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An Effective Leadership Paradigm

Competent leaders ensure that their staff understand and are committed to clearly articulated expectations. New staff and new leaders particularly misunderstand what is expected of them. Lack of continuous reinforcement and solid explanations of the rationale behind the expectations can result in performing the wrong thing the right way—not the outcome we were seeking. The leader is disappointed in the results and now has to determine how to deal with his/her own disappointment as well as the purported failure by the staff member. To react with anger or resentment speaks volumes about your leadership and may become a stumbling block for future interrelationships that are critical to success, not to mention promotional opportunities. In these circumstances, it is important to use this as a coaching opportunity and to manage yourself before confronting the employee. You are in a position of authority, and clarity is critical. How and what you say and the way in which you say it can have an undesirable domino effect on your leadership as well as on the employee.

Examining what you would like to accomplish in this situation while taking a deep breath is often very valuable. Do you want to help this employee or is this a constant problem that may need different solutions? A question to ask yourself is “Did I play a role in the disappointment?” I have found that leaders are often rushed, believe everything is clear, and they don’t always articulate as well as they should have. You might ask whether the employee has enough skill and education to meet the requirements. Do they need more training and/or coaching? Were they adequately prepared to understand all the intricacies involved? Most importantly, focus on the issue, the outcomes, and not on the person; this is about an issue. Separate the incident from the employee as a person.

Finally, learn what you need to about yourself, how you react, and how you can use the situation to both elevate the employee and your own leadership skills. No matter how clear we think we have been about expectations, various barriers may interfere with success. Helping the employee manage these obstacles is part of your job. Identifying them prior to implementation

as soon as they are known helps ensure success. And success of your employees ensures organizational success, their success, as well as your own. This makes for a great leader!

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Editor's Note

This is an unusual edition of Nurse Leader since we have featured Linda Burnes Bolton for the second time. Initially she was the third interviewee for Nurse Leader and now she is featured as the President of AONE. Time has passed over 11 years and it is in honor to have Linda on our cover again. she has passed time very productively and added positively to nursing during that time period. This is also one of the editions we print annually that focuses on a topic; this time the important role of APRNs.

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