

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Nursing Education and Practice

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Introduction

Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in both nursing education and practice, profoundly impacting the quality of care nurses provide to their patients, as well as the effectiveness of their interactions with colleagues and other healthcare professionals. In the high-pressure, often emotionally charged environment of healthcare, emotional intelligence is essential for nurses to manage their own emotions, understand and respond to the emotions of others and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics with compassion and professionalism. Defined as the ability to recognize, understand, manage and influence emotions in one and others, emotional intelligence is increasingly recognized as a key factor in enhancing communication, decision-making and patient outcomes in nursing practice. In nursing education, emotional intelligence is vital for preparing students to face the challenges of clinical practice. Cultivating emotional intelligence in nursing students can help them develop better self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills, all of which contribute to their professional development and ability to build therapeutic relationships with patients. In nursing practice, emotional intelligence influences the quality of patient care and the effectiveness of teamwork within healthcare environments. Given the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering compassionate, patient-centered care, it is essential to recognize and cultivate this skill within both nursing education and practice, ensuring that nurses are not only skilled clinicians but also emotionally attuned caregivers [1].

Description

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as a crucial component in nursing education and practice, influencing how nurses engage with their patients, colleagues and the healthcare environment at large. The concept of emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize, understand, manage and influence emotions in one and others. In the context of nursing, EI is not merely about emotional awareness; it extends to the ability to navigate complex emotional dynamics, whether in managing the stress of a busy healthcare setting, dealing with patients in distress, or fostering positive and collaborative working relationships with colleagues. Nurses are often at the front lines of healthcare, working with patients who may be dealing with chronic illnesses, acute health crises, or life-altering diagnoses. Emotional intelligence also plays a significant role in patient safety and quality of care. Nurses who can manage their emotions are less likely to become overwhelmed in stressful situations, which allow them to make clearer, more rational decisions that can directly affect patient well-being. In nursing education, emotional intelligence is a fundamental skill that should be cultivated alongside clinical knowledge and technical expertise. The development of emotional intelligence in nursing students helps prepare them for the emotional demands of the profession and equips them with the tools to handle stressful or high-pressure situations [2].

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Incorporating emotional intelligence into nursing education begins with fostering self-awareness in students. Self-awareness is the ability to recognize one's own emotions and understand how they affect thoughts and behavior. In nursing, self-awareness helps students to identify their emotional triggers and develop strategies to manage their reactions. For example, a student who recognizes that they become anxious when performing certain clinical tasks can take steps to calm themselves before carrying out those procedures, thus reducing the likelihood of making errors. The development of self-awareness is critical not only for personal growth but also for the ability to establish trusting relationships with patients, who often rely on nurses to provide reassurance and comfort during times of vulnerability. Self-regulation, another key component of emotional intelligence, is equally important in nursing education. Nurses with high levels of self-regulation are less likely to react impulsively or become overwhelmed by emotions. Instead, they are able to stay focused on the task at hand, make clear decisions and continue providing high-quality care [3].

The development of emotional intelligence in nursing education also involves nurturing empathy. Empathy the ability to understand and share the feelings of another is at the core of patient-centered care. Nurses with high emotional intelligence are able to connect with their patients on a deeper level, providing comfort and reassurance while also addressing their physical needs. Empathy allows nurses to better understand the emotional and psychological aspects of a patient's experience, which is critical in providing holistic care. For example, a nurse who empathizes with a patient's fear of an upcoming surgery is better able to offer support and provide information that alleviates anxiety. Empathy also contributes to the development of trust between nurses and patients. When patients feel understood and cared for, they are more likely to trust their nurse and be more open about their concerns, which can lead to more accurate assessments and better health outcomes. Social skills are also essential in dealing with patients and their families. Nursing often requires difficult conversations, such as delivering bad news, discussing treatment options, or addressing concerns about a patient's prognosis. Nurses with high emotional intelligence are able to approach these conversations with sensitivity and compassion, which can ease the emotional burden on patients and their families. In turn, this can help patients feel more supported and empower them to make informed decisions about their care [4].

The ability to manage relationships is another vital component of emotional intelligence that plays an important role in nursing practice. Nurses work in a team-oriented environment and building strong, collaborative relationships with colleagues is essential for providing effective care. High emotional intelligence helps nurses navigate conflicts, resolve interpersonal issues and contribute to a positive work environment. A nurse with strong relationship management skills is able to handle disagreements or misunderstandings with colleagues in a constructive way, ultimately leading to better teamwork and improved patient care. They are able to recognize signs of emotional fatigue and take proactive steps to recharge and care for themselves. Emotional intelligence also helps nurses build resilience, enabling them to cope with difficult situations and recover from setbacks. This emotional resilience is critical for maintaining the nurse's overall health and longevity in the profession. Incorporating emotional intelligence into nursing education not only enhances the personal development of students but also benefits the broader healthcare system. By equipping nursing students with the tools to develop their emotional intelligence, educators are preparing them for a profession that requires both technical expertise and emotional sensitivity. Nurses who possess high levels of emotional intelligence are more likely to provide compassionate, effective care, foster positive relationships with patients and colleagues and contribute to a healthier, more resilient healthcare system [5].

Conclusion

In conclusion, emotional intelligence is a critical skill in nursing education and practice. It enhances the nurse's ability to manage their own emotions, connect with patients, communicate effectively, collaborate with colleagues and navigate the emotional challenges of healthcare. As healthcare systems become more complex and patient care becomes more focused on emotional and psychological aspects of health, emotional intelligence will continue to be a fundamental factor in determining the success of nursing practice. By prioritizing emotional intelligence in nursing education, we ensure that future nurses are not only skilled in clinical tasks but also emotionally attuned, empathetic and capable of providing the compassionate care that patients deserve.

Acknowledgement

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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