

## Healthy Work Environments — It's a Two-Way Street

Often when I ask nurses to describe what a Healthy Work Environment “looks” like, they are quick to list things like — one that is free from bullying or harassing behavior, good benefits, and responsive managers and administrators who support good nurse-physician communication. Rarely, if ever, do nurses articulate how they can contribute to the HWE. As preceptors, it is your job to help new nurses understand the four things that each of us needs to do to make our work environment as healthy as possible.

- 1. Understand what is expected of you in your job.**

If you believe you are expected to perform certain tasks and functions in your role but those are not in sync with how you will be evaluated, then you need to seek clarification from your supervisor or manager. Whether you are a clinical nurse or a chief nursing officer, knowing what is expected of you is critical for you to be successful. So, ask early, ask often.

- 2. Give honest, constructive feedback when emotions are not running high.**

Obviously, the time to give feedback is not in the middle of a code blue. Screaming or chastising adults rarely changes their behavior. It is best to think about what you want to share with your co-workers, even create a draft to help eliminate any potential phrases that are loaded with emotion or bias. We all need to be able to provide feedback in a way that is respectful and consistent with professional behavior. Consider the book, *Crucial Conversations*, for how best to do this.

- 3. Allow yourself to receive honest, constructive feedback.**

None of us likes to hear that we have areas that need improvement. Human nature simply doesn't want to believe or accept that we have potentially fallen short of our goals. However, it is called a “practice” discipline for a reason. When you hear feedback that indicates you should be working in a different way, sit back and process the information before you give a knee-jerk response. Perhaps there is good information that will help you to be a better co-worker.

- 4. Give your co-workers sincere, positive feedback.**

Everyone wants to hear that they have been a helpful colleague. Even your manager or director needs to hear when they have given you sound advice or helped you with an issue. When you think about it, we all like praise and support. There may not be time during the day to thank your co-worker at the moment, but seek him or her out at the end of the day and offer your appreciation.

Research has shown that a HWE has a positive impact on patient outcomes. Of course, a HWE should be the goal of every organization at every level. It is clearly the role of that organization to put in place mechanisms that contribute to a HWE, but it takes all of us to make it happen.

### REFERENCES

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