



*Engaging with*

# **The Principles of Nursing Practice**

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Guided reflection  
for nursing students



Royal College  
of Nursing

**NURSINGSTANDARD**

## The Principles of Nursing Practice:

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- are a set of statements describing what constitutes safe and effective nursing care
- apply to all nursing staff, in any setting – for example: ward managers in hospitals, team leaders in community, specialist nurses, community nurses, health visitors, health care assistants and student nurses
- cover aspects of behaviour, attitude and approach which underpin professional practice
- encompass current literature on nursing and were developed through working jointly with patients, the public, health care colleagues and nurses
- were published in 2010 and are endorsed by the NMC, the CQC and patient groups.

This short workbook will help you understand the Principles of Nursing Practice (PNP) and support you in ensuring that they are integrated into your practice as it develops.

## Get started now

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- Principle A** Nurses and nursing staff treat everyone in their care with dignity and humanity – they understand their individual needs, show compassion and sensitivity, and provide care in a way that respects all people equally.
- Principle B** Nurses and nursing staff take responsibility for the care they provide and answer for their own judgments and actions – they carry out these actions in a way that is agreed with their patients, and the families and carers of their patients, and in a way that meets the requirements of their professional bodies and the law.
- Principle C** Nurses and nursing staff manage risk, are vigilant about risk, and help to keep everyone safe in the places they receive health care.
- Principle D** Nurses and nursing staff provide and promote care that puts people at the centre, involves patients, service users, their families and their carers in decisions and helps them make informed choices about their treatment and care.
- Principle E** Nurses and nursing staff are at the heart of the communication process: they assess, record and report on treatment and care, handle information sensitively and confidentially, deal with complaints effectively, and are conscientious in reporting the things they are concerned about.
- Principle F** Nurses and nursing staff have up-to-date knowledge and skills, and use these with intelligence, insight and understanding in line with the needs of each individual in their care.
- Principle G** Nurses and nursing staff work closely with their own team and with other professionals, making sure patients' care and treatment is co-ordinated, is of a high standard and has the best possible outcome.
- Principle H** Nurses and nursing staff lead by example, develop themselves and other staff, and influence the way care is given in a manner that is open and responds to individual needs.

You can find more information at [www.rcn.org.uk/nursingprinciples](http://www.rcn.org.uk/nursingprinciples)

Make sure you understand the eight principles. Think about how they relate to your practice as a student nurse.

## When you go on placement

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- 1**     **a.** Find out if the Trust has a set of values/principles (these might be just for nursing or might relate to the whole of the staff body)

**b.** How does the local value set relate to the PNP? What connection can you make? (There is no right or wrong answer to this, it is likely they will readily link.)

**c.** What are the key themes that strike you from looking at the values and the PNP?

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- 2**     Find out how quality and safety are monitored in the area you are working in and in particular how performance is fed back to staff.

.....
- 3**     What are the results of the most recent patient survey relating to the area you are working in?

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- 4**     Looking around you whilst on placement, do you see activity and care clearly demonstrating the local values and the principles in action? (See ‘reflective questions’ below to help you think this through.)

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- 5**     How can the staff in your area (including you) start a conversation about making sure that the values and Principles do underpin the way people work?

.....
- 6**     What sort of things seem to affect whether the Principles are being ‘lived’ or not? How can someone bring this to the attention of managers for discussion (eg too few staff making it difficult to complete all the care needed).

.....
- 7**     When you go back to your studies, keep the principles in mind when you are learning new skills and techniques.

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- 8**     On each new placement run through these questions again.

## Reflective questions for students about episodes of care

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(Approach based on Johns model of guided reflection see Johns C (2000) 'Guided reflection' in Palmer A.M, Burns S, and Bulman C ( editors) Reflective practice in nursing: the growth of the professional practitioner (2nd edition) Oxford: Blackwell.)

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Think back over the work you've been involved in today and make notes on the following:

**What episodes of care seem to stand out positively ?**

Select one and consider the following:

**What was the context, who was involved, what was happening ?**

**What aspects of the interactions between the people involved make this a positive example of care in your view ?**

**Were there elements of the Principles of Nursing Practice that you can identify in this event ?**

**How did witnessing this episode of care make you feel ?**

**Did you give anyone feedback about this positive experience ?**

**What aspects of the nursing behaviour and practice you've identified can you take away and learn from ?**

Were there episodes of care that caused concern or could be improved on ?

If so, select one and consider the following:

What was the situation that caused you concern or could be improved on ?

How did you feel at the time? How were those involved feeling ?

Did you raise your concern with anyone ?

What was their reaction ?

If you did not feel able to raise your concern, why was this ?

What have you learned as a result of this reflection ?

**Remember:** If you see poor care, feel you are being prevented from providing safe, compassionate care, or if someone reports a concern to you, start discussing it with your colleagues now. Your employer's whistleblowing policy should detail with whom you can raise a concern. Find out more at [www.rcn.org.uk/raisingconcerns](http://www.rcn.org.uk/raisingconcerns) or by calling the RCN on 0345 772 6100 at any time for support and advice.

For more information see:

NMC raising and escalating concerns [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)

Care Quality Commission guidance on raising concerns (England) [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

National PIN Policy on Whistleblowing (Scotland) [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority whistleblowing guidance (Northern Ireland) [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk)

Health Care Inspectorate Wales Concerns and Complaints about Health Services in Wales (Wales) [www.hiw.org.uk](http://www.hiw.org.uk)

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### **Nursing students and the RCN:**

The Royal College of Nursing supports your studies, represents your rights and offers advice. We are the biggest professional union for nurses and nursing in the UK. Find information about bursaries, campaigns, local student activism, free resources to help you study, e-magazines and more on the RCN Student community pages at: [www.rcn.org.uk/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students)

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