

Improve Nurse Recruitment and Retention by Being Maslow Conscious

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Abraham Maslow developed his hierarchy of needs in 1954 when his book, *Motivation and Personality* was first published. Nurses and other healthcare professionals have used his philosophy to understand patient behavior, but don't usually think of it as affecting themselves. Take a fresh look at Maslow's hierarchy to consider how it can help you to understand the nursing crisis.

Maslows hierarchy of needs

Maslow developed a concept that distinguished five levels of human needs ranging from basic, lower order needs to social and psychological needs of a higher order. As you might remember, people need to have lower order needs met first, before they can focus on higher order needs.

Consider how we use this hierarchy in patient care. Patients who struggle with obtaining their basic needs for food and shelter won't be able to concentrate on higher level needs such as health teaching.

Are you ignoring Maslow's hierarchy of needs relative to nurses? Consider common nursing complaints: Under-staffing, unsatisfactory work environments and mandatory overtime.

Under-staffing

Nurse Jones arrives at work to find that only three licensed staff are working instead of the usual five. She is told "We'll do what we can to help you."

Nurse Jones is scared and angry. She is scared that she will miss treatable complications or make a serious medical error. She is angry because so many previous nurses have resigned due to multiple under-staffing situations. Management has violated Nurse Jones's basic needs for safety and security.

Lack of staff also affect injury rates. Transferring patients from their beds to their chairs with too few staff is a frequent cause of serious back injury, a violation of basic physical needs.

Unsatisfactory work environments

Negative cultures interfere with nurses' needs. The lack of courtesy and respect chips away at a nurse's sense of self, destroying his or her energy and motivation.

Some organizations have endangered nurses physical needs by resisting adoption of safer equipment, such as needleless IV systems, because it is more expensive.

Mandatory overtime

Some organizations use mandatory overtime for their convenience rather than take the time to arrange appropriate staffing. The example here is an 11-7 nurse who discovers that she or he has been mandated to work 7-3 as well. The nurse loses his or her need for proper rest, a basic need.

Nurses also lose a sense of safety when their fatigue increases their medical error rate. For example giving 50 or more medications after having already worked all night is a recipe for disaster. When mandatory overtime is carried to its extreme, nurses lose so much social life and have so much fatigue that they can't maintain even a minimal life balance.

What organizations lose

Nurses

Nurses seek other jobs to avoid undesirable working conditions. They leave in an effort to prevent burnout, however,

they often find that the new environment is no better than the one that they had left.

Money

You lose a lot of money when a nurse leaves. According to the Advisory Board, a private research firm in Washington DC, a 500 bed hospital can save \$800,000 if they reduce nurse turnover by only 3%, say from 13 percent to 10 percent.

Quality care

Tired nurses can't respond well to patient needs. You should maximize your nurses' ability to do their job well, because quality patient care determines your reputation and profitability.

Improve nurse recruitment and retention

Physical:

In a Maslow conscious environment, nurses thrive. They are more productive, have more energy, and also have the necessary patience for our very demanding work.

Safety:

In a Maslow conscious environment, nurses flourish because they are supported by safety conscious organizations. They can feel proud of their patient care.

Social

In a Maslow conscious environment, nurses feel appreciated within organizations that resonate with a spirit of friendliness and warm support.

Self-esteem

In a Maslow conscious environment, nurses feel validated because their organizations regard them as autonomous professionals.

Self actualization

In a Maslow conscious environment, healthcare organizations find substantial value, because self-actualized nurses set their organizations apart from the competition. These nurses innovate, outline improved work practices, and influence other staff members to function at peak performance. Patients notice the difference, and your reputation grows. When exceptional professionals want to work for your organization, you achieve a critical mass of excellence that drives your success.

Consider becoming Maslow conscious to improve nurse recruitment and retention. You will gain respectability and profitability.

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