



A CLIENT CARE MODULE:

**HELPING NEW
CLIENTS ADJUST**



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A Client Care Module:

HELPING NEW CLIENTS ADJUST

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for caregivers like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask your supervisor.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

THANK YOU!

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

List at least three signs that a new client is not adjusting well to his or her new environment.



Examine your role in helping new clients adjust and discuss why it is important to do so.



Describe the emotional losses that often lead to the decision to move into long term care.



Discuss the benefits of staying socially active and list at least three activities that provide social interaction.



Demonstrate thoughtful and compassionate care to new clients during the adjustment period.



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A Client Care Module: Helping New Clients Adjust

A LIFE OF TREASURES AND MEMORIES

Lily lived a romantic and exciting life as a professional ballet dancer. She toured the country as a young woman, dancing with passion and grace.

She met her husband after a show one evening. He was handsome and smart. She describes it as "love at first sight!"

They got married and started a family right away. Lily gave birth to two girls.

The new family spent years travelling all over, collecting treasures and memories from each adventure.

Lily showed her children all the famous theaters where she danced. Her oldest daughter followed in her footsteps and became a ballet dancer.

Sadly, over the past year, Lily **lost her husband** after 54 years of marriage. He was her **best friend**.

While she was grieving, Lily found out she had **breast cancer** and started chemo and radiation. The treatments were rough and she was having trouble managing alone. She became more and more **forgetful and confused**.

One night, as she tried to make her way to the bathroom in the dark, she fell and **broke her hip**.

Her daughters came to her the next day to talk about assisted living.

Within a month, **Lily's house was sold** to make money to pay for long term care. Most of Lily's treasured possessions from her travels were dispersed among the family. The rest were either put into storage or sold.

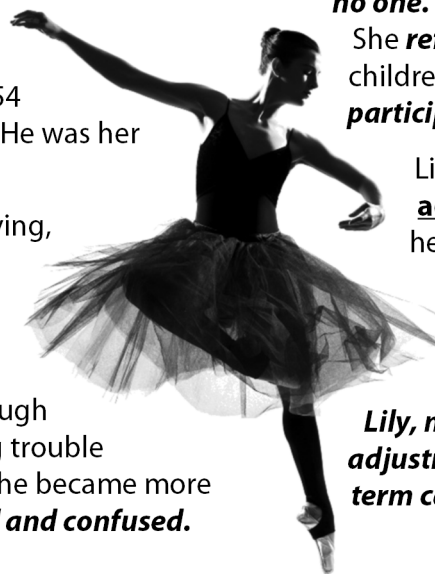
Then came moving day. Lily was **tearful and helpless**. Her daughters felt awful and full of guilt.

For the first two weeks, Lily **spoke to no one**. She never left her room.

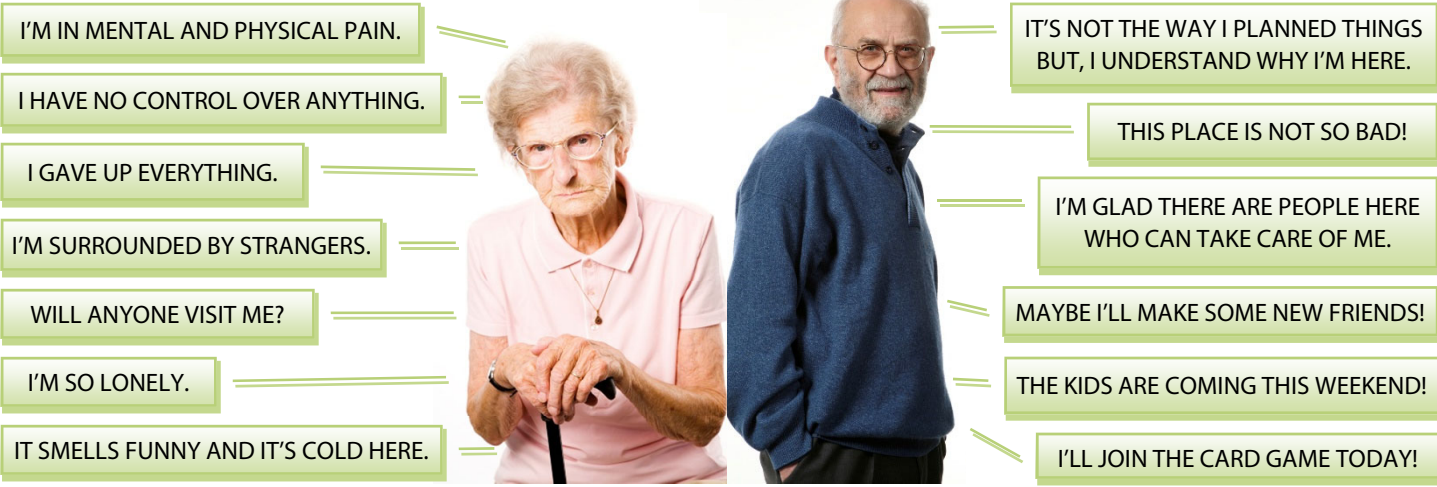
She **refused calls** from her children. And, she **refused to participate** in her own care.

