

so they may appear to overreact to loss or threatened loss of treasured objects. Encouraging children to communicate their needs and voice their concerns enables the nurse to provide reassurance, to dispel myths and fears, and to implement activities that reduce their anxiety. For example, if a shy child dislikes being the center of attention, ignore that particular child by talking and relating to other children in the family or group. When children feel more comfortable, they will usually interject personal ideas, feelings, and interpretations of events.

Adolescence

As children move into adolescence, they fluctuate between child and adult thinking and behavior. They are riding a current that is moving them rapidly toward a maturity that may be beyond their coping ability. Therefore, when tensions rise, they may seek the security of the more familiar and comfortable expectations of childhood. Anticipating these shifts in identity allows the nurse to adjust the course of interaction to meet the needs of the moment. No single approach can be relied on consistently, and encountering cooperation, hostility, anger, bravado, and a variety of other behaviors and attitudes is common. It is as much a mistake to regard an adolescent as an adult with an adult's wisdom and control as it is to assume that a teenager has the concerns and expectations of a child.

Interviewing an adolescent presents some special issues. The first may be whether to talk with the adolescent alone or with the adolescent and parents together. If the parents and teenager are together, talking with the adolescent first has the advantage of immediately identifying with the young person, thus fostering the interpersonal relationship. However, talking with the parents initially may provide insight into the family relationship. In either case, give both parties an opportunity to be included in the interview. If time is limited (such as during history taking), clarify this at the onset to avoid appearing to “take sides” by talking more with one person than with the other.

Privacy and confidentiality are of great importance when communicating with adolescents because it is consistent with developmental maturity and autonomy. Explain to parents and teenagers the legal and ethical protections and limits of