

What is Person-Centered Care and Why is it Important?



The ever-increasing demand on healthcare often causes caregivers to lose sight of the person behind the condition they're helping. This is why person-centered care is so important. It helps caregivers refocus on a crucial aspect of care: fulfilling a person's needs beyond their disability, illness or any other acute and/or chronic conditions.

The health and social care sector are increasingly adopting a person-centered care approach, and rightly so. Not only does it help individuals receive a better-quality care, but it also improves healthcare settings as a whole and the relationship between the client and the caregiver.

As a caregiver, you should learn about the benefits of providing person-centered care and how to apply it in practice. It'll help you fulfil your role to the best of your abilities and maximize your clients' quality of life.

What is Person-Centered Care?

Person-centered care is one of the top 3 fundamental standards of care that requires healthcare providers to meet according to World Health Organization and one of the 13 fundamental standards of care according to The Health Foundation.

Delivering person-centered care involves caring for clients beyond their condition and tailoring service to suit their individual wants and needs. It's about respecting that they have their own views on what's best for them, and have their own values and priorities in life. To do this, you need to get to know clients as a person and actively involve them in care-related decisions. No one appreciates having decisions made for them or bossing them around. It makes them feel like an object or task, making care impersonal.

As its name suggests, person-centered care puts the person at the heart and center of their care. You adapt the service to their expectations and preferences, not the other way around. Doing so allows clients to retain their dignity and autonomy during an already stressful and challenging time. Rather than leaving them feeling hindered by their illness or disability, or debilitated during their acute or chronic change in health, you help them live a fulfilling life and promote their sense of self-worth, individuality, autonomy, respect and dignity. This practice to treat each individual as a person and respecting their views and feelings and thoughts regarding their care also helps to promote a better relationship and trust between the client and their caregiver.



Principles of Person-Centered Care

The Health Foundation narrowed and defines **four** principles of person-centered care, which you should keep in mind whenever you support and care for your client(s).

The four principles of person-centered care are:

1. Treat people with dignity, compassion, and respect.

The four principles of person centred care



Individuals who enter our care often lose their independence due to chronic conditions or acute changes in their health, which puts their sense of dignity at risk. Person centered care enables you to maintain that dignity by respecting their wishes and treating them with compassion and empathy.

To fulfil this principle, you must always keep in mind that each client, just like you, have their own thoughts, feelings, opinions, beliefs, and values, and these don't suddenly become invalid due to their care needs. Respecting their personal qualities helps them feel validated and cared for in a more holistic way: both physically and emotionally.

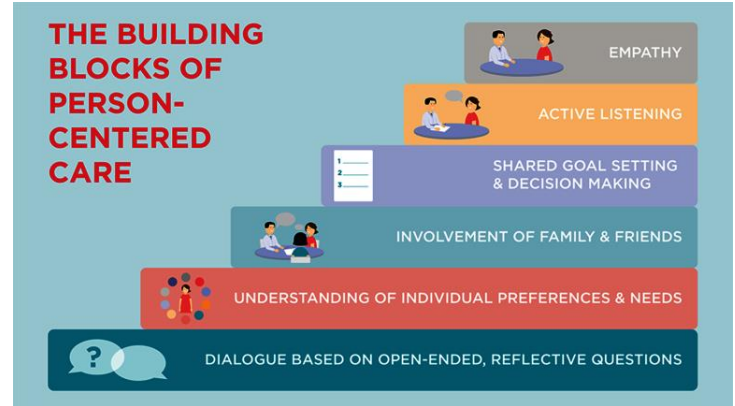
2. Offering and providing coordinated care, support, and treatment.

In order to deliver consistent person-centered care, you have to coordinate with other healthcare workers, social care workers and/or services. Otherwise, when clients move between services or carers, you have to rebuild the understanding of their personal wants and needs. In the meantime, the client would not receive the level of care that they need due to frequent changes of carers who do not know them well or their routine or services.

Note and/or record clients' personal needs in their service plan and share it with other caregivers and services when necessary. Additionally, all caregivers involved in a client's care should communicate with one another to build a shared understanding of how to best deliver a person-centered care to their client. Remember to keep confidentiality in mind at all times.

3. Offer and provide personalized care, support, and treatment.

This principle is the heart of person-centered care. It requires you to understand that what works for one client may not be appropriate for another. A standardized cookie-cutter approach can affect a client's ability to recover or manage their condition properly, and – depending on their personal circumstances and values – may damage their quality of life and outcomes. Personalizing the service to each client needs allows them to



retain some of their independence and fulfil their personal wants and needs, thus respecting their dignity and choices.