Lily was having trouble **adjusting** to the reality of her new situation.

Keep reading to learn how you can help new clients, like Lily, make a more healthy adjustment to living in long term care.



WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGES . . .



I'M IN MENTAL AND PHYSICAL PAIN.

I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER ANYTHING.

I GAVE UP EVERYTHING.

I'M SURROUNDED BY STRANGERS.

WILL ANYONE VISIT ME?

I'M SO LONELY.

IT SMELLS FUNNY AND IT'S COLD HERE.

IT'S NOT THE WAY I PLANNED THINGS BUT, I UNDERSTAND WHY I'M HERE.

THIS PLACE IS NOT SO BAD!

I'M GLAD THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE WHO CAN TAKE CARE OF ME.

MAYBE I'LL MAKE SOME NEW FRIENDS!

THE KIDS ARE COMING THIS WEEKEND!

I'LL JOIN THE CARD GAME TODAY!

HOW WILL YOU KNOW IF YOUR CLIENT IS ADJUSTING?

SIGNS OF ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS	SIGNS OF HEALTHY ADJUSTMENT
<p>MOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depressed, withdrawn, angry. Long lasting or severe sadness or feeling of hopelessness. 	<p>MOOD:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mood is appropriate for the circumstance. Looks on the "bright side" of most situations. Is able to joke and stay positive.
<p>BEHAVIOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ignores or rejects rules and routines. Regressive behaviors, acts helpless, demands special attention. 	<p>BEHAVIOR:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes and responds appropriately to rules and routines. Makes an effort to participate in meals and activities.
<p>PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refuses to try new tasks or quits in the event of mild failure. Refuses visitors, expresses anger during visits, or becomes withdrawn, sad or angry when visits come to an end. Does not respond to others who reach out in support. Rarely requests help with getting needs met. 	<p>PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL FUNCTIONING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts new tasks (physical and social activities) and can do well with practice. Accepts and enjoys visits from friends and family. Reaches out to others (staff and other residents) for friendship and getting physical and emotional needs met.
<p>SELF CONCEPT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sees self as helpless, incapable, unloved. Relies on others for meeting life's basic needs.. Unable or unwilling to make any meaningful contribution. 	<p>SELF CONCEPT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reasonable degree of self confidence. Sees self as capable of participating in self-care. Able to make a meaningful contribution to the society within facility and its residents..

WHAT'S NEW?

Grab your favorite highlighter! As you read through this inservice, **highlight five things** you learn that you didn't know before. Share this new information with your supervisor and co-workers!



THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Remember the old saying, "You never get a second chance to make a first impression?" Well, this is especially true when helping clients adjust to their new surroundings and circumstances.

You are probably going to be the first person with whom the client forms a relationship. So, it's important to be prepared, professional and compassionate.

