

## Preceptors' Coaching Roles

The coaching concept has been used in many professions — athletics, business, human resources and education. Coaches have a unique set of skills and talents, and their functions and techniques can be used by nurse preceptors. Two coaching roles that apply to preceptors include educator and evaluator.

### Educator

As coaches plan for the season, preceptors plan for the orientation process. This involves two vital stages — assessment and planning. During the early stages of orientation, preceptors ask the preceptees questions about themselves. This establishes the preceptor as a good listener and also provides information for designing the orientation. Rules are established during this phase by discussing a clearly defined set of expectations for the preceptee.

### Evaluator

Like a good coach, a preceptor understands the importance of evaluation. Just as a coach reviews game tapes, a preceptor reviews performance and provides feedback. As coaches modify training plans, preceptors can use information from orientees to modify the orientation plan in order to maximize learning.

### References:

- Davis, K, Middaugh, D, Davis, R (2008). *First Down! Keeping your team in the game with great coaching.* *Medsurg Nursing*, 17(6):434-436.
- Megginson, D, Clutterbuck, D (2005). *Techniques for coaching and mentoring.* Elsevier, St. Louis.

## The Preceptor as a Coach

A good athletic coach possesses several qualities that can be applied to a nurse preceptor. Enhancing these qualities in preceptors will strengthen the relationships between preceptors and preceptees while improving orientation programs.

### Knowledge of the Game

From the fundamentals to advanced strategies of a particular sport, a good coach knows the game. A preceptor is typically an experienced, competent nurse. Preceptors demonstrate their knowledge by their ability to guide the preceptee to the answers in order to strengthen self-esteem and competency.

### Willingness to Learn

Good coaches are knowledgeable about their sport, yet they must continue to learn. They often attend clinics and camps, and they seek tips from elite coaches. Preceptors also must stay up to date with new research and information in their field. How do you stay current in your role as a preceptor?

### Able to Motivate

The ability to instill motivation, a positive attitude and enthusiasm for the game into their players is a sign of a good coach. Preceptors accomplish this by inspiring new preceptees to believe in themselves and to strive for excellence in nursing.

### Able to Individualize and Adapt

An awareness of differences among athletes and orientees is important for coaches and preceptors. Individualizing techniques and styles is key to success on the field and in the hospital. Preceptors must pay attention to a preceptee's learning styles, emotional intelligence, strengths and opportunities for improvement.

### Effective Communicator

Effective communication skills are essential for the coach and the preceptor. Preceptors, like coaches, should be able to clearly explain their ideas. Clear communication means setting defined goals, giving direct feedback and reinforcing key messages. An important part of communication is good listening. Compassionate ears welcome comments and questions.

### Good Role Model

Coaches and preceptors lead by example. A coach who wants respect should show respect to a player. This is true for preceptors and preceptees. In addition, nurse preceptors also should role model nursing codes of conduct and nursing values.