

Nurse Leadership Etiquette



Principles every nurse leader should know & skills every nurse leader should have.

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Congratulations!

Thank you for downloading the Nurse Leadership Etiquette e-book. In this book you will learn about skills and principles of successful nurse leaders. Information provided can be applied in any healthcare setting. What you have now are sound fundamentals for nurses at any level of expertise. There are many qualities that make a nurse leader efficient, successful and qualified to lead a healthcare team. So, kudos to you for taking a step to strengthen your skills and to better serve your community.

With 20 years of nursing experience in various settings and different positions you learn what works and what does not work in healthcare leadership. I observed leadership and their behaviors for years with the anticipation to be as great as the best nurses I learned from. I honor many of the great nurse I have learned from in time. With all this information I felt compelled to share with other nurses. It does not matter if you are in a management role or a staff nurse. A nurse is a leader. Here are characteristics of that leader.

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Part I

The Social Aspect of a Nurse Leader



Nurse Leadership Etiquette

Build a professional relationship with your staff.



Keyword professional. Do not just hire staff and put them to work. During their employment, build a professional relationship to let staff know who you are and that you care about their well-being and their job performance. It is possible to build this work relationship without knowing details of their personal life issues or problems. You do not need to know their personal business such as their relationships or other issues it is non-related to their job or their job performance. Learn who they are and how they perform.

Do not become familiar with their staff when they are in trouble. It is unfortunate and unprofessional for a manager to not know their employees. Some do not acknowledge their staff until it is time to discipline them. How tacky. Most often in nursing we expect our staff to be efficient in customer service. Well, as a leader so should you. You should also make sure you smile and greet your staff, just as you expect them to do with residents or patients.

This relationship builds a respected, professional bond. Consider how your staff feels to be in your presence and to not be acknowledged as if they were a stranger. Now imagine if you were friendly and provided a simple gesture such as saying, “good morning” or “hello”. Do you not know what impact this simple act could create?

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Do not just instruct but explain.



Now do not just instruct or give directions to your staff but explain what they are doing. It is important for staff to understand the cause-and-effect of their actions. Let go of your ego and understand you are not explaining yourself or undermining your authority. Realizes as a leader, you are an educator as well. Sometimes staff need to understand the *be*-cause and effect of their direction. Remember they cannot read your mind. Obviously as the leader you are more skillful and educated as they are if you want results make sure they are on the same page as you. Your staff just might surprise you and go beyond your expectations

In almost every facility, no matter the healthcare setting, we refer to our staff as a team. In the forefront of the team is a leader calling all the plays. Communicating with gives your staff a sense of purpose. It helps to make their job more satisfying besides their basic duties. They feel more a part of the clinical team when they know the purpose and realize they are an intricate factor to achieve a common goal.

