



### Did you know that...?

- The nursing assistant role was developed during World War I when the Red Cross enlisted the help of untrained volunteers to assist nurses.
- In 1990 alone, the Red Cross trained 40,000 nursing assistants! This organization continues to offer CNA training programs today.
- In the U.S., there are more than 3 million direct care workers: nursing assistants, home health aides and personal care aides...and there will be a need for 1 million more by 2016!

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Nursing assistants provide up to 80% of direct hands-on client care.

# A Nursing Teamwork Fact Sheet

Just for You from In the Know!

## CNAs AND NURSES ARE A TEAM!



**Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.**

~Author Unknown

Teamwork is great, right? Chances are, everyone at your workplace would agree that client care improves when nurses and CNAs work together as a team. Unfortunately, it can be a challenge!

If you work in a tense atmosphere where

people have problems giving or receiving respect, you may feel:

- Stressed out and anxious.
- Unable to get a good night's sleep.
- Unhappy with your relationships at home.
- More injury or accident-prone at work.
- Like you get less done at work every day.
- That clients are less satisfied with their care.
- More and more frustrated with your job.

## A LITTLE R-E-S-P-E-C-T GOES A LONG WAY

Giving or receiving respect. Which should come first? If you ask your co-workers, they might say things like:

**"I'm not giving anyone respect who doesn't show me respect first."**

**"I'd better show the nurses some respect so that they like me."**

**"My supervisor deserves respect and so do I!"**

If you take a look at these three responses, you'll probably agree that the first one sounds pretty aggressive. Let's face it: if everyone had

that attitude, no one would ever make the first move! Instead, everyone would be waiting for someone else to be respectful first.

The second response shows a lack of confidence; it's more passive. Respect is not about liking or disliking someone. Two co-workers might not enjoy each other's company, but they can still respect each other.

The last response is the most assertive response. Remember—being assertive means that you expect to both give and receive respect.

## WHEN COMMUNICATION BREAKS DOWN

**In the nursing field, a number of things can get in the way of assertive communication, such as:**

### SHIFT WORK

- Most healthcare organizations function around the clock—with two or three shifts. In order to provide quality client care, employees on every shift must communicate effectively with each other. This doesn't always happen! And, miscommunication can cause resentment. For example:
  - The day shift thinks the night shift has it "easy" because the clients are asleep.
  - The night shift thinks the day shift leaves extra work for them on purpose.
  - Employees from each shift are more loyal to each other than they are to their unit or organization.

Does any of that sound familiar?

### EDUCATION VERSUS EXPERIENCE

- It happens throughout healthcare. Nurses with decades of experience may feel they know more than some new physician who is still "wet behind the ears". Or someone who has been a CNA for twenty years may resent being told what to do by a nurse who just graduated school.

### MORE THAN ONE "BOSS"

- No matter where you work, you probably have more than one nurse delegating tasks to you. For example, if you are a home health aide, you may have three, four—or more—nurses supervising you in the field. If you work in a healthcare facility, you may have several RNs delegating work to you. It can get confusing to have more than one "boss" at a time. Each nurse may feel that his/her clients take priority—and you may feel like you are being pulled in ten directions at once!



**Be sure you are clear about what your nursing supervisor expects from you. If you have questions about your assignment, don't be shy. ASK!**

### SHORT STAFFING

- With the current nursing shortage and lean economic times, many nurses and nursing assistants are busier than ever. They are doing more client care with fewer staff members—and may feel that they don't have time to communicate effectively.

### DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

- This is similar to the conflict between education and experience. For example, a 60 year old nursing assistant may have trouble communicating with a 22 year old nurse. Or, a 50 year old nurse may find it hard to communicate with an 18 year old CNA. They just don't seem to speak the same language or have the same approach towards work!

**If nurses and nursing assistants aren't getting along as well as they should, it's the clients who suffer. In the end, sharing information about clients is the most important communication for your nursing team. Whether you communicate in writing, with an oral report, during a meeting or one-on-one, it's all about working together for the best interests of the client. Don't let anything get in the way of that.**

*For more information on this issue, please check out our inservice entitled **The CNA/Nurse Relationship**.*