

## Promoting Professional Conduct Toolkit Overview

**TeamSTEPPS**  
Team Strategies & Tools to Enhance Performance & Patient Safety

**TeamSTEPPS** Professional Conduct Toolkit

## What is it and why do we need it?

- This toolkit is a training aid for those implementing TeamSTEPPS and/or seeking to address behaviors that negatively impact patient safety and disrupt the work environment
- It consists of
  - Toolkit Overview and User Guide
  - Four modules (emphasis on the role of leaders)
  - Additional Resources (emphasis on connect with the person and correct the behavior)

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## What is it and why do we need it?

- Professional conduct is a key component of high-performing teams that deliver safe patient care
  - When tolerated, bullying and horizontal violence create barriers to care and become embedded in the culture
  - Leaders need resources to manage conflict and promote professional conduct



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## How to Obtain the Toolkit

- Contact DoD Patient Safety Program  
[patientsafety@dha.mil](mailto:patientsafety@dha.mil)
  - They will send you a link to a zip file containing all materials including videos
- Email Katherine Jones [kjonesj@unmc.edu](mailto:kjonesj@unmc.edu)



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## Toolkit Objectives

- Understand the link between professional conduct, effective teamwork, and patient safety
- Describe the impact of unprofessional conduct
- Recognize patterns of disruptive behavior
- Respond to instances of disruption effectively
- Develop system structures to support engagement
- Assess situations that may require outside referral or special assistance



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## Professional Conduct Toolkit

### Module 1

Professional Conduct,  
Teamwork, and  
Patient Safety

### Module 3

Supporting Engagement—  
Role of Leaders and  
System Responses

### Module 2

Responding to Behaviors  
that Undermine Safe  
Patient Care

### Module 4

High-Conflict Personalities,  
Mental Health Issues and  
Safety Considerations



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## Module 1 Performance Objectives

- Describe how professional conduct supports effective teamwork and safe patient care.
- Define unprofessional conduct.
- Describe the impact of disruptive and intimidating behavior on the clinical care environment.
- Define patterns of unprofessional conduct including bullying and horizontal violence.
- Identify two approaches for responding to unprofessional conduct—enforcement and engagement.



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## Defining Unprofessional Conduct

- View a video defining unprofessional conduct
- Unprofessional conduct includes disruptive and intimidating behaviors that interrupt teamwork and undermine safe care.



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## Defining Unprofessional Conduct

**Examples of overt behaviors:**

- Verbal abuse
- Shaming in front of others
- Scapegoating
- Belittling
- Physical threats/ throwing objects

**Examples of indirect or passive behaviors:**

- Refusing to answer questions or return calls
- Backstabbing
- Withholding information
- Recruiting others to take a side
- Undermining
- Retaliation




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## Impact of Unprofessional Conduct

- According to Joint Commission Sentinel Event Alert #40 —Behaviors that Undermine Safe Patient Care:  
*Intimidating and disruptive behaviors can foster medical errors, contribute to poor patient satisfaction and to preventable adverse outcomes, increase the cost of care, and cause qualified clinicians, administrators and managers to seek new positions in more professional environments.*

[http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea\\_40.htm](http://www.jointcommission.org/SentinelEvents/SentinelEventAlert/sea_40.htm)



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## Patterns of Unprofessional Conduct

- A 2008 statement by the Center for American Nurses defines:
  - **Horizontal (lateral) violence** as “the physical, verbal, or emotional abuse of a fellow employee”
  - **Bullying** as “an offensive abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, or abuse of power conducted by an individual or group against others, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable, which undermines their self-confidence and which may cause them to suffer stress.”

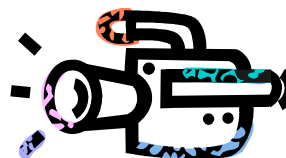


## Videos: Horizontal Violence and Bullying

- Retaliation scenario
- Bullying scenario
- Exclusion of new nurse scenario
- These videos are available at  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBCRBaLHR1k&feature=PlayList&p=2643A7B123CC8F01&index=2>





Click the icon to begin the videos;  
then use the controls on the video  
screen to stop and restart as needed.



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## Two Approaches: Enforcement & Engagement

- Actions to promote professional conduct occur at both the individual and system levels.
- Two approaches for promoting professional conduct are:
  - Enforcement (power based)
  - Engagement (collaborative)





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## Module 2 Performance Objectives

- Describe examples of behaviors that can disrupt team performance.
- Identify the link between unprofessional conduct and conflict within the team.
- Describe four steps for responding to unprofessional conduct.
- Assess whether and how to respond to unprofessional conduct.
- Differentiate between a competitive (power-based) and a collaborative stance.
- Describe the two-stage *Connect & Correct* technique.
- Identify what to evaluate after you have responded to a lapse in professional conduct.



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## Unprofessional Conduct

- Unprofessional conduct is behavior that interferes with effective communication and negatively impacts team performance and patient care.
- People who exhibit disruptive behavior require feedback to increase their awareness of the impact their behavior has on team relationships and patient care.
- Disruptive behaviors may also indicate system issues that require further assessment.



## Unprofessional Conduct and Team Conflict



- Unprofessional conduct contributes to conflict within the team.
- Conflict can be good when it is used to develop creative solutions to complex problems.
- Engaging in conflict requires constructive approaches that address the relational aspects of team performance.



