

# ***Positioning Yourself As A Leader***

***1.5 Contact Hours***

***Presented by:***

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# Positioning Yourself as a Leader

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Objectives:

After completing this course, the learner will be able to:

1. Identify the 5 elements of a goal
2. Discuss the 10 ways to develop yourself as a leader
3. Identify the 7 principles of active listening
4. Identify the functions of a mentor.

## Introduction

Motivating people to work together to accomplish great things is the fundamental definition of a leader.<sup>1</sup> Leaders are committed to public service, nurturing new leaders, and making a lasting contribution to the public good, and are models for anyone who hopes to motivate and inspire.<sup>2</sup> Leadership means having a vision of a greater good and initiating actions to achieve that vision. In making decisions to attain their goals, leaders create change, and that change becomes history.<sup>3</sup> Nursing leadership uses personal traits to constructively and ethically influence others, through a process where clinical and organizational outcomes are achieved through collective efforts; the nurse leader engages in relationship building to empower those being led toward achievement.<sup>4</sup> Leadership in healthcare is an essential skill. It is recognized as the ability to influence, network, empower and facilitate those colleagues around us.<sup>5</sup> Several factors have been identified regarding perceptions and beliefs about leadership development in nursing: self-

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<sup>1</sup> Gergen, D. (2007, November 19). America's best leaders – The spirit of teamwork. *U.S. News & World Report*, 143(18), 42-64.

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, M. The legacy of leaders. *Nursing Leadership (CJNL)*, 18(3) 2005: 23-25

<sup>4</sup> Yoder-Wise, P. *Leading and Managing in Nursing*. 1999. Mosby, Inc. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, St. Louis Missouri. Pg. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Armstrong, S. (2007). Effective healthcare leadership. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 15(1), 123-124.

confidence; innate leader qualities; a progression of experiences and successes including education; influence of significant people who expressed confidence in, and encouraged the nurse leader; and personal life factors.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, leadership was considered an art that only certain people were born with. In the 1930s, psychologists thought that leadership was more effective in small groups, though in the 1940s, it was believed that there were universal traits common to all leaders. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it was thought that there were key behavioral patterns that resulted in leadership. Later on in the 1960s-70s, researchers tried to match behavior patterns that worked best in certain situations. In the 1980s, it was decided by researchers that leadership was doing the right thing to achieve excellence. But then, of course, one had to know what the right thing was. The problem with all these theories, though, was that they were proposed mostly by management science and social psychology researchers, which excluded views of leadership in other disciplines. Not only was there a problem with leadership theories, but the definition and models of leadership changed considerably throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to where we are today.

Professional development starts with self-awareness. Who are you? What do you like to do? What are your strengths, weaknesses, skills, talents, and interests? Ask these questions of someone close to you whom you trust to get feedback for greater insight. The nurse leader is a driving force; she is a source of inspiration and a role model. A nurse leader has developed keen listening skills, and can also constructively critique others. All professional nurses should be displaying

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<sup>6</sup> Bondas, T. (2006). Paths to nursing leadership. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 14(5), 332-339.

and honing leadership behaviors, whether they are at the bedside, or in administrative roles.

Healthcare is constantly evolving. Change is inevitable and originates inside as well as outside the healthcare organization. It influences how we work, think, and lead, and encompasses all systems in the organization. Leaders manage change. How nurses respond to change impacts how those changes affect the organization. Effective change leaders gather accurate, comprehensive, timely information continuously about the progress of the change process.<sup>7</sup> To be an effective leader, nurses must possess excellent communication and interpersonal skills, as well as be knowledgeable in the art of interacting with others, managing conflict, and how to empower others. Problem-solving and decision-making are also important attributes for a nurse leader; both begin with the ability for critical thinking. Something else that leaders know is that the focus should not be on themselves to make a difference, but on the team. Leaders reflect a spirit of teamwork.

