

## FAMILY SUPPORT

The makeup of every family is different. There are biological families, and there are those we consider family through emotional connection and support.

**What if families were considered partners in the care process who can collaborate with nurses to best meet patient needs and healthcare outcomes?**

It makes difference when we involve family in the care of their loved ones. When many acutely ill patients find that their family members are well informed, the patient's care plan is executed more smoothly and they are more comfortable. Oftentimes, the family member became an ally in delivering care and supported patient improvements through encouragement in areas such as nutrition, emotional support, pain management and transition to discharge.

***By providing information and support, nurses can minimize the family's anxiety about delivering care and achieve positive responses in the patient.*** Family-centered care recognizes the importance of caring for and integrating a patient's family as part of the care process, as their involvement and opinions often guides the patient. It's composed of four core concepts:

1. Respect and dignity: Actively listening to the patient and family members and using knowledge about values, beliefs and cultural background to improve the delivery of care and corresponding plans.
2. Information sharing: Timely communication of complete and unbiased information to patients and families that allows them to play an active role in care and decision-making.
3. Participation: Encouragement and support for patients and families in the care and decision-making process at a level they're comfortable with.
4. Collaboration: On an institution-wide level, patients and families are invited to work alongside healthcare leaders to partake in everything from the development and implementation of programs to the delivery of care.

### **When communicating to the family, it is helpful to:**

- Establish a point of contact in the family to relay information to the rest of the family and friends.
- Create website to share information regarding the patient with family and friends.
- Review information regarding the hospital procedures, visiting hours, important contacts and their phone numbers.
- Be aware of what you are saying, but also how you are saying it.
- Speak in a gentle tone of voice, using their names and the name of the patient.
- Try to form a connection in order to build a sense of trust.
- Reflect on the type of family you are talking to.
- Provide realistic expectations.
- If you can't answer their question, just taking the time to listen helps a lot.

### **References:**

- Boyle, Brian (2015) "The critical role of family in patient experience," Patient Experience Journal: Vol. 2 : Iss. 2 , Article 2. DOI: 10.35680/2372-0247.1112. Available at: <https://pxjournal.org/journal/vol2/iss2/2>
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