

What is Building Healthy Teams?

- › Nursing care is generally provided by nurses working as members of multidisciplinary health care teams. When the health care team demonstrates healthy behaviors (e.g., appropriate leadership, good communication, clear goals), patient outcomes and quality of health care are maximized
 - *What:* A team is a group of individuals working together with a common purpose (e.g., to provide excellent nursing care to perioperative patients), common and clearly defined goals (e.g., the goal that no patient will develop a surgical wound infection), and an identified process for achieving those goals (e.g., nurses will use aseptic technique when changing a surgical dressings). A healthy team is a team in which all members participate collaboratively and work in harmony to achieve the defined goals. Building healthy teams refers to actions that are performed to develop health care teams that deliver high quality health care and maximize patient outcomes
 - *How:* Healthy teams are built by creating an organizational culture that values teamwork, fostering positive team processes within the team, and encouraging individual behaviors that promote healthy functioning of the team
 - *Where:* Building healthy teams occurs in all areas of a healthcare organization, including inpatient and outpatient healthcare settings and in organizations that deliver patient care in the home care setting
 - *Who:* Nursing leaders and managers at all levels of a health care organization (e.g., nurse executives, unit managers) and staff nurses are responsible for building healthy teams

What is the Desired Outcome of Building Healthy Teams?

- › Nursing care will be provided within the context of the collaboration of a healthy team that results in delivery of high quality patient care and maximal patient outcomes

Why is Building Healthy Teams Important?

- › Nursing care provided by teams that are not healthy results in delivery of a lower quality of patient care and poorer patient outcomes compared with care provided by healthy teams
- › Nurses functioning as members of healthy teams report higher levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of burnout

Facts and Figures

- › Cultivating healthy teams takes time (Smith-Trudeau, 2010)

What You Need to Know Before Building Healthy Teams

- › Healthy teams require
 - high levels of trust and support
 - Trust is the foundation on which other team characteristics are built
 - clarity of purpose
 - The team must have a clearly defined, common purpose and clearly defined goals

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- identity
 - The team must be recognized as a team and each team member must have a clear role in the team
 - commitment from all team members
 - Team members must be motivated and must actively participate in the team
 - respect among team members
 - Respect is a necessary component of collaboration and teamwork
 - positive attitudes
 - Apathy or antipathy destroys morale and inhibits teamwork
 - excellent communication
 - Team members, especially team leaders, must have excellent communication skills and be able to clearly communicate team goals and group processes
 - diverse talent
 - The team requires input from all members, which allows for a variety of perspectives
 - creativity
 - Meeting team goals often requires new, innovative solutions
 - discipline
 - Without discipline, the team will not be able to work together to meet its goals
 - stability
 - When members of the team change frequently, team members do not develop trust and do not learn to work together effectively
 - Patient care units that rely on the use of temporary or registry nursing staff members have difficulty building and maintaining healthy teams
 - strong leadership
 - The team leader must
 - encourage cooperation, loyalty, and trust
 - encourage team members to share information and value the input of each team member
 - foster positive attitudes among team members
 - communicate clearly and facilitate communication in the team
 - establish team values and set norms for the team
 - facilitate the team’s involvement in defining goals and motivate team members to collaborate to achieving those goals
 - stimulate debate in the team to get a variety of perspectives
 - foster problem solving in the team
 - have time management skills and efficiently manage meetings
 - effectively delegate to members of the team
 - provide effective feedback
 - avoid conflicts of interest
 - negotiate with team members to build consensus when making decisions
 - have the skills necessary to resolve conflict between team members
 - evaluate how well the team is meeting goals
 - Nurse managers and charge nurses commonly function as team leaders
- › Indications that a team is unhealthy include
- decreased productivity
 - confusion regarding roles of team members
 - apathy and lack of participation
 - poor communication among team members
 - conflict among team members
 - inequality or perceived inequality among team members
 - team members not valuing the team leader
 - ineffective team meetings
 - failure to achieve team goals
 - low quality of patient care delivered and/or poor patient outcomes
- › Actions that help leaders build healthy teams include the following:

- Provide structured opportunities for team members to share information regarding their personal history and build interpersonal relationships
 - Sharing experiences, competencies, and vulnerabilities fosters trust and respect and encourages cooperation
 - Teams that attempt to start working together immediately without first building interpersonal relationships among team members often never develop the competencies they need to achieve their goals
 - Time should be set aside at team meetings for building relationships because the hectic pace of the work environment often does not allow time for team members to get to know one another
 - Increase appreciation for the diversity of members of the team
 - Team members with diverse personal and professional backgrounds provide a variety of perspectives and can suggest innovative solutions to problems and issues that confront the team
 - Team leaders need to indicate to team members that different backgrounds and perspectives are valued and encouraged
 - Team leaders can encourage team members to share past experiences with problem solving that successfully worked when the team is confronted with a problem or issue that is similar to one in the past
 - Assignments in the team should be made based on the strengths and experiences of individual team members
 - Explain and clarify team norms
 - Each team has unwritten expectations regarding the behavior of team members; these unwritten expectations should be explained and made clear to all team members, particularly to new members of the team
 - Team members who violate team norms are often made to feel unwelcome, which impedes teamwork
 - Nurse managers or experienced nurses can explain unit norms (e.g., how breaks and mealtimes are determined; how staff birthdays are celebrated) to nurses who are new to the team
 - Provide a clear purpose and clearly defined processes and goals for the team
 - Without a clearly defined purpose and clearly defined team processes and goals, teams are unable to effectively function
 - The team leader must recognize if the team is deviating from its purpose and goals, and provide redirection as needed and revise team processes if they are not achieving goals
 - Clear guidelines should be in place to evaluate if the team is achieving its goals (e.g., the use of healthcare-associated infection [HAI] statistics if the goal of the team is to decrease HAIs)
 - Establish guidelines regarding decision making
 - The team leader should clarify those decisions that can be made by the team and those that are to be made by the team leader or other leaders in the healthcare organization (e.g., the team can decide to use tape recordings for shift report but cannot decide when a shift will start or end)
 - Negotiate mutually satisfying resolution of conflict
 - Trust among team members and between team members and the team leader is the basis on which conflict resolution is possible
 - All parties involved in conflict must be satisfied with the resolution or the conflict will reemerge in another form Focused, structured team building activities can be accomplished through monthly team meetings
 - Each meeting can focus on a topic of interest to the team or a topic identified by the team leader as affecting the functioning of the team (e.g., a presentation on conflict management or workplace violence)
 - a staff retreat
 - Attending a day-long off-site retreat can help team members get to know each other better, value their differences and similarities, develop trust, and work effectively as a group
- › Prior to building a healthy team, the team leader must
- define the members of the team and the purpose for the team
 - determine the goals of the team and the processes by which those goals will be achieved

How to Build Healthy Teams

- › Provide structured opportunities for team members to share personal histories and build interpersonal relationships
 - Set time aside at team meetings for relationship building and sharing of experiences, competencies, and vulnerabilities
 - Consider holding an off-site retreat, if feasible
- › Explain and clarify team norms
 - Have experienced nurses explain unit norms to nurses who are new to the team
- › Explain the purpose and clearly defined team processes and goals for the team
 - Provide clear guidelines to evaluate if the team is achieving its goals
 - Hold monthly staff meetings that focus on a topic of interest to the team or a topic that affects the functioning of the team

- › Establish guidelines regarding decision making
- › Increase appreciation of the diversity of the team
 - Express to the team members that different perspectives are valued and encouraged
 - Encourage team members to share past experiences that may be helpful to the resolution of issues confronting the team
- › Negotiate mutually satisfying conflict resolution
 - Verify that all parties involved in the conflict are satisfied with the resolution
- › Evaluate how well the team is achieving its goals and adhering to its purpose
 - Provide redirection, if necessary
 - Revise team processes as needed if goals are not being achieved

What to Expect After Building Healthy Teams

- › Nurses will provide care in the context of a healthy team that results in high quality patient care and maximal patient outcomes

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