### **Ways to Develop Yourself as a Successful, Confident Leader**

#### ***1. Purpose***

Rick Warram, in his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, asks, “What drives you?” Leaders know that answer. Leaders understand the purpose in their own lives and what they wish to accomplish personally and professionally. A leader must be able to express belief in the value of his or her goals. Leaders are also able to self-reflect and act on those insights.

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<sup>7</sup> 4, pg. 83.

Self-awareness is a key to strong leadership.<sup>8</sup> A leader's purpose is to guide the team toward achieving a goal by motivating them and helping them focus. It involves accountability and responsibility. Leaders turn challenges into opportunities.

## ***2. Goals***

Leaders should be able to envision goals and have a clear plan of action as well as strategies to achieve those goals. Goals should be specific and have a deadline. To promote commitment, instructions and support should be provided to anyone on the team. The plan must be constantly evaluated and feedback obtained as early as possible. Goals assist leaders to focus on what is relevant and important in achieving those goals.

Goals should have the following characteristics. They should be:

- Specific – to clearly see what you want to achieve (write them down)
- Measurable – you should be able to measure the progress
- Attainable – they should be challenging but reasonable
- Relevant - know why you want to reach the goal
- Timely – give yourself a specific time limit or deadline

## ***3. Manage Your Reputation***

Your reputation is one of your most valuable assets; it is what others believe about you. It is honorable character and selfless service. Henry Ford said, “You can't build a reputation on what you are going to do.” Your reputation is built around what you do and how you do it. It doesn't matter what you say to people, they look at how you act. For most people, it takes a long time to build a good reputation, but it can be destroyed in the

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blink of an eye. It is important to build and maintain a good reputation in all aspects of your life – professional and personal.

#### ***4. Actively Listen***

Listening is voluntary. Experts estimate that we hear only 10% of the information around us. Leaders know that they don't have all the answers. They are open to suggestions and know that their success is dependent on a group effort. Leaders also actively listen – they focus and tune in to the individual who is speaking – without judging. This means that they are focused on the speaker, and listen to the conversation so that they are able to repeat the speaker's intended meaning. It does not mean developing defensive responses in your head while the other person is communicating. Principles of active listening include:

- Conveying interest in what the other person is saying
- Encouraging the other person to expand on his or her thinking
- Being able to garner the key ideas from the conversation and validate
- Being able to clarify perceptions
- Filtering out distractions
- Not jumping to conclusions
- Being aware of tone and body language

#### ***5. Continuing Education/Improvement***

John F. Kennedy said, "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

Effective leaders are not born, they are made. They are continually studying, training, and gaining experience in all aspects of their personal and professional lives, including leadership skills. Leaders also create opportunities for progressive experiences and successes, and inspire others.

## **6. Collaboration**

Leaders must be able to creatively collaborate with other managers and staff to enhance quality outcomes. Effective accomplishment of objectives is the result of collaboration, which involves respect and compromise. Collaboration involves analyzing situations and defining the conflict at a higher level where shared goals are identified and commitment to work together is generated.<sup>9</sup> Through cooperative problem-solving, collaboration helps the team learn and grow and share different viewpoints, and find common ground. It fosters brainstorming. Cooperation and communication are important aspects of collaboration.

Teamwork is required if you want to get better results from less work and if you want to accomplish anything of value. Working with other people toward a common goal is also extremely rewarding and fulfilling. John Maxwell, in his book *Talent is Never Enough*, shares what he's learned about teamwork:

- Teamwork divides the effort and multiplies the effort
- Talent wins game, but teamwork wins championships
- Teamwork is not about you
- Great teams create community
- Adding value to others adds value to you

It's also important to develop the team by having the right people on the team and then help those people grow and reach their potential – good leaders do their best to see the abilities of others and help them recognize and develop those abilities.<sup>10</sup> Don't forget to give the credit for the success to the team, as well take responsibility yourself for the lion's share of the blame when the result is unsuccessful.

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<sup>9</sup> 4, pg. 327.

<sup>10</sup> Maxwell, J. (2007). *Talent is never Enough*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc. Pg. 259-264.