Set an example



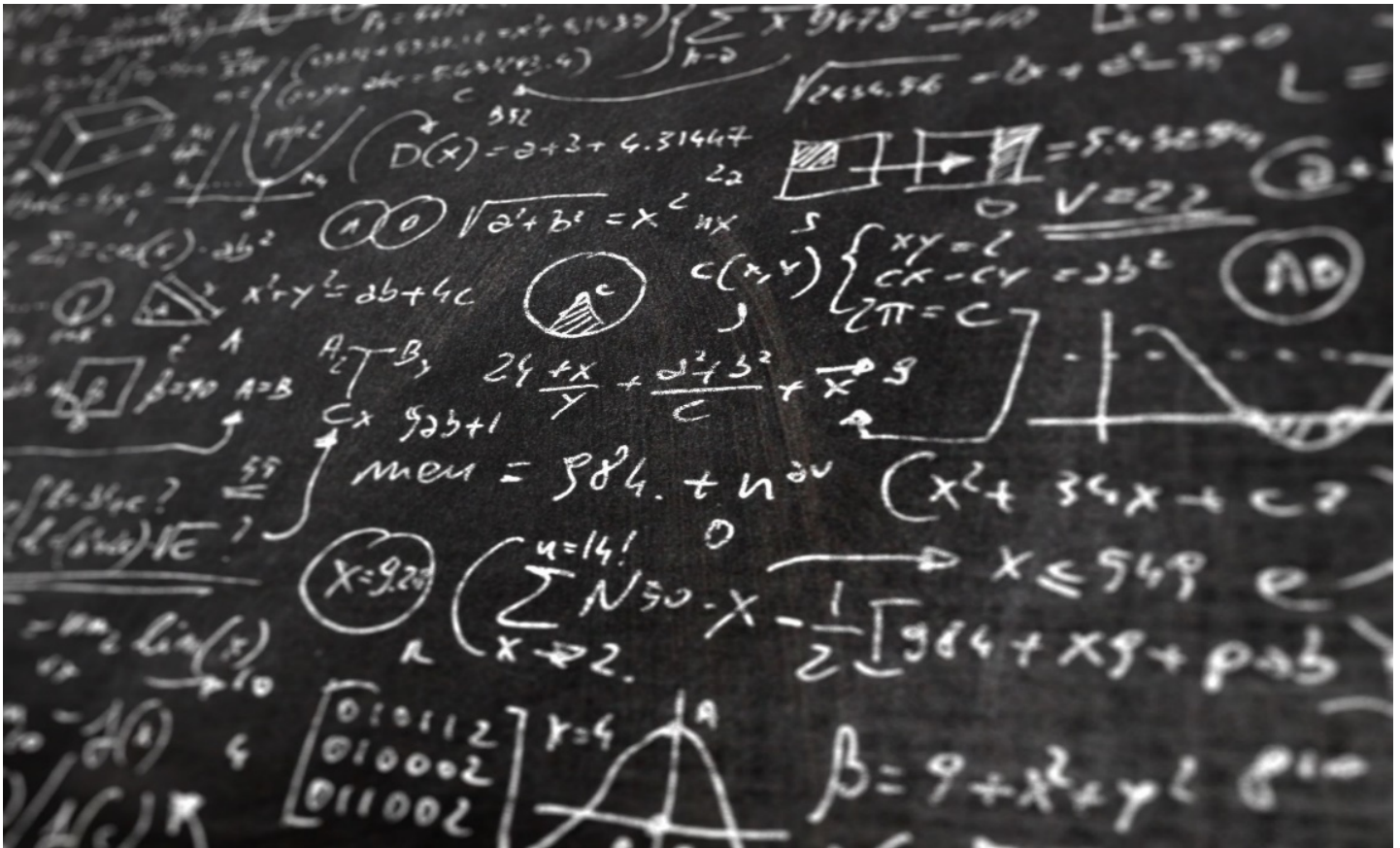
As the leader of your team you exemplify of what you expect. One of my mentors would always say “inspect what you expect”. As a leader are you able to expect certain things from your staff based off how you lead. Are you someone that your staff should or could mimic as a professional? Let's be real, no one respects a hypocrite or someone who is untrustworthy. It is obviously something you cannot hide. These are definitely characteristics you do not want your team to embrace. No one is perfect and we are aware of that but there are certain characteristics and qualities as a leader that we should demonstrate daily.

Your team is your backup. They are your eyes, ears and backbone. Their work performance reflects your leadership. Create an honest environment to strengthen your team. Most of the top facilities embodies principles that are practiced at all levels of the chain of command. Implementation of these values reinforces major value within your team.

As the leader it is a lot of pressure to maintain and perform at such a high level. It is required to be able to perform under high pressure situations. Be ready for your team to follow your lead.

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Educate, educate, educate.



Educate your staff. It is important for your staff to always be sharp with their skills whether it is at the bedside or on paper when documenting. Staff practices some of the basic skills daily of course but as we know there are always new things trending and changes in the way we practice. As a leader you should be aware of these changes and educating your staff as well. State and federal government creates the requirement for your staff to have so many in-service hours per year on specific topics. There is also continuing education that is a requirement for licensing renewal for nurses; and as for CNA's there are skills that are evaluated on a routine schedule as determined by the state regulations.