HERE IS HOW YOU CAN MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION:

- **Introduce your self and explain your title and your role.** Let the client know exactly how you are going to help him or her meet the goals in the plan of care.
- **Speak clearly and concisely.** Avoid slang words and medical jargon that may be unfamiliar to older clients.
- **It's not just what you say . . . it's how you say it.** Let your client know you care through your tone of voice, facial expressions, words and gestures.
- **Put on a happy face!** Even if you are having a bad day, put your own feelings aside and focus only on the *client's* physical and emotional needs.
- **Focus on the human—not the task.** Slow down and talk calmly and casually as you introduce the client to his or her new home.
- **Be patient.** Give older clients extra time to answer your questions or tell you what they have to say. Reaction time slows as people age.
- **Never discuss your feelings about your employer, co-workers or other clients** in the presence of the clients or their family members.
- **Make time to talk to the client's family.** Ask the family about the client's likes and dislikes, routines and preferences, especially if the client cannot communicate these things independently.
- **Make yourself available.** Give your client clear instructions on how to reach you (or someone else who can help) whenever a need arises. Let the client know it is okay to ask for help and that you (or one of your co-workers) will be there when the client needs you.



TALK about it!

Open the Discussion

THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE

Are you and your co-workers doing enough to help new residents feel "at home?"

- **Ask your supervisor and co-workers how they help new clients adjust.**

If your workplace does not already have a **welcoming committee** in place, why not organize one?

Talk to your supervisor about organizing a group of Aides, nurses and even other residents to visit with new residents during the adjustment period.

Ask your supervisor:

- **Do you think our clients could benefit from a welcoming committee?**
- **Could we work together to form a welcoming committee for our new clients?**

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

~ Mahatma Gandhi

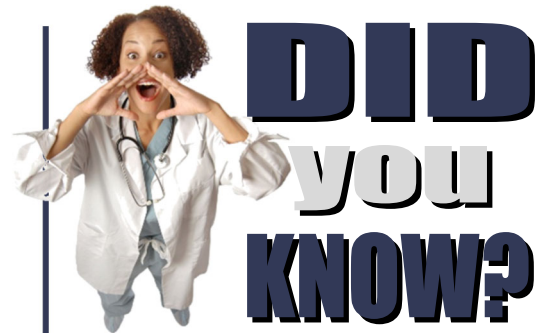
ADJUSTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT

"I long, as does every human being, to be at home wherever I find myself." ~ Maya Angelou

Leaving your home and making major life changes can be frightening and confusing for older adults. Your goal is to make them feel as "at home" as possible in this new environment.

HELP NEW CLIENTS FEEL "AT HOME":

- **Prepare the room in advance.** Preparing in advance lets the client know you were ready and waiting for her arrival. Tidy up the room, make the bed, bring an admission kit (if this is the policy at your workplace).
- **Inform the roommate.** If there is a roommate, let him or her know in advance that there will be a new resident. Springing this news on a roommate in the presence of the new client can make everyone feel awkward.
- **Orient the client to the room.** Upon arrival, help the client get comfortable by orienting him or her to the room, apartment or suite. Help the client locate important places, like the bathroom and the closets.
- **Adjust shades, lighting and thermostat, if needed.** Make the room feel comfortable to the client. Ask about preferences and make adjustments as needed.
- **When the time is right, introduce the roommate** (if there is one). Try to have something pleasant prepared to say about each person to help them get to know each other. For example, *"This is Rose. She can tell you all about the food and coat drive we do for local families during the holidays."*
- **Help unpack and arrange personal belongings.** Be sure to say out loud where you are putting things and make sure the client hears you. For example, *"I'm hanging your robe on the back of the bathroom door. Will that be okay for you?"*
- **Place frequently used personal items like glasses, magazines, and journals in or on the nightstand.**
- **Show the new client how to operate the call system** and allow time to test it.
- **Show the new client how to operate the television and telephone.** Never assume these things are obvious. The remote control and the telephone may look very different from what the client used at home. Go through the functions and allow time to practice.



IT'S NOT JUST FOR OLD FOLKS!

The population of younger adults (ages 31 to 64) who need long term care is increasing. Today, this age group makes up about 14 percent of a typical nursing home's population.

Some of these younger clients have had chronic illnesses since childhood. Others may have new issues related to injuries from accidents or combat.

And finally, there has been an increase in younger adults with mental illness and substance abuse problems who need long term care.

Younger clients may have different needs from older clients, including:

- The need for more choices.
- Peer-to-peer support groups.
- Activities that are separate from the older adults.
- Access to computers and the internet.

