Promoting Professional Conduct

Professional Conduct, Teamwork, and Patient Safety
Safety and quality of patient care are dependent on teamwork, communication, and a collaborative work environment.
Performance Objectives

- Identify two approaches for responding to unprofessional conduct—enforcement and engagement.
- Describe four steps for responding to unprofessional conduct.
- Assess whether and how to respond to unprofessional conduct.
- Differentiate between a competitive (power-based) and a collaborative stance.
- Describe the two-stage Connect & Correct technique.
Professional Conduct and High-Performing Teams

- Professional conduct contributes to safe patient care and is a key component of high performing teams.

- Reinforcing professional conduct expectations within the team:
  - Is a form of self-correction
  - Provides mutual support
  - Reinforces trust
  - Provides needed feedback
  - Is a key component of care coordination
Unprofessional Conduct

- Unprofessional conduct is behavior that interferes with effective communication and negatively impacts team performance and patient care.

- People who exhibit disruptive behavior require feedback to increase their awareness of the impact their behavior has on team relationships and patient care.

- Disruptive behaviors may also indicate system issues that require further assessment.
Unprofessional Conduct and Team Conflict

- Unprofessional conduct contributes to conflict within the team.
- Conflict can be good when it is used to develop creative solutions to complex problems.
- Engaging in conflict requires constructive approaches that address the relational aspects of team performance.
Two Approaches: Enforcement & Engagement

- Actions to promote professional conduct occur at both the individual and system levels.
- Two approaches for promoting professional conduct are:
  - Enforcement (power based)
  - Engagement (collaborative)
Engagement

- Engagement is a collaborative approach that seeks to correct the behavior while preserving or restoring trust among team members.

- Connect & Correct is a collaborative engagement approach.
Addressing instances of unprofessional behavior in order to improve patient safety is the job of all team members.

Four Steps for Responding to Unprofessional Conduct:

- Assess
- Adopt a stance
- Connect & Correct
- Evaluate
Assessing Whether and How to Engage

- Determining whether and how to address a difficult situation requires assessment of the risks—to you and to others.

- Routinely avoiding a difficult conversation can lead to patient harm and does not provide needed feedback to team members.

- Engaging effectively requires that you are both assertive and cooperative.
Adopting a Competitive Stance

- A competitive (power-based) stance is high in assertiveness and low in cooperativeness.

- A competitive stance prioritizes an immediate outcome over the need for a good relationship with the individual. It is most effective in crisis situations or where there is an imminent risk.
Adopting a Competitive Stance: Examples

- **CUS**—I’m concerned. I’m uncomfortable. This is a safety issue.

- **Two-Challenge Rule**—Assertively voicing a concern at least two times to ensure that it has been heard.

These are good techniques for ensuring that your concern is heard when there is an imminent risk to patient care.
Adopting a Collaborative Stance

- A collaborative stance is high in assertiveness and high in cooperativeness. It reflects a “yes, and” approach.

- A collaborative stance is useful when:
  - You try a competitive stance and get resistance
  - You want to fully understand a situation
  - You want to learn together
  - You want to find the most creative solution
Exercise: Adopting a Stance

- Consciously choosing how to engage rather than defaulting to a habitual style takes practice and self reflection.

- A collaborative stance entails inviting the other person to work with you and acknowledging what they may need in order to do so.
Connect & Correct

- Using the two-stage collaborative process *Connect & Correct*:
  - Improves the likelihood that the feedback will be received
  - Does not compromise the work relationship
  - Sets the stage for productive problem solving.

**NOTE:** See the Connect & Correct Tip Sheet in the Toolkit Additional Resources folder
Raising Awareness

- The vast majority of people are unaware that their behavior is having a negative impact on others.

- This is particularly true if they are upset and are not connected to others, but are instead in fight-or-flight mode.
TeamSTEPPS

Stage 1: Connect

The first stage, *Connect*, focuses on creating a connection with the other person and building trust.

By creating a connection first you:

- De-escalate the situation
- Develop trust with the person
- Gain deeper understanding of the situation
- Demonstrate respect
Connect: PEARLA

- To connect, use the following algorithm:

  **PEARLA**
  - **P**resence
  - **E**mpathy
  - **A**cknowledgement
  - **R**eflect/reframe
  - **L**isten openly
  - **A**sk questions

**NOTE:** See the Tips and Tools for Connecting: PEARLA Tip Sheet *in the Toolkit* Additional Resources folder
Connect: PEARLA
Presence and Empathy

**Presence:** To create connection, you must first focus on the situation that is occurring between you and the other person.