In your facility, are you afraid to accept patients or residents with complicated cases or who require special care? It is most likely because your staff is not comfortable performing necessary skills, or they are not professionally trained to meet that patient's need. Right? The best method to remedy this is to educate your staff on the specific need. If you are unable to educate your staff, there are resources within your community for trained professionals who will assist you with educating your team.

Avoid gossip



This is one thing that I feel a professional leader should not have to be told. Yet unfortunately there are leaders who do not know or respect that they should not participate in gossip. It is a mystery if they enjoy the attention or they do not recognize the harm that they are doing. Either way they should not be involved. It also should not be acceptable for staff.

Getting to know your staff while building a relationship is not the same as entertaining gossip. As you start to learn, or you get to learn your staff there is no reason that the staff should know your personal business. You effectively lead your staff or set expectations for your staff if you are partaking in gossip with your staff. If anything, when you hear gossip you need to end it right away. It is your responsibility.

It is unprofessional to share your staff personal issues or to discuss disciplinary actions with other staff members. In nurse management one should be aware you must always remain professional. It is awesome to have a great relationship with your nursing team, but your purpose is not to be their friend by disregarding your professional responsibility.

Be Empathetic



Are you able to approach situations with empathy? As a leader, you may have to imagine yourself in an unfamiliar position. Learn to lead without bias. Instead, lead with understanding this is not a weakness this is one of the greatest strengths to have as a leader. In your position you really do have to make some really tough decisions. And be mindful you need to be fair.

It is puzzling, how can you be in the service of healthcare and lack compassion for others? In the process of dealing with humans there will be diversity. Your empathy is not only for your staff, but also the patients you care for. Would you want to be under the care or leadership of someone with selective or no regard for others?

Your personal perspectives should be kept in check if it interferes with your ability to having an open mind and an open heart. Empathy shows that you care. In almost any relationship, personal or business, there is much concern of how much a person cares. Leading with empathy is a valuable strength.

Part II

Strategize for Success



Organized



Well is this not a no brainer? In the chaotic world of nursing things can go from great to asking is at a full a moon in the middle of the day. It is imperative to maintain control by being organized and ready for surprises. Having things in order is a must. Not just for your sanity, but for it is a responsibility.

When government officials come to evaluate your facility's performance, are you feeling like you are starting from scratch or do you feel confident in the information you are providing. So many facilities run around in chaos because they do not practice the show they perform when they are being surveyed. The anxiety of what they may or may not observe is challenging by itself. Being organized with records, your schedule and commitments are a huge factor in being an effective leader.

Already organized? Stay organized. It is a valuable asset to your leadership. If you are not an organized being, connect with someone on your team who can help you. It makes a difference.

Goal oriented



Do you remember when in nursing school you learned about creating a care plan? It's funny, student nurses think they will never write another care plan after graduation. And new nurses swear they will never have time to read the care plan that is available. Well goals are quite similar to a care plan. There is a problem, a plan to prevent or improve that problem and steps to obtain a specific goal by a targeted date.

Having goals for your facility is important. With all the responsibility of a nurse leader, you should have specific goals for yourself, the management team and your floor staff. How can you lead and not know where you are headed? There should be a plan in place to lead you and your team to success.

In providing customer service, your leadership is visible. Lack of direction is also visible. Consider how you want to be perceived. Lead as a confident nurse. Know where you are and where you are headed.

Vision



Vision statements are common now days all companies. A facility may have their own vision and mission statement. You should have your own vision and mission statement for your own personal govern. The business that you work for their vision and mission statement is to motivate you to reach a common goal for their company. Be mindful you should have your own vision for yourself that you can measure the quality and effectiveness of your own efforts. Ethically, your vision will hold you accountable for the decisions you make and the behaviors you display as a leader.

