

# Strategies for Maintaining Professionalism and Positivity in Challenging Hospital Environments

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## ABSTRACT

The importance of professionalism and maintaining a positive attitude when faced with challenging work conditions in a hospital environment is increasing. As healthcare has become more complex, opportunities for stress and conflict have arisen. Yet, often the medical response is focused on caring for the patient, making decisions, diagnosing, treating, and curing. We expect healthcare professionals to be professional, even when challenged or upset. However, to embody the characteristics of professionalism, some individuals may require support. This essay will explore this topic.

**KEYWORDS:** healthcare, professionalism, medical response.

## 1. Introduction

The importance of professionalism and maintaining a positive attitude when faced with challenging work conditions in a hospital environment is increasing. As healthcare has become more complex, opportunities for stress and conflict have arisen. Yet, often the medical response is focused on caring for the patient, making decisions, diagnosing, treating, and curing. We expect healthcare professionals to be professional, even when challenged or upset. However, to embody the characteristics of professionalism, some individuals may require support. This essay will explore this topic.

In hospital, patients feel nervous and in pain. They see busy and upset staff, which can be frightening. It's important for patients to feel valued. Healthcare providers must maintain a caring attitude and professionalism. Negativity and disrespect toward patients should be avoided. Strategies to maintain professionalism and

positivity are key. High-performance doctors and nurses face tough situations which can create stress. Staff expertise and patient safety are at risk. The challenge is to develop strategies to keep professional and positive communication.

### 1.1. Significance of Professionalism and Positivity in Healthcare

Healthcare can be a high-stakes field for professionals working on the front lines. Grit and resilience are necessary qualities for clinicians providing care and engaging with the public. Perhaps the two most central qualities to thrive in healthcare are professionalism and positivity. These qualities are among the most wished for by clinicians and patients. Professionalism is a basic tenet of trust and communication. A positive attitude leads to happy patients, fewer errors, and a healthier organization.

Healthcare professionals often cite a positive environment and sense of respect alongside feelings of team membership as major determinants in the choice of profession or practice setting. In the hospital, a focus on quality care is a clear secondary benefit to creating a customer satisfaction-oriented environment. A good mood is catching. A positive, engaged healthcare professional will engage patients and colleagues. A hospital filled with good spirits will be a happy, healing environment. Likewise, developing a reputation based on working with professionals who are positive is a major draw for your institution. Positivity: attitude reflects leadership. Employees and those talented graduates entering the organization should note the tone and operating principles from leadership. Those individual security blankets flourish when the tone in the upper reaches of the leadership world is dour, condescending, or negative. Then, an honest expression of positive starts today. Positive hospital professionals are fascinating to work with and are appealing to patient experience interest. Beyond these charming bedside effects, those who bring a positive attitude to the job often contribute to higher commitment and morale in their work. The secretion of positive hormones floods the practitioner and contributes to a reduction in stress hormones, free radicals, insomnia, and other chronic degenerative diseases. If you are lucky enough, managers and executives who bring these characteristics create excellent organizational cultures and achieve great results. These are the things that ultimately will lead to job security and satisfaction.

## 2. Understanding the Challenges of Working in Hospitals

Hospital settings present unique challenges to professionals working in them. Healthcare is characterized by high-stakes decisions that directly impact the lives of patients and their families. Research consistently shows that the rate of errors increases under stress, so ensuring that professionals continue to perform at a high level is a major concern of leadership. Professionals who are stressed, burned out, and disengaged are also more likely to leave their positions, thereby increasing the difficulty of ensuring appropriate staffing levels and high performance. Hospital settings are also unique because professionals interact frequently with patients and family members who are experiencing crises. Workers who are exposed to high levels of emotional distress on a daily basis are at risk of developing their own mental health issues. Patients and family members, for their part, are more likely to

feel dissatisfied with their care when healthcare workers are burned out or disillusioned. In sum, the problems of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals are inextricably linked to the well-being and outcomes of patients and families.

