a problem does exist, a solution to the problem must be found.

Many other stress-reducing techniques can be used to manage stress. Some of the more common techniques include:

- ◆ *Live a healthy life:* eat balanced meals, get sufficient amounts of rest and sleep, and exercise on a regular basis
- ◆ *Take a break from stressors:* sit in a comfortable chair with your feet up
- ◆ *Relax:* take a warm bath
- ◆ *Escape:* listen to quiet, soothing music
- ◆ *Relieve tension:* shut your eyes, take slow deep breaths, and concentrate on relaxing each muscle that is tense
- ◆ *Rely on others:* talk with a friend and reach out to your support system (figure 4-11)
- ◆ *Meditate:* think about your values or beliefs in a higher power
- ◆ *Use imagery:* close your eyes and use all your senses to place yourself in a scene where you are at peace and relaxed
- ◆ *Enjoy yourself:* find an enjoyable leisure activity or hobby to provide “time outs”
- ◆ *Renew yourself:* learn new skills, take part in a professional organization, participate in community activities, and make every effort to continue growing as an individual



FIGURE 4-11 Relaxing and talking with a friend is one way to reduce stress.

- ◆ *Think positively:* reflect on your accomplishments and be proud of yourself
- ◆ *Develop outside interests:* provide time for yourself; do not allow a job to dominate your life
- ◆ *Seek assistance or delegate tasks:* ask others for help or delegate some tasks to others; remember that no one can do everything all of the time
- ◆ *Avoid too many commitments:* learn to say “no”

It is important to remember that stress is a constant presence in every individual's life and cannot be avoided. However, by being aware of the causes of stress, by learning how to respond when a stress reaction occurs, by solving problems effectively to eliminate stress, and by practicing techniques to reduce the effect of stress, an individual can deal with the daily stressors in his/her life and even benefit from them. It is also important for every health care worker to remember that patients also experience stress, especially when they are dealing with an illness and/or disability. The same techniques can be used by the health care worker to help patients learn to deal with stress.

4:7 INFORMATION

Time Management

One way to help prevent stress is to use time management. **Time management** is a system of practical skills that allows an individual to use time in the most effective and productive way possible. Time management helps prevent or reduce stress by putting the individual in charge, keeping things in perspective when events are overwhelming, increasing productivity, using time more effectively, improving enjoyment of activities, and providing time for relaxing and enjoying life.

The first step of time management is to keep an activity record for a period of several days. This allows an individual to determine how he/she actually uses the time available. By listing activities as they are performed, noting the amount of time each activity takes, and evaluating how effective the activity was, an individual can see patterns emerging. Certain periods of the day will show higher energy levels and an improved qual-

ity of work. Other periods may indicate that accomplishments are limited because of fatigue. Wasted time will also become apparent. Time spent looking for objects, talking on the telephone, playing games on a computer, and doing things that are not worthwhile is time that can be put to more constructive use. After this information has been obtained, an individual can begin to organize time. Important projects can be scheduled during the periods of the day when energy levels are high. Rest or relaxation periods can be scheduled when energy levels are low.

SETTING GOALS

Goal setting is another important factor of time management. A **goal** can be defined as a desired result or purpose toward which one is working. Goals can be compared with maps that help you find your direction and reach your destination. An old saying states, "If you don't know where you are going, you will never get there." Goals allow you to know where you are going and provide direction to your life.

Everyone should have both short- and long-term goals. Long-term goals are achievements that may take a period of years or even a lifetime to accomplish. Short-term goals usually take days, weeks, or months to accomplish. They are the smaller steps that are taken to reach the long-term goal. For example, a long-term goal might be to graduate from college with a health care degree.

If the person with this goal is starting high school, short-term goals might include:

- ◆ Research and learn about the wide variety of health careers.
- ◆ Job-shadow health careers that seem most interesting.
- ◆ Talk with people in different health care careers to find out about the careers.
- ◆ Complete job interest surveys to determine how your own skills and interests match requirements for different health careers.
- ◆ Discuss career opportunities with a guidance or career counselor.
- ◆ Attend job fairs or career planning days to obtain information on specific health careers.
- ◆ Use a computer to research health careers on the Internet.

- ◆ Narrow your career choices to the health care fields that you like best.
- ◆ Investigate which high-school courses you should take to meet college entry requirements for these health careers.
- ◆ Take the required courses in English, math, science, computer technology, and other specific academic areas.
- ◆ Explore the career and technology programs offered by your high school.
- ◆ Enroll in a health science technology education (HSTE) program if one is available.
- ◆ Join a student organization for HSTE students to network with other people who have similar interests.
- ◆ Obtain a job or work as a volunteer in health care areas to determine which career you like best.
- ◆ Research and visit different colleges or technical schools to learn about course offerings, financial aid, entry requirements, and other similar information.

