Build, Maintain Preceptor Relationships With Trust

Enduring relationships are built on a foundation of trust. Since 1999, the nursing profession has ranked first in every year but one by a Gallup poll as the most “trusted” profession. The high level of trust that the world gives to nurses has been earned over centuries, and rightfully so. Patients and their families trust that nurses will listen to their concerns and serve as advocates for their needs. Nurses are charged with exemplifying care, competence and service. In turn, people and patients respond positively to these qualities.

Why then, do nurses also have the reputation of “eating their young?” Where is that same trust for each other that is shown to patients? Preceptors have the opportunity to change this image one nurse at a time and one unit at a time.

Trust does not just happen. It is earned and maintained by many small actions over time. Trust is the necessary precursor for feeling able to rely on a person, taking thoughtful risks and experiencing believable communication. As the preceptor, consider using some of these suggestions to build a foundation of trust with preceptees.

Communication
- Encourage and practice open honest communication.
- Avoid gossip.
- Really listen.
- Do not share preceptees’ mistakes with others on the unit. Follow this good rule: “If it is not YOUR story, don’t tell it.”

Consistency
- Always be there for your preceptees, no matter what the needs or questions.
- Follow through with them.
- “Walk the talk.”

Caring
- Foster and exhibit caring in all aspects of precepting.
- Show appreciation for jobs and tasks that are well done.
- Maintain an environment of respect and acceptance.
- Exhibit a genuine interest and commitment to the success of your preceptees.

Do what you say and say what you do.
- Do not make empty promises.
- Be there for preceptees, no matter what the reason.

Reference