

Being a good member of your healthcare team

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Notice: We attempt to be as accurate as possible, but the information contained here should not be implemented without checking current guidelines from your own medical and supervisory personnel.

In your facility, most everyone operates as a part of a healthcare team.

A good team effort is often at the core of what makes a healthcare facility successful.

The team is important

Each person has their own duties and responsibilities, unique areas of expertise and knowledge... and each person is an important part of that team.

Each member of the team must function to the best of their abilities, or the team will not function properly, and the quality of health care in your facility will decline as a result.

A team is an important part of providing a quality life through quality care, because members work together.

All caregivers must be willing to learn how to become a contributing member of their team, and to help their team be successful in all that it does.

Research shows that effective teams improve caregiving

Note that much evidence-based research clearly shows that effective teams substantially increase the effectiveness of caregiving.

For example, incidences of pressure ulcers can be brought to near-zero when an effective team is in charge.

Infection control, when a team effort is involved, is substantially more effective.

Even the deadly MRSA is substantially reduced when infection teams are involved.

Incidences of pressure ulcers can be brought to near-zero with an effective team.



A good team effort is often at the core of what makes a healthcare facility successful.

Good teamwork is work

Learning to become a good team member through teamwork does not happen overnight.

Teamwork is work – but the results make all efforts very worthwhile.

A big difference in teams

There's a big difference between teams that function well, and teams that function poorly.

And because of the importance of teams in any type of organization, they have been studied and researched extensively.

So the things that make them function well are quite well-known, and can be learned about, and implemented in your own individual team situation.

First off, good team leadership is a key ingredient. Without it, a team has difficulty in functioning properly, and team members become discouraged as a result.

Without good, supportive, leadership, the team does not operate nearly as effectively as it should.

But much of the responsibility for maintaining a good team rests with the team members themselves.

Each member of the team needs to support the team, or the team will function poorly.

And, often, all it takes is one poorly functioning member to destroy much of the team's function.

This means that it's everyone's job to support the team, and be a productive member.

Individual performance is important

What individual team members need to do to optimize team function has been widely studied, as it is very important in any type of organization.

For example, here are eight rules that make a team work that are taught at Ohio State University:

- Remember that each member of the team has something of value to contribute.
- To make the team more effective, get to know each other's strengths and special capabilities.
- As a member of a group, you have to be willing to share the "ownership" of your concepts with others of the group.
- The diversity of the team may be frustrating at first, but it is one of the greatest strengths of working in a group.
- Be respectful of each member's feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Don't just complain about problems; see what can be done about them.

You need to have respect for each of your fellow team members, and their ideas and opinions

Effective teams substantially increase the effectiveness of caregiving.



And discuss as a group about how to solve the problems that will arise.

- Remember that a team can become a "family" working together for the common good.

Mostly, it all boils down to this: you need to have respect for each of your fellow team members, and their ideas and opinions. And you need to contribute to the team effort, yourself, too.

Remember, a team is a group... not an individual effort... so you need to operate harmoniously with the entire group.

How to function as a group

Also taught at Ohio State are some general requirements of the overall team, that need to be met in order for the team to function well:

- **You trust each other.** This means, among other things, that each and every team member can state their views and opinions without fear of ridicule or retaliation.
- **No team members work behind the backs of others, in order to undermine them in the organization.** All problems and differences should be brought forth openly in your team meetings.
- **Team members support each other.** This means that you will give help to your fellow team members whenever they need it, without any strings attached.

- **You have open communications with all team members.** This means you can discuss topics and issues without being guarded or cautious.

- **You are a good listener.** This means that whenever another team member has something to say, that you give them a chance to talk, and listen attentively to what they are saying.

Being a good listener is a very important part of being a good team member.

By being a good listener, not only will you learn something of value, but you will be showing that you respect the opinions of your fellow team members.

Listening, more than you talk, is usually a good idea.

- **Each team member will clearly understand the team objectives, and their role in them.**

If you don't clearly understand what you are to do within the team, you need to ask the team leader for clarification.

Good team members are good listeners



- **Use and respect the strong points, and unique expertise, of each member.**

Each team member has their own, unique, set of strengths and knowledge that they bring to the team effort, regardless of their experience or education.

Each team member needs to recognize and respect these strengths, and use them for the benefit of the team, and your elders.

- **Conflict resolution is handled fairly by all members of the team.**

When conflicts arise, it is important for you to understand that conflicts in the team are often a desirable thing.

This is because when conflicts are brought up, and resolved, that's often how progress is made.

