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Role Model the Elements of Emotional Intelligence

Strengthen your emotional intelligence by paying attention to four elements. Each element listed below is followed by a brief explanation and a checklist to-do.

Self-Awareness — your ability to accurately perceive your own emotions in the moment and understand your tendencies across situations.

- ☐ Recognize what "pushes your buttons."

Self-Management — your ability to use your awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively.

- ☐ Monitor your emotions to actively choose what you say and do.

Social Awareness — your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them. This is about perceiving what other people are thinking and feeling, even if you do not feel the same way.

- ☐ Listen and observe. These two skills are key in developing emotional intelligence.

Relationship Management — your ability to detect your own emotions and others' emotions in managing interactions to ensure clear communication and effective handling of conflicts.

- ☐ Build bonds with others that grow over time.

Preceptors Help Next Generation of Nurses Develop Emotional Intelligence with Communication and Practice

Although nursing involves cognitive and technical skills, there is growing recognition of the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that are needed to cope with the complex demands of today's health care systems. The ability of nurses to manage their own emotions and to understand their patients' feelings is an asset in providing care. Yet, recognizing and using the elements of emotional intelligence is overlooked in most nursing curricula. As a result, new nurses often learn emotional intelligence from you, their preceptors. Role modeling the elements of emotional intelligence is essential in developing the next generation of nurses and changing how nursing is perceived as a profession. Review these elements in the left column for ideas on how to role model emotional intelligence. In addition to being a role model, talk about emotional intelligence with your preceptees and encourage them to develop these skills.

Emotional intelligence is about open, honest communication — the same foundation that you used to build your relationship with your preceptee. This same concept needs to be extended to patient care situations. The quality of patient care will be enhanced when nurses can engage with patients, detect and act on cues and anticipate their patients' needs and wishes as they respond accordingly to address the physical, psychological and spiritual aspects of care. Emotional intelligence is developed with practice and feedback, and it evolves over time. This, too, is part of your role as a preceptor.

Emotional intelligence also affects professional team development. The way we communicate with and respond to each other sets the foundation and culture of our unit and, ultimately, the profession of nursing. Preceptors must lead by example in their communication skills. As a preceptor, you must have self-awareness and the ability to manage your emotions in a positive way. It is equally important to recognize the emotions of others and the underlying reasons for those emotions/reactions.

Reference: *Bradberry, T. & Greaves, J. Emotional Intelligence 2.0. Talent Smart Inc, San Diego, CA 2009.*

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