

Professionalism in this Age of “Duty Hours:” Seven Essential Elements to Promote Excellence

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PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of the program, participants should be able to:

- 1. Describe seven elements of professionalism and explain the principle underlying each element.**
- 2. Describe the important elements to include on any form that evaluates the professionalism of students, residents, faculty, staff and administrators.**
- 3. Describe a five-step process to give critical, instructive feedback to an individual who exhibits inappropriate behavior or unprofessional conduct, which includes strategies to manage the individual’s reactions and the overall interaction.**

PRESENTATION OUTLINE

**The Self-Discipline of Being a Professional:
Seven Essential Elements to Promote Excellence**

**“Do As I Do, Not As I Say:”
How to Be an Effective Role-Model**

**Difficult Feedback Made Easy:
How to Effectively Give Instructive Feedback**

Can Unprofessional Behavior Be Corrected?

THE SELF-DISCIPLINE OF BEING A PROFESSIONAL *SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO PROMOTE EXCELLENCE*

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BEING PRESENT

Your attendance in the hospital, clinic, lab or office and at lectures and meetings is *expected*, not optional. Be alert, focused, and ready to handle your assignments and responsibilities. This is a reflection of your commitment to your institution, your profession and, most importantly, your patients.

BEING PRESENTABLE

As a clinician, you should always be careful to dress in a professional manner and project a professional image in the way you talk and behave. This facilitates building trust with patients and colleagues.

BEING PUNCTUAL

Other people's time is just as valuable to them as your time is to you. Respect it (and them) by being on time for assignments. If you're going to be late, call ahead or offer a "sincere" apology when you arrive.

BEING PREPARED

When you arrive at the hospital, clinic, office, lab or classroom, be ready to handle your assigned tasks and duties. Set aside time each night to read up on patients and/or to review the next day's procedures.

Think of each patient as a test and ask yourself, "*How prepared am I to take these tests today?*"

At the end of each day, ask yourself, "*How well did I do on the tests I took today?*"

Daily reflection, review, revision, and remediation are the keys to life-long learning.

BEING POLITE

The most challenging aspect of being a professional is maintaining a calm demeanor, especially during stressful encounters. Inappropriate or disrespectful behavior cannot be justified by how you feel (e.g., "I yelled because I was angry").

Avoid distractions from electronic devices during important conversations with patients and colleagues. Treat others the way you want to be treated. Remember "please" and "thank you" never go out of style!

BEING PROFICIENT

Always look for ways to improve your performance. Feel good about your successes and accomplishments but don't "rest on your laurels."

As you develop confidence and competence in your clinical skills, strive to excel.

Use persistence and perseverance to turn your mistakes and failures into learning opportunities.

BEING PROACTIVE

Throughout your personal and professional growth, take the initiative to conduct regular *self-assessments* (what you know and can do) and *self-evaluations* (how well you do things) to identify your strengths as well as any deficiencies and/or areas for improvement.

Learn to *integrate your life* by identifying and anticipating the *flashpoints* when your professional duties and obligations *intersect* with the demands of your personal life.

Determine the differing needs to be met in these situations and develop strategies as well as contingency plans to ensure you effectively handle each situation.

~~BEING PERFECT~~

The Five-Step Process for giving Critical Instructive Feedback

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If the interaction went smoothly, then it did NOT go well

1. **DENIAL** (Expect it---it's a normal response to the sting of criticism)
The person will likely try to protect himself/herself (we all do). In anticipation of this, begin the conversation by pointing out that you are talking with the person because you care; you are concerned about some aspect of his/her performance. You want to help him/her.

Strategy:

1. Describe the mistake/problem in clear, succinct and specific terms.
2. Describe what needs to be done to correct the mistake/problem.
3. Describe what will happen if the mistake/problem is corrected as well as what will happen if the mistake is NOT corrected.

Monitor your frustration level. It will rise as the person continues to deny the mistake or problem. If you don't seem to get through, *restate 1-2-3*. If you fail to break through the denial, call a "time-out" for a brief period, or stop and schedule another meeting.

2. **ANGER/UPSET** (Acknowledge the feeling not the comments)
When the denial wall (i.e., excuses) comes tumbling down, the person will likely become angry or upset. These feelings are *INNER-FOCUSED but OUTER-DIRECTED*.

Strategy:

1. Stay focused on the mistake or problem. Do not get distracted by the "lashing out" comments, insults or other statements---don't "bite the bait."
2. Allow the person to be angry or upset, but remind him/her the goal is to recognize and correct the mistake or problem.
3. Resist the tendency to feel that you have to justify your position or your actions
repeat 1-2-3 in Step 1.
4. Watch the person's reactions. Call a "time-out" if the person becomes too upset or appears threatening. Give the person time to regain composure or cool off.
5. If the person becomes unable to continue the conversation or you are feeling too frustrated, stop and set a date for a follow-up meeting. If necessary, consult a mental health specialist to determine if the person should undergo a more formal evaluation.

NOTE: With some individuals, you may not progress through Step 1 or Step 2!

3. **UNDERSTANDING** (Hear it directly from the learner)

The key to correcting the mistake or resolving the problem is getting the person to “own up” and take responsibility for his/her learning, behavior and actions!

Strategy:

1. Watch for verbal and nonverbal signs that the person understands the nature of the mistake/problem and the necessary corrective steps.
2. Ask the person to **TELL YOU IN HIS/HER OWN WORDS** what s/he did wrong, what s/he must do to correct it, and what will happen is s/he does or does not correct the mistake or problem (i.e., **“I did X, I need to do Y to correct it, ...”**).

PLEASE DO NOT ASK: “Do you know what the mistake/problem is?” *or*
 “Do you know what you have to do to correct it?”
The person simply has to nod his/her head---which is basically meaningless!

3. Take notes as the person states the problem, the corrective steps and the consequences. This will serve as a record of the interaction. Writing notes is also a useful technique if the interaction gets heated.

Be careful-----when the person states what s/he did wrong, s/he may revert back to Step 1 by denying the problem or minimizing its seriousness. If the person does this, **repeat 1-2-3 from Step 1** and reiterate that your goal is to **HELP** him/her correct the mistake or resolve the problem. If the person tries to negotiate different corrective steps, move into Step 4.

4. **BARGAINING** (Know what is within your authority or control)

The goal is to correct the mistake or solve the problem, not to minimize it.

Strategy:

1. Remind the person (and yourself) that your goal is to help him/her correct the mistake or solve the problem.
2. Repeat the corrective action(s) described in Step 1. Some individuals will try to negotiate different corrective steps or consequences.
3. Decide whether there is room for negotiation. If so, decide what **YOU** are willing to negotiate. Remember to negotiate only those changes within your authority.
4. Don't hesitate to say, “Sorry, this is **NOT NEGOTIABLE.**”

NOTE: If you are unsure whether something is within your authority, be candid and say, **“Let me check with and I will get back to you.”**

5. **ACCEPTANCE/AGREEMENT** (Make it written or oral)

The goal is to reaffirm the person's responsibility to correct the mistake or problem and your willingness to help.

Strategy:

1. Restate the corrective steps to be taken and the consequences for achieving (or failing to achieve) them.
2. Conclude by emphasizing the importance of the meeting, recognizing the effort involved to reach this final stage, and providing encouraging comments.

GENERAL GUIDELINE: If repeated conversations occur or the “seriousness” of the problem increases, there should be a written record of the interactions (i.e., documentation). If the problem is not corrected, develop a formal remediation plan signed by both parties.