What do you do differently for your younger clients?

What activities or programs are in place for this age group? (If you don't know, ask!)

If you have any suggestions to improve care for younger clients, take your ideas to your supervisor!

ADJUSTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT—CONTINUED

Once the client is familiar with the room, you can offer a tour of the facility.

HELP NEW CLIENTS ADJUST TO THE FACILITY:

- **Let your client know what activity status the doctor has ordered.** For example, if the client must travel by wheelchair, explain the order. Provide a wheelchair if needed, and inform the client that until the doctor changes the status, this is the only way to be safe from trips, slips and falls.
- **Just outside the room, give the client a landmark.** In other words, have the client look at the door to her room, then look around the hall just outside the room. Find some identifying feature. For example, *"Your room is number 17B. It's just 2 doors down from this TV lounge."*
- **Introduce staff and other residents that you pass as you are on your tour.** Be sure to introduce your client by the name she chooses. Some people like to be called by their first name. Others will want to be addressed by Mr. or Mrs. and their last name.
- **Locate the dining hall.** Discuss meal times and inform the client of any special meal orders in the care plan. Be positive about the food. One of the biggest things people worry about when they are away from home is that they will not get good food! If the client expresses concerns, you might say, *"Well, I'm sure it's not as good as you would have made it . . . but I think you'll enjoy it. Plus, you don't have to spend all day in the kitchen cooking and then cleaning up afterwards!"*
- **Locate any other special features of your facility.** Show the client the beauty shop or barber, the exercise room, game room or arts and crafts area and any other special places of interest to your client.
- **Show the client the schedule or calendar of events.** Invite the new client to participate in something of interest. For example, if there is an ongoing event, like a weekly music class, and this new client has expressed an interest in music—then invite the client to join the class!



THINK about it!

THE FREEDOM TO BE MAD

You have your health and your freedom, so you have options when it comes to dealing with feelings like anger, sadness or stress. You can talk to a friend, go for a walk, go for a drive or take a bubble bath.

What options do your clients have?

Most people will feel some degree of anger, sadness or stress during the adjustment period. How they deal with these feelings is the key to a smooth transition.

Before a client gets to the point of throwing things, complaining or refusing to cooperate, ask the client (or the family) what will help.

Find out what the client likes to do to relax. Maybe he likes to listen to music or get outside for some fresh air. Maybe she likes to clean when she's angry. Give her a towel and let her dust knick-knacks, or if she's able, give her a broom and let her sweep.

- ***Think of some other ways you can help clients deal with anger, sadness or stress?***
- ***Talk to your supervisor and co-workers and find out what they do.***

ADJUSTING TO FALL RISK FACTORS

Research shows that falls and fear of falling are much more common in new long term care residents than in others who have been in the facility for a while.

HELP NEW CLIENTS ADJUST TO FALL RISK FACTORS:

- **Talk to your clients about their risk for falls.** Clients who are not confused or disoriented *can* and *should* be trusted to work with the healthcare team to keep themselves safe.
- **Explain the facilities falls prevention policy.** If your workplace has a policy like “Call, Don’t Fall!” in place, be sure your clients and their family members understand the policy and know why it is so important.
- **Make sure new clients are familiar with the environment,** including the location of the bathroom, light switches and the call bell.
- **No locks. please!** As a precaution, ask clients to always leave the bathroom door unlocked. If a fall occurs while they are inside a locked room, giving them assistance will be tough!
- **Use assistive devices as ordered.** Some clients feel that using a cane, walker or wheelchair is a sign of age or weakness. If your clients are not using their equipment as ordered, report your observations to your supervisor.
- **Confused, non-compliant, or combative clients may need to be coaxed into following the rules that keep them safe.** For example, you may need to sit down with the client and family members and convince the client to agree to call for help as needed or you may even have them sign a “contract.” The contract may simply be a piece of paper that says, “*I will call for help before getting up to walk.*” Then have the client sign it and tape it up where it is easy to see.
- **Encourage new clients to stay as active as possible**—and to get some kind of daily exercise. If your client is being treated by a physical therapist, ask the therapist what you can do to help your client stay active.
- **Encourage daily stretching exercises!** Flexibility becomes limited with age. Bending to pick up things or reaching for a phone can be tough. Daily stretching helps keep muscles flexible and strong!