Because of these intense stressors, it may not be surprising that large numbers of healthcare staff are affected. Their roles should not under any circumstances "squeeze" out their personal lives: the staff themselves should not be squeezed and life's worries, upsets, and stresses should not have a negative impact on the care and compassion that they provide. Burnout and work represent two ends of a continuum. At one end is burnout, characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishment, and depressive symptoms and dysfunctional stress. Professionalism can act both as a cog in this cycle and as a protective factor, moderating some of the negative effects. Pharmacists in hospitals must guard against the creep of burnout. Resilience is the ability to return to normal, or to recover one's energy, after personal or organizational change. Resilience in healthcare workers is goal-oriented. It is regarded as a personal capability that can be developed if an individual has the necessary preparation, qualifications, and motivation. This is facilitated through both the leadership and management of the organization. Given this, from time to time, hospital training requirements state the need for refresher training on, or further development of, attitudes, professionalism, personality, and/or ways of working.

## 2.1. Physical Demands and Stress

It can be easy to forget the physical demands of working in a hospital, especially for those who have not participated in direct patient care, but the truth is that the field is intensely physical. Doctors, nurses, and support staff alike must lift, turn, and otherwise position patients throughout extended shifts (often back-to-back or with far fewer than the recommended hours of rest between), needing to maneuver their bodies as much as the patient's in order to access their clothing, to shift an IV line, or to perform another of countless necessary tasks. Often these movements must be completed with only one or the other side of the body and without the ability to use one's core to help stabilize. (Melnik et al.2022)(Maben & Bridges, 2020)(Maben et al.2022)

Frequent patient handling contributes to the physical toll of hospital work while simultaneously highlighting the demands and stress of such a fast-paced environment. The work of hospital staff is repetitive. In the medical unit setting, one's caseload will turnover every few days to once a week, necessitating the re-creation of routines and rapport relationships with new patients or families. There is a positive association between the length of the nurse's shift and job stress, with those who work for longer shifts experiencing significantly more stress than those working shorter shifts. These challenges are not insurmountable. Proper self-care that includes good eating habits, exercise, rest, and even ergonomics can mitigate the effects of these physical limitations. However, to some degree, we must recognize the physicality of healthcare work and universal ergonomic hazards as basic job facts and not simply moral failings or department-specific issues to be grappled with individually. If we all provide adequate support, optimal functioning may increase.

There are burgeoning rotating health intern programs at various health systems, but these do not specifically help professionals who hope to create a career in healthcare, nor do they make handling patients easier for professionals once the training program is complete. For this reason, we recommend that our departments make available a yoga or Pilates class free of charge to professionals working in the healthcare field, running every morning and every evening to accommodate a wide range of schedules; this will cater to transporters, housekeeping, and lab workers or couriers that work overnight, in addition to the main hospital staff.

It can be easy to forget that the root word of professionalism is profession, “a care one is called to.” It is difficult to consistently bring one’s best self to the big heavy-duty tasks of one’s professional life. It also finds that this turnover is necessary to maintain control of the global emotional and physical environments patients create due to the bleed-through effect of their legal diagnoses. In this media-saturated, constantly monitored society, this negative environment can be both created by and contribute to the workplace violence so frequently seen in healthcare settings. Creating an environment that better allows for optimal functioning, joy, and emotional support could help lower the amount of stress and disorder for both workers and patients.

### **3. Strategies for Adapting to Difficulties**

Having identified a number of challenges in the hospital previously, here we elucidate strategies for overcoming emotional labor in the hospital. There are five distinct strategies discussed in depth. First, we discuss tips to enhance personal resilience. For example, specific tips include strategies to motivate oneself in the morning or look forward to some rituals or habits that reduce stress. Other personal tips could include ways to manage time effectively. We also describe other proactive problem-solving strategies. We suggest that colleagues can agree on strategies for taking back the work environment or organize some team building, which can contribute to the feelings of mutual understanding and cooperation. Tips also offer wellness strategies, such as breathing exercises, and using mindfulness to learn to cope with uncertainty and to take control of one's focus. A final group of tips includes methods to connect with mentorship and peer support. (Gkonou & Miller, 2021)(Miller & Lewis, 2022)(Kou and Gui2020)

A number of challenges and corresponding strategies for their alleviation have been identified within this hospital and thus are described. Some of these strategies focus on helping individuals to become more adaptable and remain effective from a personal perspective, such as through stress management. Other strategies focus on transitioning perspectives from the individual to the team or organization, such as through mentoring and peer support systems. One solution, of course, is developing an adaptable mindset or maintaining desirable professional qualities even during a stressful time. In essence, being like water, which can shift and change shape, like the healthcare practitioners who are able to balance professionalism and emotions in an environment that can vary from hospice to ER room.