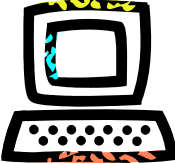



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## Connect & Correct

- Using the two-stage collaborative process  
*Connect & Correct:*
  - Improves the likelihood that the feedback will be received
  - Does not compromise the work relationship
  - Sets the stage for productive problem solving.

**NOTE:** See the Connect & Correct Tip Sheet in the Toolkit Additional Resources folder

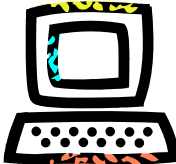

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## Stage 1 Connect: PEARLA

- To *connect*, use the following algorithm:
- **PEARLA**
  - Presence
  - Empathy
  - Acknowledgement
  - Reflect/reframe
  - Listen openly
  - Ask questions

**NOTE:** See the Tips and Tools for Connecting: PEARLA Tip Sheet in the Toolkit Additional Resources folder

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## Acknowledgment: Example 1

**Nurse 1:** Are you kidding me? I can't believe this is the assignment you gave me! How am I supposed to take care of this guy who is bleeding and get my other patient ready for OR?

**Nurse 2:** It seems overwhelming. What would help you right now so you can feel more comfortable caring for these two patients?



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## Sample Clarifying Questions

- Tell me—what would help you right now?
- Where would be a better place to have this conversation?
- What does respect look like to you?
- What is going on that has you so upset?
- What do you think is the impact of your behavior?
- What do you hope to accomplish by talking this way?
- How is this helping you get what you need?



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- Using the TeamSTEPPS® DESC script is one way to seek correction of unprofessional behaviors.
- **DESC:**
  - **D**escribe the specific behavior
  - **E**xpress how it makes you feel and what your concerns are
  - **S**uggest alternatives and seek agreement
  - **C**larify the consequences in terms of the impact on goals of the team



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- Describe the role of organizational leaders in the promotion of professional conduct across the system.
- Describe the Joint Commission leadership standards and recommendations for addressing conflict and unprofessional conduct.
- Describe how enforcement and engagement are complementary approaches for responding to lapses in professional conduct.
- Identify how to use a tiered approach for responding to unprofessional conduct.
- Identify assessment tools that can be used at both the individual and group levels.
- Describe the role of the leader/coach in promoting professional conduct.
- Identify how health professionals can develop conflict competence.



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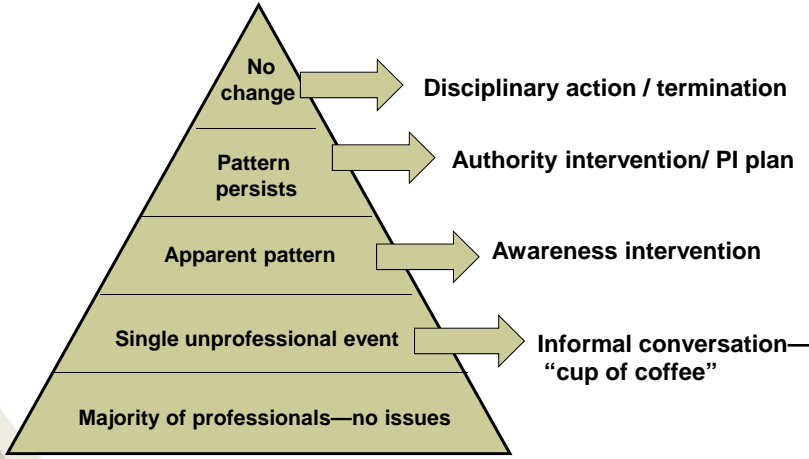
## View a Video: The Role of Leaders in Addressing Unprofessional Conduct



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## Tiered Interventions for Leaders



No change → Disciplinary action / termination

Pattern persists → Authority intervention/ PI plan

Apparent pattern → Awareness intervention

Single unprofessional event → Informal conversation—  
“cup of coffee”

Majority of professionals—no issues

Hickson, 2007

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- Describe the link between promoting professional conduct and the safety and personal well being of health professionals.
- Identify the traits of high-conflict personalities and strategies for setting limits on unprofessional behavior with them.
- Identify the role of well-being committees and other assistance programs.
- Identify strategies for supporting those who are impacted by high-conflict personalities and others who negatively impact the work environment.



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- High-conflict people are those individuals who have a life-long pattern of high-conflict behavior and who typically exhibit long-term traits of those with personality disorders and who engage in ongoing high-conflict thinking.

Eddy, W. *It's All Your Fault: 12 Tips for Managing People Who Blame Others for Everything*. (2008). Janis Publications.



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- For high-conflict people, the ability to self-reflect and self-correct is limited or nonexistent.
- They default to destructive conflict behaviors and they seem unable to make different choices.



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1. Use empathy and create connection repeatedly.
2. Acknowledge their fears and emotions as real to them without agreeing with their conclusions or beliefs.
3. Listen openly to their concerns without being taken in by misinformation or inaccurate conclusions.
4. Consistently set clear limits on behavior and create structures to contain their impact on others.



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5. Don't fall for the drama and don't adopt high-conflict behavior yourself
6. Recognize that a single intervention will not be sufficient—they will require continued interventions and limit setting
7. Do not take their attacks personally or feel you are to blame for the situation



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- Signs indicating referral may be necessary
- Review of policy and referral resources
- Well-being committee and EAP



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## Summary

- Efforts to address disruptive behavior should be carried out in the context of an organizational commitment to the health and well-being of all.
- Managing lapses in professional conduct with high-conflict personalities takes advanced skills and persistent effort.
- Supporting those who are impacted by high-conflict people, particularly those with less power or authority, is an essential role of leaders.



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