CONNECT
It now!

Apply what you know

Federal Law **requires** all healthcare providers to assess each client’s risk for falls within the first 14 days of admission and to re-assess periodically throughout the duration of care as the client’s condition changes.

- **Who does the falls risk assessment at your workplace? If you don’t know . . . ask!**

- **What is your workplace system for identifying clients who are at risk for falls?**

- **What do you differently for clients at risk for falls (for example, use a bed alarm, ambulate with assistance)?**

MAKING EMOTIONAL ADJUSTMENTS



By the time a new client becomes a resident in a long term care facility, he or she has likely suffered many emotional losses.

For example, your new client may have lost a spouse or close friend, received a diagnoses of a chronic illness, lost driving privileges and/or lost the familiar surroundings of home. All these losses can make adjustment difficult.

HELP NEW CLIENTS ADJUST TO THESE EMOTIONAL LOSSES:

LOSS OF INDEPENDENCE: To stay safe, many people who need daily help must become residents at nursing facilities. Losing their home means losing their independence and sense of control.

- People who feel as if they have no control over their own lives may lose self-esteem. They may also become depressed and uninterested in doing anything for themselves.
- Allow your elderly clients to make as many of their own decisions as possible. This allows them to feel “in control” and may keep them from becoming more and more dependent on you.
- Help your clients focus on the things they are still able to do, rather than dwelling on the things they can’t do anymore.

LOSS OF LOVED ONES: Losing a spouse, especially after a long term marriage, can be especially devastating. With the death of a spouse, many people lose their best friend.

- Encourage your widowed clients to do as much as possible for themselves so they learn that they can be independent—even if it’s in little ways.
- Encourage your client to share some special memories of their spouse with you.



LOSS OF PURPOSE: Many people take pleasure in being productive. If they lose the ability to be productive, they may feel worthless. They may start to think, “I am no good to anybody . . . I’m just taking up space.”

- The goal for most seniors is to fill their time in a rewarding way—rather than to have each day drag on with no purpose. So, help your clients find a variety of interesting and fun ways to pass their time.
- Help your clients feel valuable by recognizing the knowledge and wisdom they have gained through the years. For example, ask for their opinion on a current event or on an issue such as how to invest money or discipline a child.

LOSS OF HEALTH AND YOUTH: Health problems that develop later in life tend to be permanent. This can cause elderly people to long for the good health they had in their youth.

- Help clients to look and feel young and healthy by encouraging a healthy diet and some form of exercise every day.
- Talk to your clients about current events, such as politics, music and movies. Keeping up with the times helps people stay “young at heart.”
- Share funny stories or jokes with your clients to keep them laughing!

To learn more about Emotional Losses, request our inservice topic on, “Emotional Losses in the Elderly.” It provides an overview of the many emotional losses facing people as they age, and shows you how you can make these emotional transitions easier for elderly clients.

MAKING SOCIAL ADJUSTMENTS

Living in a facility where there are staff members and other residents constantly around takes some getting used to. But, research shows that people who remain socially active are less likely to show physical decline as they age.

While the adjustment period may be awkward or difficult, reassure your client that being socially active is well worth the effort!

Some social activities you may suggest include:

- Socializing (keeping in touch with friends and family or making new friends).
- Reminiscing (telling stories about the “good ol’ times”).
- Intergenerational Activities (activities with kids and grandkids).
- Volunteering (helping others).
- Group or team games (cards, board games, shuffleboard).
- Sharing a meal.
- Joining a book club (or starting one if none exist).
- Attending church services.

HELP CLIENTS ADJUST TO THE NEW SOCIAL SITUATION:

- If your new client resists socializing with others—but seems capable of it—make an effort to understand why. He may be angry, shy, or even depressed.
- If a client seems depressed or withdrawn, report your observations to the nurse. Depression is common in this age group, but it is treatable!
- Ask members of a church group or other volunteer organization that to make a visit to your clients—especially those who are rarely visited by family members.
- If family members (especially children) come to visit, encourage them to play a game with your client.
- Volunteering can give your client a sense of purpose, and the satisfaction of helping others in need. There are plenty of opportunities available, like packing care packages for troops overseas, organizing a coat drive for school kids, making blankets for sick children. Check out www.seniorcorps.org for volunteer opportunities all over the United States.