**Empathy:** Putting yourself in another’s shoes and imagining what might be going on for them is a key element in creating connection.
Connect: PEARLA Acknowledgement

- **Acknowledging** what is going on for the other person is a crucial step in helping them to calm down and helping them to hear what you have to say.

- Acknowledging what matters, particularly when someone is upset, takes practice.
**Acknowledgement: Example 2**

**Physician:** You have no clue about what we do here. All you pay attention to is the bottom line, and patient care is suffering because of it.

**Administrator:** You’re right that I don’t have your level of experience caring for patients. Tell me what you are most worried about regarding these proposed changes.
Connect (PEARLA) Reflect and Reframe

- **Reflect**: Reflecting back what you heard using neutral language is a good way to both check that you heard correctly and de-escalate the situation.

- **Reframe**: Reframing means to take a concept, idea, or statement and say it in a way that helps the person view the situation differently. It is a way of refocusing the conversation toward the issues and what matters to the person—and away from blame or rigid positions.
Reflect and Reframe: Example

Person 1:
It figures that the new person was involved in this. It seems like every time something bad happens, he’s had something to do with it.

Person 2:
- Rarely is one person to blame for everything that goes wrong. What do you think contributed to this particular situation?
  OR—
- So you’re saying you’re concerned about the quality of care on this unit. What concerns you most?
  OR—
- It’s hard to say what happened since he’s not here. Have you spoken to him directly about your concerns?
Connect (PEARLA): Listening Openly

“*The opposite of listening is preparing to speak.*”

*Bill Isaacs*

- **Listening openly** requires that you listen to the facts, listen to the emotions, notice the body language, and listen for the meaning behind the words.
Connect (PEARLA)
Ask clarifying questions

- Ask questions that clarify the situation and show you are interested in what matters to the person speaking.

- Clarifying questions are also a good way to help the person become aware of how they are behaving.

- Tone of voice matters when asking clarifying questions. Avoid asking “why” questions.
Sample Clarifying Questions

- Tell me—what would help you right now?
- Where would be a better place to have this conversation?
- What does respect look like to you?
- What is going on that has you so upset?
- What do you think is the impact of your behavior?
- What do you hope to accomplish by talking this way?
- How is this helping you get what you need?
Creating Connection

Understand first.

Explain later…
Stage 2: Correct

- To address lapses in professional conduct, it is important to remember that you are solving two problems:
  1. Restoring trust among team members
  2. Problem solving to correct the behavior

- In Stage 2, you seek *correction* of the behavior by describing it, describing the impact, suggesting an alternative, and seeking agreement.
Stage 2: Correct

- Using the TeamSTEPPS® DESC script is one way to seek correction of unprofessional behaviors.

DESC:

- **Describe** the specific behavior
- **Express** how it makes you feel and what your concerns are
- **Suggest** alternatives and seek agreement
- **Clarify** the consequences in terms of the impact on goals of the team
Stage 2: DESC Script Sample

- **Describe:** When you don’t answer pages or return phone calls …

- **Explain:** I am worried that I won’t be able to give safe care to the patient.

- **Seek alternatives and agreement:** I need for you to respond or have someone call for you if you are busy. Is that something you could try?

- **Clarify Consequences:** If not, it is going to have an impact on patient care and how much I can trust you.
Evaluate

The final step in the four-step process for responding to unprofessional conduct is to evaluate progress. It is good to evaluate the following:

- Your skills and abilities in responding
- The outcome of your conversations — what changed?
- Next steps if any are required
- Identify your support system
Exercise: Engagement Approach

**Engagement** happens when the issues are dealt with directly by those involved in the incident rather than merely reporting the incident to someone else.
Summary

- Disruptive and intimidating behaviors undermine team effectiveness, compromise the safety of patients, and contribute to unhealthy work environments.

- Actions to promote professional conduct occur at both the individual and system levels.

- Two approaches for promoting professional conduct are:
  - Enforcement (power based)
  - Engagement (collaborative)
Summary

- **Assess**—Risk to me/Risk to others
- **Adopt a stance**—Competitive/Collaborative
- **Connect & Correct**—PEARLA & DESC
- **Evaluate**—Self, outcome, next steps, support