



RELATIONSHIP-CENTRED CARE

It's all about the relationship

Getting the client's cooperation is essential to providing safe care. From the very first contact, the caregiver's words and actions set the tone for a pleasant relationship.

WHATEVER THE PHYSICAL AND COGNITIVE STATE OF THE CLIENT, THE CAREGIVER ESTABLISHES AND MAINTAINS THE RELATIONSHIP DURING ALL CAREGIVING ACTIVITIES.

The caregiver's presence

- **The frequency and quality of interactions** with the client determine the caregiver's "presence."
- **Presence is the sum of all the ways (verbal and non-verbal)** the caregiver communicates with the client. Presence helps ground the client:
 - > By stimulating the client's senses
 - > By making the client the focus of the caregiver's attention
- **Presence helps keep the client autonomous** and prevents withdrawal.



Relationship-Centred Care

Whatever kind of care is being provided, it only begins after the caregiver has established contact and a relationship with the client. This is called the relationship-centred care approach.

The approach starts before care is actually provided. Depending upon the caregiver's knowledge of the client and the client's state of health, different approaches may be used. A typical description follows:



Establish the relationship by looking at, speaking to and touching the client

Face the client, say hello, make eye contact and introduce yourself.

Offer your hand or place your hand on a non-sensitive part of the client's body (forearm, leg).

A handshake or touch may become a thumb hold.



The caregiver establishes the relationship with the client.



When the head of the bed is raised, the caregiver and client are at the same level, which encourages a more equal relationship.

**Instead of hoping
for good days, we make
them happen!**

The goal of the relationship-centred care approach is to create a situation where the client and the caregiver have a pleasant exchange because a good relationship has been established.

Obtaining Consent

Prolonging the contact helps to establish trust, which is conveyed to the caregiver by the client's verbal consent or body language. In some cases it may be hard to clearly identify the consent, the connection or intuitive feeling that signals agreement between client and caregiver. That intuitive feeling comes from the ability to recognize subtle feedback from the client.

In any case, don't immediately interpret the client's lack of reaction as consent. If you don't get clear consent, start providing care with caution and remain alert to any signs of assent.

If the client refuses care, stop and don't go any further. Otherwise you're not respecting the client and you're putting your own safety at risk. Once you stop, think about the situation and ask yourself some questions.

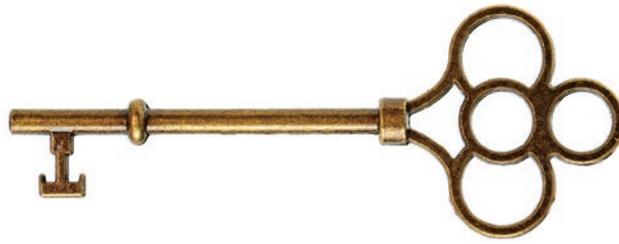
- **Is this care absolutely necessary?**
- **Is this the right time? If not, can the care be put off until later?**
- **Can the way the care is provided be modified?**
- **Is the care putting your safety at risk?**
- **After reflection and analysis, which strategy do you want to adopt?**



The thumb hold reassures the client.

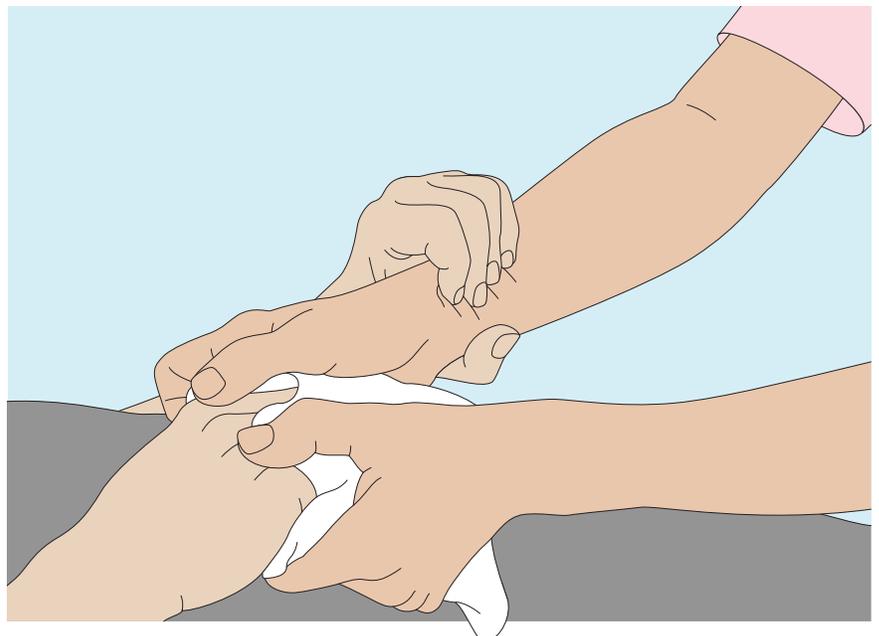
Begin and continue the task while maintaining the relationship

Maintain visual and verbal contact with the client and let them know why you're there. "I'm here to help you. I'm going to take care of you. We'll have a nice time." The words and tone of voice reassure and soothe the client, and help them trust you.



Safety Tips

- **When a client reacts badly** (crying, spitting, scratching, hitting), it's best to step back, wait, and then try the approach again.
- **The thumb hold reassures the client.** It can also be useful in that it occupies the client's dominant hand (or both hands) and thus reduces your risk of being scratched, clawed or hit.
- **If a client grabs you on the wrist, it's an aggressive act, but ask yourself what the underlying intent is.** It may not be actually be aggression. You need to decode this feedback – Is the client afraid? Is the client trying to feel safer? Ask the client to release your wrist. If the client doesn't comply, slowly pull your wrist away on the client's thumb side.



An invasive action that's not always aggressive!

REFERENCES

1. ASSTSAS. (2017). *Understanding Feedback and Adaptability*.
For more information, go to asstsas.qc.ca/ars

CAUTION

Use of this guide is not a substitute for comprehensive training in the Relationship-Centred Care Approach, and does not guarantee safety improvements in all situations. Adjustments are always necessary based on the variations in each specific work situation.



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Ensemble en prévention