

Ethics for the caregiver

Inservice training for CNAs in the latest in evidence-based caregiving

Professional ethics are the building blocks that provide the foundation on which your caregiving career is based.

Professional ethics provide a standard of conduct and code of behavior.

They are a set of principles which relate to what is morally right or wrong, and provide standards of behavior.

All professional ethics for all people are important, but professional ethics related to caregiving and the caregiver, are vital for the well-being of all.

In many cases they're as important as your medical knowledge, for they can have a direct bearing on the quality of care that you deliver.

As a caregiver, you are obligated to follow the standards of behavior and the rules that are guided by the professional ethics of your caregiving position.

As all caregivers know, the caregiving profession can often be difficult, or frustrating, with many challenging situations.

The basic rule of thumb, no matter the situation, is to always be guided by your professional ethics and to do what you know to be right.

The professional ethics that should guide you, at all times, include the following principles:

- **Always perform care to the best of your abilities, for all of your elders, all of the time.** Giving the best care possible means doing what is supposed to be done, when it is supposed to be done, and in the manner that is supposed to be done... for all elders, always.



- **Treat all your elders with respect... every day, all the time.** Never mistreat them, or deny needed care... ever. This is one of the most important ethical considerations for caregivers, for it's at the very core of your profession.

Elders feel good if they are honored and respected in their daily life activities.

Call them by name and not the generic "grandma" or "grandpa" or "hon."

Each elder has a name which is individual, and means something, and expresses a lifetime of work, hope, fear, loss, love and happiness.

Treating them with respect, and giving them the best quality care possible, makes them feel that they are still important people, and that you believe they are important.

This makes them feel good about themselves, and substantially improves their quality of life.

Answers to Ethics quiz

1. T
2. a, b, c
3. T
4. T
5. F
6. T
7. T
8. F
9. T
10. T

- **Treat all elders equally.** Give all your elders the best care possible, regardless of their gender, race, nationality, religion, personal beliefs or social or economic status.

Take care of all of your elders with respect, and be considerate of all their feelings and beliefs. You may not agree or believe the same things, but your elders have the right to be and say what they wish.

- **Provide care with kindness and patience.** Some elders are easier to take care of than others, but kindness and patience is always required. In fact, they are major caregiver attributes, which all caregivers should strive to achieve.

Kind, patient caregivers are the ones who have the most significant and positive impact on their elders... and the ones who are most fondly remembered.

- **Be an advocate for your elders.** This means you're always supporting them, making sure they're properly cared for and not neglected, that all caregiving requirements are being done adequately for each elder, making sure that your reports are always followed up, and so on.

Remember... you may be the only advocate they have left in their lives... this is a very important responsibility in the caregiving profession.

- **Provide privacy and maintain dignity.** Put yourself in your elder's place. Would you want the door or curtains open if you were using the bathroom or taking a bath? Would you want your roommate or a visitor see you as you receive personal care?

Privacy is essential in all daily care activities. Never shout down the hall with a temperature reading or a bowel movement occurrence.

Protect your elders by providing the privacy you would want for you or for your family members. Providing your elders with privacy maintains their dignity.

And also keep in mind that federal regulations require that you honor the privacy of those with Alzheimer's, just as you would anyone.

- **Respect confidentiality.** This includes both oral and written. Each caregiver and elder has the right to expect that knowledge gained through the circumstance of illness or work will not be forwarded to others who do not need to know the information.

Do not place medical records in any area where they can be seen by unauthorized

Professional Ethics in a nutshell:

- Always give the best care that you can, for all your elders, all the time.
- Respect your elders.
- Do what you know to be right.
- Perform job ethically and as required.
- Follow rules and regulations of facility, and state and federal requirements.
- Be honest
- Be respectful
- Be kind

individuals. Do not leave records at charting stations, on desks, chairs, in the dining or activity room.

Repeat only information that has a direct bearing on the elder's health situation, and only to those involved in the care of the resident, and do not let yourself be overheard.

Remember, also, that these confidentiality requirements are in the tough federal law called HIPAA.

