

Nondrug Pain and Symptom Management DISTRACTION

DISTRACTION—the process of drawing a person’s attention away from one thought, object, or experience and toward a different thought, object, or experience. May decrease experience of pain because of our ability to process only so much information at a time.

Benefits of distraction:

- Decreasing pain
- Increasing relaxation
- Providing an opportunity to spend enjoyable time with other people

Potential problems with distraction:

- When distraction successfully relieves pain, some staff or family may doubt the presence or severity of the pain.
- Patient may become even more aware of pain when distraction ends
- Patient must be ready for and interested in using distraction as a pain relief technique.

Methods of distraction:

- Watching TV or movies
- Petting an animal
- Playing games
- Listening to music
- Pictures may be used in the following way:
 - Fill a folder or box with pictures from magazines or calendars
 - Keep the folder or box on hand and bringing it out when patient needs something to do
 - Ask patient to look at a picture and describe it in any way he chooses.
 - As soon as he loses interest in one picture, choose another one.
- Humor
 - Create a humor library
 - ✓ Cut out favorite cartoons, sayings, jokes, or quotes and put them in an album or folder. Offer to patient when distraction is needed.
 - ✓ Watch portions of a funny movie
 - ✓ Read sections of a funny book out loud

NOTE: The RN or CNA should only administer non-drug therapies that are within his/her particular scope of practice. Please follow the policies and procedures of your facility regarding administration of non-drug therapies.

Adapted from: Beth Miller-Kraybill, Nondrug Pain & Symptom Management in *Nursing Assistant End-of-Life: Computerized Educational Program*.

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Reference: Swedish Medical Center. *Nursing Assistant End-of-Life: Computerized Educational Program*. Pittsburgh, PA: Hospice and Palliative Nursing Association; 2006.