4. Supporting clients in recognizing and developing their own strengths and abilities, so they can live an independent and fulfilling life.

Providing person-centered care requires involving client in decisions and helping them take actions to support themselves. Doing so helps them to develop their own capabilities and an understanding of how to look after themselves as independently as possible, while ensuring their safety.

Fulfilling this principle is mutually beneficial in other aspects. The client will feel in greater control of their life, increase their self-esteem and confidence in their abilities with the right support and encouragement, thus will increase their sense of autonomy and be less reliant on more direct healthcare services. On other side, the caregiver may assist in other needs the client has weaknesses in, or provide more care services to clients who have more significant dependencies.

Keep in mind that this is a very fine balance. Trying to force a client to do more on their own can make them feel like you don't want to help, while helping too much makes them feel like they have no say in their care. All it takes to avoid this is maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the client and their representative, on goals and expectations of the care services provided.

Why is Person-Centered Care Important?

First and foremost, person-centered care helps the individual receive a more suitable care with a more holistic approach, making them feel like a person rather than a task. However, it also brings so many other benefits to client and healthcare caregiver overall.



Person-centered care is important for clients because:

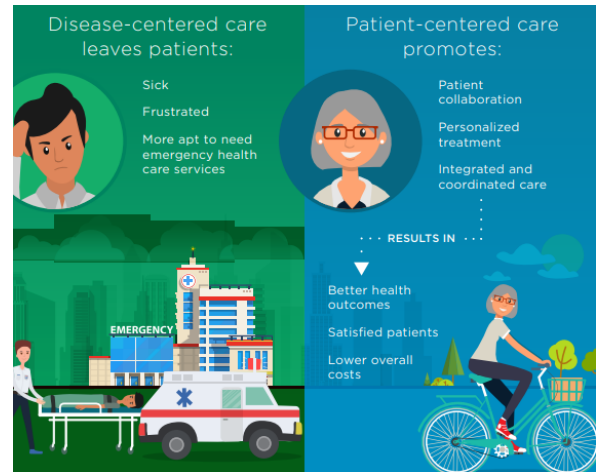
- **They will feel more comfortable and confident in your service**, as keeping their dignity and independence builds mutual respect and trust. The client will trust you to do what's best for them, which makes the services provided easier for you both.
- **You will meet their emotional, social, and practical needs**, which in turn enhances their quality of life.
- **You can support those who may not be able to directly communicate their wants and needs.** Numerous conditions or disabilities can affect a person's ability to communicate effectively or express own needs. For example, individuals affected by dementia, learning disabilities, or those who simply don't have the confidence to do so may not be able to effectively express what needs and wants they need for you to meet in order to enhance their quality of life. Person-centered care helps you find suitable ways to help them communicate and maximize their quality of care,

including understanding their unique language and interpreting their behavior and body language to better communicate and meet their unique needs.

- **It improves their independence.** Not only is this beneficial on a personal level for the client, but it also encourages them to take part in decisions regarding their own care and life. It raises their engagement and autonomy, which helps you reach more appropriate decisions regarding their care. Furthermore, it gives them the confidence and ability to look after themselves with less input from you.

**Person-centered care is important for caregivers
because:**

- **Clients are more likely to stick to treatment plans and take their medicine or participate in care** if they feel respected, involved, and in control. This relieves the pressure on you and the burden on service provided, such as repeated checks or disorganized care.
- **Hospitals in the US are extremely strained**, due to increased complexity of individual care and services needed to our growing elderly population, as well individuals with special needs and ailments that need regular and frequent medical visits and interventions by interdisciplinary teams to manage their complex care; another population is individuals who do not need urgent care but keep re-visiting emergency room to be re-admitted with conditions that could have been managed at home or outpatient. Person-centered care improves clients' understanding of their condition and when there's a need for emergency services. Therefore, they are less likely to use emergency services or choose costly or invasive treatments and be more informed about what best meets their unique needs.
- **It motivates clients to adopt positive health behaviors** that improve and help them manage their own health. This is particularly important for people with long-term and/or complex conditions, who may rely heavily on healthcare services.
- **Everyone will feel happier and more positive.** This increases the team's morale and ability to deliver empathetic, effective, and compassionate care to our clients.
- **It is time and cost efficient.** Personalized, enabling care ensures clients receive medications and treatments they will actually need and take, as well as attend and engage in the right services. You'll spend your valuable time and money on what people really want and need because they will understand what you are doing and why, as well as their own condition and unique needs associated with it.



Both you and your client deserve to live a fulfilling life and feel positively about your capabilities, despite challenges or stresses. You can achieve this with the mutually-beneficial improvements that person-centered care brings.