Your humility is a profound virtue. There are leaders who struggle with right and wrong because they do not have high standards. As hard as you worked to become a nurse and now a nurse leader, your ideals are what separates you from others. There are nurses that will cross the line for whatever reason, which usually is to cover their butt. The direction may come from a superior, but knowing your position is where you are morally responsible.

Part III

Integrity of the Nurse Leader



Integrity



Integrity is defined by the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles. This one word alone deserves its own section because no matter what your position may be, everyone should have integrity. Anywhere I have worked as a nurse, the first person to be blamed for the issues of the facility was management. Honestly rightfully so, management wears many hats and they are responsible for everyone and everything that is happening directly and indirectly under leadership. Yes, it will ultimately lead to management being at fault.

As the saying goes a team is only as strong as its weakest link. Imagine, how strong is the team if the team captain is weak? It is important to recognize that there are several words to define integrity. As you continue to read, you will learn about a specific selection of defining words for nurse leadership. I will share why these are important discussing the integrity of nurse leaders.

Honesty



As they use to say, honesty is the best policy. This still stands true today. You cannot have integrity without having honesty. As a nurse leader you need to be transparent with your staff. Remember, as a leader your goal is to lead a team of people to accomplish goals. Never make yourself believe you are doing everything alone. You are the team's leader and your relationship with your staff effects the results you are trying to obtain.

Have honest conversations with your nursing team. Your team needs to know what is expected of them. They also need to know the boundaries that are set. Honesty works both ways but know that in your position your integrity is most at risk. You must be able to be fair and honest no matter what mood you are in or who you may consider as a favorite.

Accountability



Accountability is one of the greatest arguments of a healthcare team. There is a disease that plagues teams. Do you know what that disease is called? Well it is called favoritism. Yes, I am sure you have heard of this or may have experienced it. See teams have a harder time working together because they know who the favorites are and are not.

As the team's leader this should not be obvious. It is obvious because someone is not being held accountable for their actions. I am sure you have those repeat offenders who are always late or calling off from work for example. The staff members that are there on their scheduled days and on time for the shift are offended.

Accountability is also the expectation of making sure task completed. Follow up and follow through of orders, care plans and policies & procedures are all a part of being accountable. I will not go into depth, but if it is a policy written in the employee handbook it always needs to be enforced. Your consistency will make you and your staff more accountable.

Self-awareness



If you don't see yourself, you can't understand your impact on others.

If you do not see yourself, you cannot understand your impact on others. Today is the best day to self-evaluate who you are. Knowing who you are and what you stand for is so important. Nurses are sometimes bullied by superiors who do not have the title or knowledge to be a nurse. Yet, they have the power to give directions. They delegate task that they cannot legally complete. Or there may be a superior pressuring you to do something you do not agree with and possibly know that it is unethical.

Then there is the emotional nurse leader who is either happy or mad all the time. Now this nurse is the type to do things based off of feelings instead of logic. A lot of times we lack self-control because we do not have a handle on who we truly are and where we stand. Nurse, you must be able to control your feelings and emotions.

Too many times a leader's unattractive attributes are shown in the heat of a moment or under pressure. When you are familiar with yourself you will be more inclined to manage your emotions. Staff depends on your professionalism regardless of their position. I am sure we can agree, indulging in negativity, inappropriate behavior or unprofessionalism is unacceptable.

Self-awareness is a quality skill for your morals and personal growth. It takes great strength to take on being a nurse leader. It is integral to your position to function accordingly. You must recognize how valuable you are as the nurse leader. It is amazingly easy to get burnout from the job. Protect your mental health to continue to perform at your peak.