- **Don't Gossip.** What you see and hear on the job stays on the job. Never talk about one elder to another. Anything you do must be based on the knowledge that no one needs to know what you know unless it relates directly to the welfare of the elder.

Also, don't gossip about your fellow workers. The most respected caregivers don't gossip, because it demeans them, and undermines the effectiveness of care at the facility.

- **Practice good personal hygiene.** Personal hygiene is the way you keep yourself clean and neat. The way you dress tells a lot about you. Professional and dedicated caregivers take pride in their appearance.

- **Show loyalty.** To be loyal does not mean to blindly follow the direction of others without question or discussion.

Loyalty does mean being faithful to the administration, co-workers and elders of your facility. Loyalty means not letting personal feelings interfere with your work.

It means confining grievances or negative opinions within the facility itself, and following the standard procedures of the facility for airing those grievances or opinions.

- **Maintain a positive attitude.** Positive personal qualities are necessary for success as a person and as a caregiver.

Your attitude is the way others see you through your behavior. Positive human relationships result from a positive attitude with elders as well as with other staff, family members and visitors.

- **Be responsible and dependable.** This means that you're the type of caregiver who can be depended upon by everyone to always do your best, and to be there... always... when needed in every situation.
- **Take care of yourself.** The nature of your special profession requires that you need to be at your very best every day, all the time, in order to give the best possible care to your elders.

In this profession, you need to be especially careful of things like substance abuse, lack of sleep, or other things that can cause you to have personal problems and not be at your best.

- **Stay educated.** You are in a profession that's constantly changing... there's always more to be learned.

And you owe it to your elders to be the best-educated caregiver possible. Their quality of care depends on this knowledge.

So take part in as many educational programs as you can, throughout your entire career... your elders are depending on this.

- **Be honest.** Respect your elder's possessions: Do not take things from elders that don't belong to you.

Don't cheat, or provide misinformation, on your reports. Always tell the truth.

Honesty is especially important in the caregiving profession, because your elders' quality of care often highly depends upon their caregivers being honest.

Elders in healthcare facilities are people – people with the same concerns and worries as everyone else.

They do face additional problems associated with disease and other changes related to different aspects of aging.

Physical changes, memory loss, reactions to medications, financial dependency, death of a spouse and loved ones, and lack of close relationships make it difficult to be an elder in the world today.

And they often depend upon their caregivers almost totally, to provide them the best possible quality of life.

Caregivers who diligently follow their professional ethics and who are kind, loving and patient, are at the top of their profession, and are the ones remembered and talked enthusiastically about by their many appreciative elders. END



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Quiz: Caregiver Ethics

Nursing objectives:

To learn the about the ethics of the caregiver profession.

To understand why each ethic is important in the caregiving profession.

To learn how to practically apply each caregiver ethic, for the benefit of your elders.

- 1. True, False.** Professional ethics are very important in a caregiving career, because they provide the foundation upon which your career is built.
- 2. Why is treating elders with respect so important?** (Check all that apply.)
 - a. It means that you are giving them the best care possible.
 - b. It means that you feel they are important.
 - c. It improves their quality of life.
- 3. True, False.** Kindness and patience are very important caregiver traits that all caregivers should strive for.
- 4. True, False.** Being an “advocate” for your elders means that you always watch out for them, and follow-up to make sure they get needed care.
- 5. True, False.** You don’t need to be as strict in honoring the privacy of elders with Alzheimer’s, since they don’t know what’s going on around.
- 6. True, False.** You should not divulge any information about your elders’ medical situation to anyone who is not directly involved in their care.
- 7. True, False.** Working well with others is a key principle of good caregiving.
- 8. True, False.** It’s okay to gossip about your fellow workers, and elders, because you may learn valuable information in the process.
- 9. True, False.** Your elders are depending upon you to increase your knowledge and education whenever possible, for it will continually improve the quality of your caregiving.
- 10. True, False.** Taking good care of yourself is much more important in the caregiving profession, then many other professions, because of your caregiving responsibilities on your job.

Name _____ Date _____ Score _____

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