When this person is in the junior or senior year of high school, short-term goals might include:

- ◆ Complete all required high-school courses and maintain a high grade point average.
- ◆ Confer with guidance or career counselors to obtain information on scholarships, financial help, career planning, college life, and other similar topics.
- ◆ Apply to several colleges or technical schools that have accredited programs in the chosen health field.
- ◆ Arrange for financial assistance and/or obtain a part-time job to save money for college.
- ◆ Check living arrangements at the college areas if living away from home will be necessary.
- ◆ After being accepted by colleges or technical schools, evaluate each individually to choose the school you will attend.
- ◆ Notify the school you have selected before the established deadline for enrollment.

These short-term goals are basic suggestions. Each individual has to establish his/her own goals. It is important to remember that short-term goals will change constantly as one set is

completed and a new set is established. Completion of a goal, however, will lead to a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, and provide motivation to attempt other goals. To set goals effectively, you must observe certain points. These points include:

- ◆ *State goals in a positive manner.* Use words such as "accomplish" rather than "avoid."
- ◆ *Define goals clearly and precisely.* If possible, set a time limit to accomplish the goal.
- ◆ *Prioritize multiple goals.* Determine which goals are the most important and complete them first.
- ◆ *Write goals down.* This makes the goal seem real and attainable.
- ◆ *Make sure each goal is at the right level.* Goals should present a challenge, but not be too difficult or impossible to complete.

After goals have been established, concentrate on ways to accomplish them. Review necessary skills, information that must be obtained, resources you can use, problems that may occur, and which goal should be completed first. Basically, this is just organizing the steps that will lead to achieving the goal. After the goal has been achieved, enjoy your sense of accomplishment and satisfaction for a job well done. If you fail in obtaining the goal, evaluate the situation and determine why you failed. Was the goal unrealistic? Did you lack the skills or knowledge to obtain the goal? Is there another way to achieve the goal? Remember that failure can be a positive learning experience.

TIME MANAGEMENT PLAN

Time management is used to ensure success in meeting established goals. A daily planner and calendar are essential tools. These tools allow an individual to write everything down, organize all information, become aware of conflicts (two things to do at the same time), and provide an organized schedule to follow. An effective time management plan involves the following seven steps:

- ◆ *Analyze and prioritize:* review and list established goals; determine what tasks must be completed to achieve goals; list tasks in order,

from the most important to the least important; decide if any tasks can be delegated to another person to complete and delegate whenever possible; eliminate unnecessary tasks

- ◆ *Identify habits and preferences:* know when you have the most energy to complete work and when it is best to schedule rest, exercise, or social activities
- ◆ *Schedule tasks:* use the daily planner and calendar to write down all events; be sure to include time for rest, exercise, meals, hobbies, and social activities; if a conflict arises with two things scheduled at the same time, prioritize and reschedule
- ◆ *Make a daily "to do" list:* list all tasks on a daily basis; as you complete each one, cross it off the list; enjoy the sense of satisfaction that occurs as you complete each job; if some things on the list are not completed at the end of the day, determine if they should be added to the next day's list or if they can be eliminated
- ◆ *Plan your work:* work at a comfortable pace; try to do the hardest tasks first; do one thing at a time whenever possible so you can complete it and cross it off the list; make sure you have everything you need to complete the task before you begin; ask for assistance when needed; work smarter, not harder
- ◆ *Avoid distractions:* make every effort to avoid interruptions; use a telephone answering system and screen calls; avoid procrastination; learn to say "no" when asked to interrupt your work for something that is not essential
- ◆ *Take credit for a job well done:* when a job is complete, recognize your achievement; cross the completed work off the list; if the task was a particularly hard one, reward yourself with a short break or other positive thing before going on to the next job on the list

These steps of time management provide for an organized and efficient use of time. However, even with careful planning, things do not always get done according to plan. Unexpected emergencies, a new assignment, a complication, and/or overscheduling are common events in the life of a health care worker. When a time management plan does not work, try to determine the reasons for failure. Reevaluate goals and revise

the plan. Patience, practice, and an honest effort will eventually produce a plan that provides self-satisfaction for achieving goals, less stress, qual-

ity time for rest and relaxation, a sense of being in control, a healthier lifestyle, and increased productivity.

TODAY'S RESEARCH: TOMORROW'S HEALTH CARE

Melting fat to lose weight?

According to statistics from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, nearly two-thirds of adults in the United States are overweight. In addition, more than one-third of these individuals are extremely overweight, or obese (20 percent or more above the recommended weight). Research has shown that obesity is a risk factor for the development of diabetes, heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), stroke, and even some forms of cancer.

Scientists are now researching a unique approach to treat obesity. They are trying to starve adipose (fatty) tissue by destroying the blood vessels that feed it. Fat cells grow and multiply quickly by creating tiny blood vessels called *capillaries*, which provide nourishment. Estimates are that 1 pound of fat contains a mile of blood vessels. A protein, prohibitin, located on the surface of fat-feeding blood vessels, seems to regulate cell growth. Scientists have developed a compound that attaches to prohibitin and selectively destroys the blood vessels. When the compound was injected into obese mice, the mice lost about 30 percent of their body weight within 4 weeks. Further research is now being conducted to determine the effect of this compound on baboons.

One obstacle to using this compound in humans is that prohibitin is found in cells throughout the body. Care will have to be taken to make sure that other tissues and blood vessels are not destroyed. If researchers are able to create a substance that destroys only the blood vessels to adipose tissue, they will be able to "melt" fat by literally starving it to death. If this occurs, obesity and many of the diseases caused by obesity will be eliminated.

