Even in healthy work environments, workplace conflict may affect nurses’ morale, increase turnover and even result in litigation (Iglesias & Becerro, 2012). Moreover, high job satisfaction has been linked to lower conflict (Schwendimann, 2016). The process of establishing how we do things around here as it relates to conflict resolution, albeit challenging, is crucial to a healthy work environment. This presentation addresses how the steps of policy development, context-driven policy implementation and candid feedback work in tandem during a simulation and role play training on conflict resolution.

While conflict resolution is a commonly used term, some of the behaviors that people engage in during conflict resolution cross the line to incivility, bullying or what the Joint Commission (Wyatt, 2013) describes as disruptive behaviors. A misnomer when describing these terms can lead to inaccurate and problematic next steps. Written policy development needs to accurately differentiate normal day-to-day conflict from bullying, incivility and disruptive behavior, describe how to constructively resolve conflict and explain procedures for documenting and reporting violations in the code of conduct that may be related to bullying, incivility and disruptive behaviors in the process of conflict resolution (Kennison, Dzurec, Cary, & Dzurec, 2015).

Conflict resolution is best handled in a non-emotional timely manner following clear steps for how to proceed such as TeamSTEPPS® (Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, 2013, p. 31) four-step constructive approach for resolving conflict: Describe, Express, Suggest, Consequences (DESC). It seems so innocuous and simple, yet in times of stress, the emotional response may precede thinking and, therefore, determine how we problem-solve (Jung, Wranke, Hamburger, & Knauff, 2014). Therefore, being able to handle emotions in the heat of the moment may be particularly challenging for novices and warrants training and practice.

An added step occurs after the simulation and role play to adapt the training to other contexts and sustain the effective conflict resolution behaviors. One method of strengthening healthy work settings is by developing and articulating structured and written processes for effective conflict resolution that involve policy development, step-by-step procedure, training, practice and candid feedback.

In a senior capstone course role play using the DESC script (TeamSTEPPS) provides such a training and practice opportunity to tackle a common conflict for novice graduate nurses, being overwhelmed by a hectic work assignment. This author has found that structured practice opportunities provide novices with insight about their personal styles (e.g., conflict avoidance, work around, emotionally-charged responses) that interfere with effective conflict resolution. Use of retired alumni trained and provided scripts to show constructive and destructive conflict scenarios helped provide the real-world context. Given a similar situation of feeling overwhelmed by a hectic work assignment, students wrote their own DESC script, practiced it with a retired nursing alumna and received individualized feedback. Participants reported the experience improved their confidence level and assertiveness in dealing, rather than, fearing conflict. While conflict is unavoidable, in healthy work settings effective resolution involves policy development, step-by-step procedure, training, practice and candid feedback.
Keywords:

conflict resolution, role play and training novices

References:


Abstract Summary:

Even in healthy work environments, workplace conflict may affect nursesâ€™ morale, increase turnover and even result in litigation (Iglesias & Becerro, 2012). Moreover, high job satisfaction linked to lower conflict (Schwendimann 2016). While conflict is unavoidable, in healthy work settings effective resolution involves policy development, procedure, training, practice and feedback.

Content Outline:

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Conflict resolution as it relates to healthy work environment
B. Health consequences of destructive conflict resolution

II. Policy Development

A. Defining the terms

B. Differentiating conflict, incivility and disruptive behaviors

C. Code of conduct

D. Procedure for Violating Code of Conduct

1. Describe the behavior – “When you said…”

2. Describe how the behavior made you feel – “I felt…”

3. Request the behavior be stopped – “Please don’t do that again…”

III. Constructive Conflict Resolution

A. Step-by-step guidelines

B. Use of TeamSTEPPS® DESC four-step model

1. Describe specific behavior or situation with concrete facts

2. Express how the behavior makes you feel

3. Suggest other alternatives and seek agreement

4. Consequences – state in terms of impact on team goals

IV. Simulation of Common Nursing Conflict

A. Modified National League for Nursing Lateral Violence scenario

B. Use of retired RN volunteers to show constructive and destructive communication

C. Related didactic content

D. Debrief discussion

E. Outcome measures

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Professional Experience: In May 2015 I began a relationship with Ghanaian nursing colleagues at the Presbyterian Hospital in Agogo and the Bompata outpatient clinic for the purpose of developing an international health promotion course. In July 2016 I went to Ghana for a reconnaissance trip to meet these colleagues and visit the facilities where students would work. At that visit we stayed in the homes of these colleagues and visited their places of work. During academic year 2016-2017 these colleagues visited Berea College, participated in activities with nursing students and faculty and stayed in my home. The Health Promotion in Ghana course occurred during May to June 2017. My co-author and I continue our relationships with these colleagues in preparation for a return trip. While students who went on the trip unanimously described it as "life-changing," it certainly was for me as well.

Author Summary: Dr. Kennison currently serves as the Susan V. Clayton Chair of the Baccalaureate Nursing Program and Professor at Berea College. For the past ten years she has collaborated on presentations, publications, and research related to reflective and expressive writing as effective teaching pedagogy.