## **7. Be a Role Model/Mentor**

According to Homer's *Odyssey*, when King Odysseus went off to fight in the Trojan War, he left his son Telemachus in the hands of a wise old man named Mentor. Mentor was charged with the task of teaching the young man wisdom. More than 2,000 years later, the word *mentor* soon came to mean "a wise and responsible tutor" - an experienced person who advises, guides, teaches, inspires, challenges, corrects, and serves as a role model. Leaders are driving forces and are regarded as a source of inspiration and role models for future nurse leaders.<sup>11</sup> They are a source of guidance and support and can also help create opportunities for a mentee's achievement. Role models and mentors encourage professional growth. Some functions of a mentor:

- Sponsorship
- Exposure/protection
- Coaching
- Challenging assignments
- Role modeling
- Mutual positive regard
- Counseling
- Social interaction<sup>12</sup>

Characteristics of a good mentor:

- Excellent listening skills
- Possess patience and understanding
- They give more than receive
- They have the ability to engage in long-term relationships
- Personal integrity and ethical conduct

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<sup>12</sup> 4, pg. 410.



The goal of a mentor is to provide guidance and support by sharing knowledge, experience and wisdom.

### ***8. Manage Conflict***

Conflict is a natural by-product of human interaction. Differences in knowledge, perceptions, and decisions frequently surface when people communicate. This can cause disagreement, misunderstanding, and conflict. The communication process is not harmed if disagreement is managed constructively. But, when disagreement turns into conflict, it causes defensiveness, which strains the communication. If the conflict is not resolved, it will accumulate eventually to the point where communication stops.

The key to non-defensive, or open, communication is to avoid blaming. You must focus on the behavior or situation, not the person:

- Start your opening sentence with the problem or the behavior
- Use non-judgmental words
- Stay calm
- Take ownership of the problem

The cost of unresolved conflicts can be enormous in terms of time, money, and momentum. It also affects morale and work quality. Four essential elements of resolving conflict:

- Preserve self-esteem in others
- Listen with empathy
- Accept others as unique
- Express your views honestly

The first step to resolving conflict is to determine if the other person is willing.

Resolution requires the efforts of both parties.<sup>13</sup>

### ***9. Learn From Mistakes***

Many decisions we make may be wrong, but mistakes can be minimized. The first step is to accept the bad decision. A leader takes responsibility for his or her mistakes and approaches them as learning experiences that will inevitably teach a valuable lesson for future success. A leader will take a constructive attitude toward the mistake and look for causes – the questions of how, what, where, when, why should be examined. Could the cost of the mistake be minimized and how should it be handled? Then act on the decision.

### ***10. Realize Your Full Potential***

To realize your full potential, you must have knowledge of who you are. You must be aware of what is going on in your life, both personally and professionally. Leaders understand cause and effect of the decisions they make, and are able to take responsibility for their actions and make changes along the way. They know there is always room for improvement. The best leaders meet the following criteria – they:

#### **Set direction –**

- By building a shared sense of purpose
- By setting out to make a positive social impact
- By implementing innovative strategies

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<sup>13</sup> Denton, M. (2007). Effective Communication. Educational Presentation for Nurses.

### **Achieve results –**

- Of significant breadth or depth
- That have a positive social impact
- That are sustainable
- That exceed expectations

### **Cultivate a culture of growth –**

- By communicating and embodying positive core values
- By inspiring others to lead <sup>14</sup>

Many leaders are tough and insensitive and don't connect with their employees. They may rely on scare tactics, be on a power trip, and attempt to demand respect by exerting their authority. Other leaders want to be friends with those on the team and would rather be popular, but they don't hold employees accountable. Successful, confident leaders are not afraid to address problems and deal with conflict, but they do so with an open mind and consideration for the opinions of others. However, they don't compromise their integrity. People are drawn to leaders who value them – they will approach a leader who makes them feel encouraged, helps them grow, and treats them honestly.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, J. (August, 2007). Velvet-covered bricks. *Leadership Wired*, 10(12).