

# MANAGER TIPS FOR FOSTERING PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



- **Draw a new line in the sand. The behaviors and comments you ignore or address become the acceptable norms of the group.**
- Focus on creating a meaningful relationship, *not on controlling the behavior or situation.*
- Always speak up 100% of the time when you see an unprofessional behavior – especially the covert. Allowing exceptions to a standard of behavior will undermine your leadership.
- Timing is everything. Unless the situation is very emotionally charged, confront staff immediately - and in private.
- Realize that staff form cliques to stay safe. Your job is to create a safe environment where all staff can speak up. Meet with the clique; share your observations and the impact of the click – then listen and learn.
- Learn and share your unit stories, both positive and negative. Use these stories to inspire and motivate staff.
- Make yourself available to new staff. Seek feedback daily for the first week and then weekly about their orientation experience and observations.
- Staff watch EVERYTHING you say and do, no matter how insignificant it may seem to you! Role modeling is the most optimal way to teach and lead cultural change. Be aware of every interaction and comment.
- Never allow physicians to undermine or devalue staff. Always ask to meet with the physician in private and articulate the impact the disruptive behavior has on safe, patient care.
- Be honest. Are there staff who you would not want to care for your own family member? These staff members need a performance improvement plan stat. If they cannot meet expectations then they should not be working on the unit.
- Don't play "*He says, She says*". When staff bring a problem to you to fix you have two choices:

- Bring the absent staff member in and have a confidential meeting. “Nothing about me without me”
- Empower the complainer to solve the problem. Teach and role model how they might approach the situation. Key point: follow up on how it went.
- Use every opportunity you can to allow staff to solve their own problems. Give public and positive feedback to staff who take ownership of their work and relationships.
- Realize that just one negative employee will undermine the team by destroying trust. Address that negativity with a ‘zero tolerance’ attitude.
- Ask for feedback. Start with charge nurses and ask for information on how they perceive you could be a better manager. Encourage peer review.
- Help out on the floor if needed. This manager behavior has been proven to have the greatest impact. You can’t have a team if you’re not on it!
- Create a “Just Culture” around mistakes. Have staff talk about errors openly and in a professional manner that focuses on prevention of system errors.
- Role model healthy communication. Begin every staff meeting for a year with an example from your floor of healthy, assertive communication.
- Be authentic. You don’t have to have all the answers; you do have to be real.
- Create a support system
  - *With other managers* – have coffee or share a meal, extend your safe zone.
  - *With your staff* – give attention and support to those staff members who are in alignment with you. Build up a core of nurses who reflect your leadership/values.
  - *With Human Resources* – anticipate problems and work with HR to maintain unit integrity by seeking advice and support early in an intervention.
  - *For yourself* – take a mental health day yearly and plan a semi-annual weekend retreat. Prioritize and demonstrate self care.

**REMEMBER!**

*To change a culture, pay attention to LANGUAGE and BEHAVIOR – and there is nothing more powerful than the language and behavior of the LEADER.*