The initial interview and may also conduct a focused interview when the nurse gathers information from the medical record related to several important areas. These include psychosocial concern, self-concept and beliefs, stress and coping mechanisms, and reasoning ability.

Psychosocial assessment begins before the initial interview when the nurse gathers information from the medical record relating to past emotional or psychiatric problems as well as physiological illnesses that may have affected the client’s psychological or social functioning. For example, psychosocial problems may be related to brain tumors, multiple sclerosis, or bipolar disorder.

During the initial interview, the nurse gathers more information about the client’s social history (e.g., marital status and occupation), history of growth and development, past emotional problems, response to crises and illnesses, and family history of emotional or psychiatric illness. If an area of heightened concern is discovered, the nurse may focus on that area during the initial interview and may also conduct a focused interview at a later time during the course of the client’s care. During the focused interview, the nurse uses information obtained from the medical history, the initial interview, and subsequent client interactions to help the client do a careful inventory of past and current psychosocial health status.

### Psychosocial Well-Being

The nurse conducts an interview focused on psychosocial well-being when:

- The information collected during the health history indicates psychosocial dysfunction.
- The client’s behavior during the initial interview is anxious, depressed, erratic, or bizarre.
- More information is needed to determine if any relationships exist between past disease processes and potential emotional or psychiatric concerns.

In some situations a psychosocial concern is not apparent at the time of the initial interview but becomes apparent at a later time, such as when a client learns of a negative prognosis or undergoes disfiguring surgical procedures. In these cases, the nurse should seek a focused psychosocial interview whenever the emotional problem becomes apparent. The case study (see Figure 5.3) describes a situation where anxiety and fear impeded a client’s recovery from a physical illness. Only after the nurse focused on the emotional impact of the illness was the client able to respond to therapy.

In some situations the client’s primary health concern is psychosocial in nature. Clients with substance abuse, depression,