



# What are the Professional Skills for Spiritual Nursing?



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## Mini Review

The main axis of nursing is human science and how to strengthen the human characteristics of their profession from the inside to outside of life change? For the part of life, growth, spirituality is an important element factor and how to teach nurses or nursing students to assess the spiritual situation of their own and the patients should start with training of their listening, empathy, and accompany skills. What are the basic professional skills for spiritual nursing? According to the author's teaching experiences for almost 20 years, listening, empathy, and accompany are three basic professional skills for nurses or nursing students to accomplish spiritual nursing.

### What is the Listening?

Nichols [1] proposed the importance of listening including not being heard as hurt, being heard as valued, and providing the testimony, and the secret of successful listening is honest [2]. Six principles of listening include understanding the meaning of words, avoiding pre-judgment, bias, anxiety, defensive, and working for purpose [3]. Shipley [4] conducted the conceptual analysis of listening by reviewing the literature of listening in the fields of business, education, medicine, nursing, and identified the defining characteristics of being non-judgment and accepting the patient as the unique, attention on their verbal and nonverbal communication, silence, and empathy. Additionally, reflection, summaries and feedback are necessary for assurance of the patients' messages being heard and realized. Shipley [4] also provided the model, contrary, and borderline cases of demonstrating the listening nurses with the clinical scenario. Furthermore [5] introduced three levels of listening, including the patients have talked and they have known; the patients have not talked, but they have known; the patients have not talked and they also have not known yet. The author considers the first level of listening as the basic professional skill for the general nurses, the second level of listening as the basic professional skill for the spiritual nurses, and the third level of listening as the advanced professional skill for the spiritual nurses. Consequently, the general and spiritual nurses, as well as

the basic and advanced spiritual nurses could be distinguished by their levels of listening.

### What is the Empathy?

Empathy is defined as going into the other's subjective inner world to feel and experience his inner feeling, but replace his subjective world, and could keep own subjective opinions, which has the essence of similarity [6]. Empathy is different from sympathy because the previous is standing on and being with the side of the patients, but the later one just feels sad and sorry for the patients without looking at their problems from the bottom of heart. If the nurses would like to have empathy with the patients, please check the background and information of the patients first and then sit down quietly to think about if they were in the situation of the patients, what feelings would they have had before going to talk to the patients. Nurses would have the empathy if they could understand the patients more and more before talking with them. Lee [6] developed the seven steps of empathy as the following process:

#### a. First stage

The nurse would ask for the patient "are you ready to talk?"

When the patient is willing to talk and start to talk...

#### b. Second stage

The patient talks his/her experience...

#### c. Third stage

The nurse shows acceptance and understanding by nodding and paying attention on the patients.

#### d. Fourth stage

The nurse reflects the meaning and feelings of the patient by summary of his/her talks and giving feedbacks.

#### e. Fifth stage

The patient expressed the acceptance of the summary and feedback from the nurse and feel the nurse understand correctly what he/she is talking about.

### f. Sixth stage

Since the patient feels the nurse could understand him/her and he/she would like to talk more about his/her own stories.

### g. Seventh stage

The nurse could go back at the third stage of empathy to further inspire the patient to talk more and deeper, approaching at the cycle of empathy eventually.

### What is Accompanying?

The author would like to ask who accompany with who? The nurse accompanies with the patients or vice versa because the majority of people in the hospital are the patients and their family members, but the nurses. Hsieh & Wang [7] explored the concept of accompany with nurse-patient relationship and identified two major themes as intersubjectivity and being with. The previous concept means that the nurse and the patients both are main roles and the later one means coexistence; therefore, accompany is not just presence without interaction. Shieh [8] raised three main questions about accompany as during accompanying, should you play as the helper? Could you be silent? Do you feel helpless? He suggested not using the brain thinking during deeply accompanying.

In conclusion, how could we train three basic professional skills of listening, empathy, and accompany for the nurses or nursing students to have the abilities of spiritual nursing? You may ask them write two reflecting journals as the following assignments:

A. Accompany with one family member or friend for two hours, and trying not to talk any word, and after accompanying, please write down your feelings of accompanying

B. Applying the seven steps of empathy when talking with one family member or friend, and practice the levels of your listening by analyzing the content of one family member or friend have talked

Ideally, three basic professional skills of listening, empathy, and accompany for spiritual nursing are interrelated with each other, and when the nurse accompanies with the patient, at the same time he/she will listen what the patient's talks by using empathy skill. The author expects this article could inspire nursing educators to value and involve into teaching listening, empathy, and accompany for the clinical nurses and nursing students so that we all could become the good listeners with the empathy when we are accompanying our patients.

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