THE NEXT Step!

Apply what you've learned!

REMEMBER LILY?

At the beginning of this inservice you read about Lily. She was having some trouble adjusting to her new situation.

- Do you think her reaction to the change was unreasonable?
- What would you have done to help Lily adjust?

Have you ever had a client like Lily?

- What did you do to help your client adjust?
- What would you do differently after reading this inservice?
- What would you want someone to do for you or your loved one in this type of situation?

What if Lily was a different race than most of the residents?

- For instance, what if she was Japanese and had only recently moved to the U.S.—while the majority of the other residents were American? How would that affect her ability to adjust?
- What would you do differently in this case?

THE PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS

It's common for people to feel powerless when they are forced to move into long term care. That's why it's so important for your new clients to learn about their rights.

All clients have the right to:

- High quality care.
- A clean and safe environment.
- Be involved in their own care.
- Protection of privacy.
- Professional discharge planning services.
- Help with bill and insurance claims.

HELP NEW CLIENTS UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS:

Residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities have the right to:

- Have family members visit anytime . . . 24 hours a day.
- Refuse to see a particular visitor.
- Manage and spend their own money (or decide who will manage it for them).
- Bring in personal belongings.
- Wear their own clothes.
- Participate in the activities of their choice.
- Visit with their spouse in private.
- Send and receive personal mail.
- Move freely about the facility without restraints (as long as they aren't a danger to themselves or others).

MORE WAYS YOU CAN MAINTAIN NEW CLIENTS' RIGHTS:

- **Never threaten your clients to get them to cooperate.**
- **Never force care on a client—even if you know it's for the best.** For example, you can't force someone to eat lunch even if you are worried about recent weight loss.
- **Never apply restraints without a doctor's order.** All clients have the right to be free from any physical or chemical restraint used for the purpose of discipline or convenience.

NOTE: *The Patient Bill of Rights may vary slightly from one place to another. Be sure you have read the Bill of Rights for your workplace so that you can help the new client understand.*



5 KEY points

Key Points to Remember

1. Leaving your home and making major life changes can be frightening and confusing for older adults. Your goal is to make them feel as "at home" as possible in this new environment.
2. Most people will feel some degree of anger, sadness or stress during the adjustment period. How they deal with these feelings is the key to a smooth transition.
3. Falls and fear of falling are much more common in new long term care residents. Protect new clients from falls and reassure them you are doing everything possible to minimize their fall risk.
4. While the adjustment period may be awkward or difficult, reassure your client that people who remain socially active stay stronger and healthier as they age.
5. The first few weeks are usually the hardest for new clients. Check in often, provide gentle reassurance, offer to help, and remain available.



EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

A Client Care Module: Helping New Clients Adjust

Are you "in the know" about helping new clients adjust? Circle the best choice. Then check your answers with your supervisor!

- Your new client is NOT adjusting well if he:**
 - Makes jokes and laughs a lot.
 - Acts helpless and demands special attention.
 - Gets sad for short periods, but recovers quickly.
 - Spends all his free time meeting new people and making friends.
- Your main goal when helping new clients adjust should be to help them:**
 - Feel "at home."
 - Forget the past.
 - Express their anger.
 - Learn their rights.
- A good way to help a client who feels he has no purpose in life is to:**
 - Suggest he watch more television.
 - Ask for his opinions on a current events.
 - Remind him that God has a plan for everyone.
 - Suggest he move in with his daughter and grandchildren.
- A client who resists socializing with others may be:**
 - Depressed.
 - Shy.
 - Angry.
 - All of the above.
- True or False**

When unpacking a new client's belongings, you should put things where you would want them if it was your room.
- True or False**

Feeling angry is normal during the adjustment period.
- True or False**

New clients have a higher risk for falls during the adjustment period.
- True or False**

Most people are willing to give up control over their own lives as they age.
- True or False**

All clients have the right to be involved in their own care.
- True or False**

You should avoid involving the family if the client is having trouble adjusting.