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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
What is professionalism and professional presence? .....	2
How do registrants demonstrate professionalism and professional presence? .....	2
Verbal Communication .....	2
Non-verbal Communication .....	2
Focus .....	3
Empathize .....	3
Key Points .....	3
Suggested Readings.....	3

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## Introduction

This tool is a resource for all registrants in all practice settings to help them understand their obligations related to professionalism and professional presence. All registrants are expected to demonstrate professional behavior and leadership in their practice as part of meeting their [Standards of Practice](#) and [Code of Ethics](#).

## What is professionalism and professional presence?

Professionalism is ensuring quality [client](#) care, while upholding the values of [accountability](#), respect, and integrity. Registrants are expected to exhibit the values and attributes of professionalism when providing care and when [collaborating](#) with colleagues, students and other members of the health care team.

A key element of professionalism is professional presence. [Professional presence](#) is a demonstration of respect, confidence, integrity, optimism, compassion and empathy in accordance with professional standards, guidelines and codes of ethics. It includes a registrant's verbal and non-verbal communication and the ability to articulate a positive and professional image, including the use of their name and professional designation.

Demonstration of professionalism and professional presence leads to trusting relationships with clients, families, communities and other members of the health care team.

## How do registrants demonstrate professionalism and professional presence?

Professionalism can be demonstrated through:

- Possessing knowledge, skills and judgement
- Accountability for actions and inactions
- Advocating for clients
- [Communicating](#) and collaborating effectively with colleagues and members of the team
- Positive and respectful attitude and behaviour
- Commitment to lifelong learning

Demonstrating professional presence requires a registrant to be present in the moment and to be engaged with the client and their family. Everything registrants say or do, however big or small, may be analyzed, amplified and worried over by clients. A registrant's facial expression, tone of voice, body language and choice of words can convey unintended messages. While a registrant may believe they engaged appropriately during an intervention or while managing multiple priorities, the client may feel very differently because of the registrant's presence, or lack of presence in the moment.

Registrants may consider the following strategies in demonstrating professional presence with clients:

### Verbal Communication

- Speak in a caring tone and ensure the message is respectful
- Speak with confidence and compassion

### Non-verbal Communication

- Make eye contact when appropriate while considering the client's cultural context
- Meet the client at their level and sit when appropriate
- Use therapeutic touch appropriately

Professional presence isn't just required when a registrant is face-to-face with clients but anytime a registrant is visible to clients, like in the hallway or at a desk. For example, clients may overhear non-professional conversations by registrants outside their room that may impact their trust in the professional therapeutic relationship.

## Focus

- Pause and reflect on the message you want to convey prior to interacting with the client
- Limit distractions
- Provide intentional focus
- Understand a client's [cultural](#) context and demonstrate cultural [competence](#) and safety
- Recognition of the client's psychological, psychosocial and physiological needs
- Use technology, including [Artificial Intelligence](#) appropriately as an adjunct to care and not a replacement for human interactions

## Empathize

- Consider how it would feel to hear your words if you were the client
- Pause, reflect and consider any impacts of your possible biases and assumptions
- Listen to understand
- Ask questions

## Key Points

- Demonstrating professionalism and professional presence is crucial to trusting therapeutic relationships between registrants and clients, the public and their health care colleagues.
- Registrants are expected to be present in the moment with their clients.
- Registrants are expected to continually reflect and ensure their practice is consistent with their Standards of Practice, Entry Level Competencies and Code of Ethics.

## Suggested Reading

- [Professional Boundaries and the Nurse-Client Relationship](#)
- [Virtual Care Practice Guideline for Nurses](#)
- [Using Artificial Intelligence Practice Guideline](#)

For further information on anything contained within this practice guideline, please contact an NSCN practice consultant at [practice@nscn.ca](mailto:practice@nscn.ca).