STUDENT: Go to the workbook and complete the assignment sheet for Chapter 4, Personal and Professional Qualities of a Health Care Worker.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

Certain personal characteristics, attitudes, and rules of appearance apply to health care workers in all health careers. Every health care worker must constantly strive to develop the necessary characteristics and to present a professional appearance.

A professional appearance helps inspire confidence and a positive self-image. Good health is an important part of appearance. By eating correctly, obtaining adequate rest, exercising daily, observing the rules of good posture, and

avoiding the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, a health care worker can strive to maintain good health. Wearing the appropriate uniform or appropriate clothing and shoes is essential to projecting the proper image. Proper hair and nail care, good personal hygiene, and limited makeup also help create a professional appearance.

Personal characteristics such as honesty, dependability, patience, enthusiasm, responsibility, discretion, and competence are essential. In addition, health care workers must be willing to learn and to accept criticism. These characteristics must be practiced and learned.

Effective communication is an important aspect of helping individuals through stages of growth and development and in meeting needs. A health care worker must have an understanding of the communication process, factors that

interfere with communication, the importance of listening, and verbal and nonverbal communication. Another important aspect of communication is the proper reporting or recording of all observations noted while providing care.

Communication barriers such as physical disabilities, psychological attitudes, and cultural diversity can interfere with the communication process. Special consideration must be given to these barriers to improve communication. Some cultural groups have beliefs and practices that may relate to health and illness. Because individuals will respond to health care according to their cultural beliefs, a health care worker must be aware of and show respect for different cultural values in order to provide optimal patient care.

Teamwork is important in any health care career. Interdisciplinary health care teams provide quality holistic health care to every patient. Teamwork improves communication and continuity of care. A picture of the patient's total care plan is clear when the role of each team member is known. For a team to function effectively, it needs a qualified leader, good interpersonal relationships, ways to avoid or deal with conflict, positive attitudes, and respect for legal responsibilities. Effective teams are the result of hard work, patience, commitment, and practice.

Leadership is a skill that can be learned by mastering the characteristics of a leader. A leader may or may not be a supervisor; any member of a group that contributes to the group's goals can be considered a leader. Of the three types of leaders—democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic—the democratic leader is the most effective for group interaction.

Stress is a component in every individual's life. Stress can be good or bad, depending on the person's perception of and reaction to the stress. By being aware of the causes of stress, learning how to respond when a stress reaction occurs, solving problems to eliminate stress, and practicing techniques to reduce the effect of stress, an individual can deal with stress and even benefit from it.

Time management is a system of practical skills that allow an individual to use time in the most effective and productive way possible. It involves analyzing how one actually uses the time available, establishing short- and long-term goals, prioritizing tasks that must be accomplished, identifying habits and preferences,

preparing written "to do" lists and crossing off work that has been completed, planning work carefully, avoiding distractions, and taking credit for a job well done. An effective time management plan will reduce stress, help an individual attain goals, increase self-confidence, lead to a healthier lifestyle, and provide quality time for rest and relaxation.

Health care workers must learn and follow the standards and requirements established by the health care facility in which they are employed.

INTERNET SEARCHES

Use the suggested search engine in Chapter 12:4 of this textbook to search the Internet for additional information on the following topics:

1. *Uniform companies*: search "uniform suppliers" to locate companies that sell professional uniforms and compare styles, prices, and so forth.
2. *Professional characteristics*: choose a specific health care career and search for career descriptions; list the required personal qualities or characteristics necessary for the career you have chosen.
3. *Communication*: search for information on listening skills, nonverbal communication, and the communication process.
4. *Leadership*: search for information on types and characteristics of leaders; evaluate which types would be most effective in guiding a health care team.
5. *Stress*: search for information on stress and stress-reducing techniques.
6. *Time management*: search for information on time management.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What five (5) main factors contribute to good health?
2. Identify eight (8) specific principles that must be followed for a professional appearance.
3. Create a personal description of yourself showing why you display at least six (6) of the

personal characteristics desired in a health care worker.

4. Why is it important to observe both verbal and nonverbal communication? Create a specific example of a situation showing how both verbal and nonverbal communication convey a message.
5. List five (5) factors that can interfere with the communication process. Give two (2) specific examples for each factor.
6. Differentiate between objective and subjective observations. List two (2) examples for each type of observation.
7. A patient is admitted to a hospital to give birth to her baby. Identify at least ten (10) health care professionals who may be on the team that provide her care. Review the many careers in Chapter 3 to prepare your list.

8. List six (6) characteristics of an effective leader.

9. Identify the three (3) types of leaders and describe their style of leadership.

10. Identify at least one major stress in your life. List the steps of the problem-solving method and then apply the stressor you have chosen to each of the steps. Identify at least three (3) courses of action that you can take.

11. List six (6) stress-reducing techniques that you find beneficial. State why they help you reduce stress.

12. Differentiate between short- and long-term goals. How are they related? How are they different?

13. What are the main goals of time management?