

Find Your Leadership Style

Some preceptors are surprised when they learn that being an effective preceptor takes good leadership skills. Preceptors use leadership skills to model the behaviors they want to teach their preceptees.

Two contrasting leadership styles discussed in the preceptor academy that preceptors use are the parenting model and the empowered model.

In the parenting model, the leaders see themselves as parents and operate on soliciting compliance rather than individual motivation. In this model, the preceptors are authoritative, and the preceptees are subordinate. This model is problematic because it interferes with the preceptees' ability to grow into independent nurses and leaders.

Preceptors who use the empowered model help the preceptees become competent and capable. These preceptors seek to foster autonomous nurses who can assume their nursing roles with confidence. Empowered nurses make their own decisions and take responsibility for their actions.

References

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Making A Case For The Empowered Nurse

The hierarchical structure within health care and nursing is changing to provide a more equitable balance of authority among staff. At the same time, preceptors must learn how to empower their preceptees and prepare them to function in an environment that calls for increased quality and productivity. Many nurse leaders have called for a greater effort to train nurses to be "empowered" because empowered nurses practice with greater self-esteem and confidence, are more self-directed and feel more successful. Empowered nurses will take the initiative required in today's demanding health care environment to go beyond working from a checklist of tasks to providing excellent, well-rounded patient care. Empowerment must be centered on the patients' needs.

Empowerment does not give an individual carte blanche power in decision making. It means responsible freedom to make decisions that will promote mutual goals. Preceptors can hone their skills in leading and teaching from an empowerment perspective. However, empowerment must be earned by preceptees. The following tips will assist preceptors in adopting an empowerment model of leadership for their preceptees.

- Assess the preceptees' foundation to ensure they have the abilities and basic tools in place, including skills, knowledge and resources, to be successful.
- Set clear expectations so the preceptees know their goals.
- Ensure ongoing two-way communication between you and your preceptees. Communicate goals and their progress toward meeting the goals.
- Be caring and demonstrate your commitment to the success of the preceptees. Convey a joint sense of responsibility.
- Establish a trusting relationship that allows for an increasing level of responsibility as confidence and skills grow.
- Be a positive and proactive role model. Encourage and recognize the contributions of others.
- Coach the preceptees to feel more comfortable with increased levels of responsibility. Guide them without micromanaging or doing the work for them.
- Hone your evaluation skills and measure goals agreed to by preceptees. Recognize their successes and identify strategies to grow and improve.

When nurses are empowered, they are energized to do their best work and reach higher goals. Nurses, in turn, teach their patients to be empowered as they advocate for their health care needs and are active participants in their care plans.