Conflicts are a valuable part of teamwork

Conflicts get discussions going, new opinions are generated, and new ideas are brought to the table that can often benefit the entire healthcare team, and your elders, too.

When conflicts arise, it is important to bring them out in the open for a fair and objective discussion, without assigning blame, or making accusations.

The key, here, is to resolve conflicts in a professional manner, and use them as an opportunity to improve operations in your facility.



Be dependable, doing your share of the work.

Use and respect the strong points, and unique expertise, of each member.

Respect each other

One of the most important rules for successful teams is simply: have respect for your fellow team members.

This means that each, and every, member of the team is valued by everyone, and that their unique knowledge and expertise is an important part of the team effort.

Note that this does not mean that you need to become "best friends" with everyone on your team.

But it does mean that you should be easy to get along with, and make a good effort to be pleasant when interacting with fellow team members.

Be an attentive listener

This also means that you will attentively listen to their ideas and suggestions respectfully, and that your fellow team members should do the same for you.

And that you will take time to understand their point of view, and how it applies to the team effort.

Your responsibility

Being a responsible team member is very important to the success of the team.

Do your tasks, as assigned, to the best of your ability.

And be dependable, doing your share of the work.

No one likes working with those who attempt to get by without doing their share of the tasks at hand.

And nothing is more destructive to a team effort, for it causes problems everywhere, and can be very destructive to the goals of the team.

So do your best at all times... be a faithful contributor to the team effort. Follow through on your promises and assignments.

Make a commitment to work together.

Not everyone is easy to work with at all times and not everyone will share the same viewpoint as you.

Even if you do not like someone or you have a team member who may be difficult, you must continue to work as a contributing member of your team.

If we all waited to have a team without difficulties or problems, we would never have a team.

Give recognition

Team members should give credit and recognition to fellow team members who have done an exceptional job, or have developed particularly good new ideas and ways of doing things.

Just keep in mind this old saying: "There's no limit to how far you can progress in life, as long as you don't care who gets the credit."

Emphasize your strong points

And here's a great tip from experts: Use your strengths.

Each team member has their own individual strengths, and has something important to offer the team.

You might have lots of knowledge in one particular area, or be very good at organizing things, or good at researching and keeping notes, or perhaps you're a good motivator, or perhaps you're a very accurate observer.

So speak up, volunteer, offer input, and so on, according to your own strengths.

No matter what they are, this kind of participation is what makes everyone a valuable member of the team, and substantially increases the team's effectiveness and success. END

Quiz Teamwork

Learning objectives:

1. To understand why teams are at the very core of successful healthcare.
2. To learn the specific points of being a good team member.
3. To understand your individual role in making the team successful.
4. To learn why you're an important factor in your team's success.

1. **True, False.** Research shows that good teamwork improves healthcare outcomes.

2. **True, False.** Each and every team member has something of value to contribute to the team, and should actively do so.

3. **True false.** An interesting thing about being a member of a team, is that you are still your own individual person, and do not need to cooperate with your teammates.

4. **True, False.** For a team to operate effectively, all of its members need to trust and support each other.

5. **Which are true?** (Check all that apply.)

- a. Each of your teammates has something of value to contribute to the team.
- b. You should not be afraid to share the "ownership" of your new ideas and suggestions with other teammates.
- c. Sometimes, it's best to work conflicts out, by "going behind the back" of team members, so that you don't hurt their feelings.
- d. You can't always have it your way... you need to be willing to compromise.

6. **True, False.** Conflicts within the team are a good thing, if properly handled, because they can lead to valuable new ideas and procedures.

7. **True, False.** Being a good listener is a very important part of being a good team member.

8. **True, False.** You should respect each member of your team, and their viewpoints and contributions to the team.

9. **True, False.** A key part of being a good team member, is that you act as a responsible person, and do your share of the work assignments.

10. **If you have a conflict or problem, you should:** (Check one.)

- a. Try and resolve it on your own, and bothering as few teammates as possible.
- b. Don't say anything about it, in order to avoid arguments and other problems.
- c. Bring it up openly in a team meeting, so that all members can work on it with you.

Name _____ Score _____ Date _____

Discussion Questions, Teamwork

- 1. Do you think you're a good team member? Why or why not?**
 - 2. What are some of your strong points as a team member?**
 - 3. What are some of your weak points that you can improve on?**
 - 4. Do you think your healthcare teams are effective? Why or why not?**
 - 5. Do you have any suggestions for improving the effectiveness of your healthcare teams?**
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Answers to Teamwork Quiz

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