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Assertiveness



Passive



Assertive



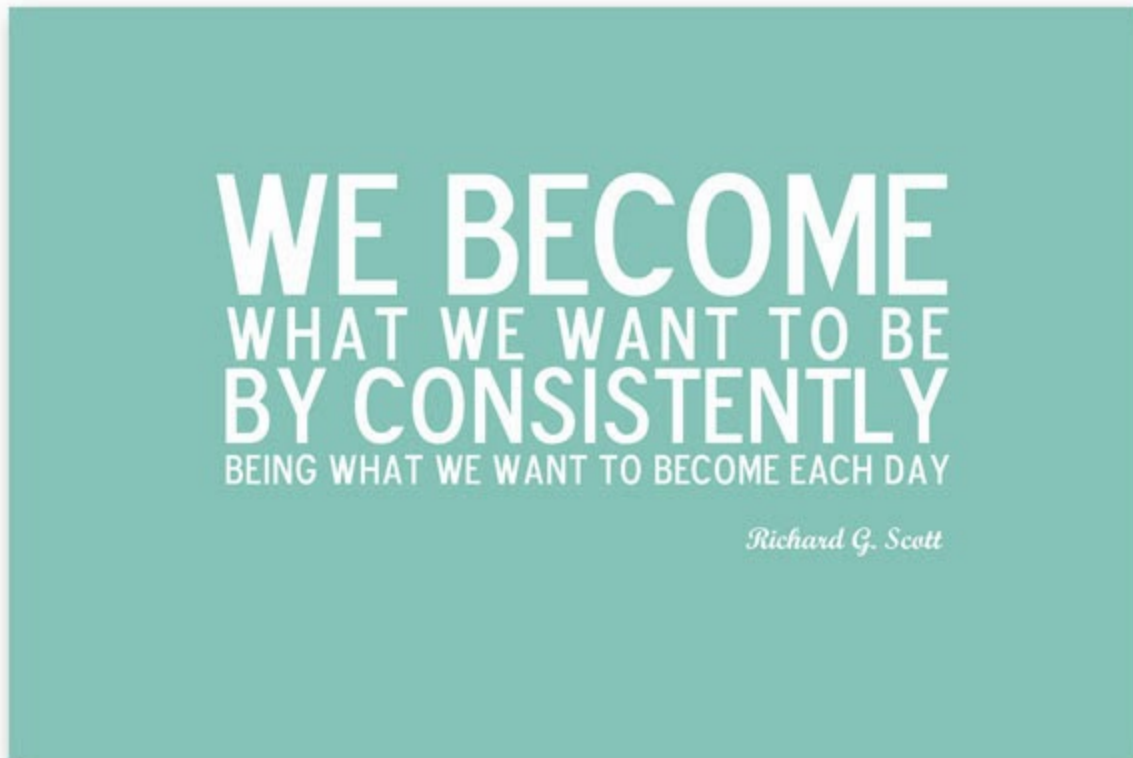
Aggressive

Now who says there is no in between? Well, being assertive is actually warranted in a nurse leadership position. Being passive will allow staff and family members to run right over you. Being aggressive will likely end your career. So, where is our happy medium? It is being a confident, straight forward leader. Being assertive does not mean be forceful, but it does require you saying what you mean and sticking to it.

As a leader, nurses are put in difficult situations. The greatest situation is being responsible for staff under you. Once you become a leader you have to make difficult decisions on behalf of others. It is imperative to understand that your professional relationship with your staff effects the performance and results.

Assertiveness is needed when you have challenges to cure a common problem. You may have to break bad habits and resolve issues that effect the team morale. Staff must take you seriously. They should not fear you, but out of respect they should honor your position. Do not be afraid to be assertive.

Reliable



As we close out, this last section on integrity you should become or stay reliable. It is a part of the process. Your consistency of request and expectations make you reliable. Your behavior and moods make you reliable. You are the nurse leader-you display strength, courage and leadership. You cannot change the rules daily, again, based from emotions. You must consistently lead as you lead the day before.

Being reliable is the stability your team needs. And so do you. As the top tier of the chain of command, follow up and follow through on your behalf is non-negotiable. You are expected to be skillful not only in nursing, but as a leader. You are expected to be responsible.

Your reliability depends on your commitment to do what you say you will do. It requires you to be honest, organized and humble. You are held accountable by your peers and should be held accountable by yourself. You are ultimately responsible for the wins and losses that are endured. Be consistent. Be reliable.

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