

Skill Security

Create More Leverage in your Nursing Practice

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Healthcare is becoming more stressful for nurses and we don't always have enough control over it. Patient care is more complex and nurses are expected to care for more patients. Quality of care is often left to chance. Gaining control of your nursing practice can help you manage this increased stress.

One way to accomplish this is to have a multitude of skills, *skill security*, and the leverage to say, "No" to situations, which are personally or professionally unwise. For example, what should you do if you are asked to do something that is wrong or not in the best interests of the patient. The best solution is to educate the person and explain why it should not be done. Since healthcare organizational behavior is sometimes less than ideal, it is often more practical to say that you would rather pursue one of your other options than violate your personal code of ethics. Having other options gives you the leverage to be in control.

Skill security benefits your employer and earns advancement because you will be helping them to achieve their goals. Organizations increase the return on their nursing investments by cross-training staff.

Some of the most valuable skills are IV certification, venipuncture, CPR instructor, ACLS certification and leadership and management skills. Accept every opportunity to learn how to use equipment such as different kinds of IV pumps, peritoneal dialysis machines, and cardiac and oxymetry monitors. Other skills worth developing are technical and business writing, public speaking, teaching and computer competence. Many nurses consistently turn down education opportunities because they are more comfortable doing the same job every day. They don't want to change unless they're forced. It is better to be pro-active, anticipate change, and

create the opportunities that you want.

Choosing skills security is challenging and involves hard work. Have the right attitude - be willing to learn and get out of your comfort zone. Spend some of your your free time attending education programs. Read about many specialties.

Many free education opportunities are available where you work, but you must invest some of your own money to attend others. Take responsibility for your actions and be sure that your work is done with quality and competence. Honestly assess your abilities, understand your limitations, and be smart and brave enough to ask all the necessary questions.

Cross training improves your competence. For example, experience in both managed care and physician's office nursing creates understanding of the other's perspective. Cross training in acute care and home care helps you plan better discharges while cross training in med-surg and psychiatry makes you more effective in both specialties.

If you are a new graduate or have been in the same job for some time, consider asking for a temporary transfer or change jobs every few years to learn a new specialty. Find opportunities to learn something new every week. Volunteer for organization wide committees or teach a class to staff or patients. Join a public speaking club such as Toastmasters or a community writer's group. Take courses at local colleges. Join a civic, theatre or professional organization. Network with people in other specialties and listen to what they have to say. Get involved and change some of your activities every year for more diverse experience.

Put yourself in control. Create the personal and professional life that you want. Practice within your code of ethics. Give yourself skill security and have more personal and professional choices.

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