### 3.1. Effective Communication Skills

Arguably, the most important strategy professionals in challenging environments can follow is the development of strong communication skills. This skill is particularly important in the healthcare setting, as more positive communication can lead to higher patient satisfaction reports. Effective professional communication among staff has also been known to prevent burnout and increase job satisfaction. Active listening, or intentionally understanding what the speaker is saying, is one of the main tenets of good communication and can lead to a better connection between communicators. This strategy is also helpful in a time of crisis because it can help a professional understand the needs of a patient in order to provide proper care. Moreover, using positive, supportive, and compassionate language can deescalate a situation and lead to a positive interaction with patients and their families. A professional response delivered in a compassionate way can build relationships between hospital staff members and can mitigate increasing violence in healthcare settings.

In addition to empathic and compassionate responses, professionals can also use the teach-back technique to ensure understanding. If a professional assumes a patient or family member understands the concepts communicated during an interaction, this assumption can be detrimental and severely hurt a patient's care plan. Professionals can use the teach-back technique to ask the patient or family member to describe what was discussed during the interaction to help ensure comprehension. On the other hand, barriers to effective communication are often related to stress and workload. Stress can lead to burnout and can negatively impact a professional's ability to perform, including their ability to communicate with attention and empathy. Multitasking and an abundance of work to be done may also limit attention and prolong the time necessary to complete tasks effectively. The stuttering associated with disjointed thoughts and distractions will reduce the quality of patient care. It is also helpful to work with a colleague, as an interdisciplinary approach has been linked to successful healing with the increased collaboration of services. This approach is also useful in educational practice in fostering collaborative instruction and course design. A professional can also use group messaging and texting to relay information to a group of people as well. Interdisciplinary teamwork relies greatly on good communication skills for effective practice.

The use of positive messages should be a primary focus because healthcare professionals' daily lives are filled with negative reports of pain, illness, death, and injury. Medical and healthcare professionals can develop techniques and skills to excel in clinical settings and in medical education. Professionals should also use positive language to maintain professionalism and protect themselves from potential harm or injury from workplace violence. Positivity is a key concept in continued professional development and in fostering a safe environment. The use of positive language can be a language of the heart that can transform interactions into collaboration and compassion. Considering the complexities associated with the current healthcare system and educational institutions, changes in language must occur to foster collaboratively safe environments. The ability to foster a human connection and take on interprofessional teamwork is also integral to successful clinician education. Such concepts are central to maintaining professionalism and

fostering a healthy, safe environment. These techniques can help change the concept of being a teacher to the privilege of teaching others in an incredibly complex healthcare system. By using compassion and an empathic approach, healthcare professionals can change a problem-based practice into collaborative and skilled healing. Professionals can use and practice good communication techniques and develop compassion and empathy, which are beneficial for both professionals and patients.

#### **4. Importance of Emotional Intelligence in Patient Interactions**

Emotional intelligence (EI) has been suggested as being a significant factor in virtually all interactions. It is important when dealing with patients as well as in establishing and maintaining professional relationships. Emotional intelligence has been described in more than one way. It is a skill that is pertinent in a number of situations in interactions. The core of EI is the ability to effectively monitor the emotions of others, respond to those emotions in an acceptable manner, and also influence the emotional state of others. It is particularly important in dealing with patients, given that people in a hospital may experience a full range of emotions on any given day.

An ability to assess and then manage both the emotional state of a patient can be beneficial for both patient and staff alike. Higher emotional intelligence led to better patient outcomes more so than solely being oriented towards the patient's physical condition. EI was recognized as allowing medical professionals to pay more heed than might otherwise occur to the social, cognitive, as well as emotional states of patients, communities, the diversity of our own population, and their own colleagues. A number of skills are encompassed within EI, and foremost of these is having awareness of one's own emotions. In particular, people need to know when they are feeling frustrated and which situations they come across that contribute most to that state of mind. By knowing what makes us feel physically and emotionally drained or frustrated, we can effectively develop a coping strategy to intercede and be sensitive enough to use them. This is particularly valuable to nurses and the support teams on the front line who interact with patients and their families. Staff who are already in this role can introduce the idea of self-awareness in service improvement. This is yet another mechanism for change that nurses, student nurses, and their support staff can practice devising and implementing. There are other skills that are part and parcel of an emotionally intelligent person. Among these are empathy and good social skills.

If healthcare staff have a high degree of EI, then they are better placed to deal with their own stress in a way that does not have a negative impact on their patients. The needs of patients and their relations can be addressed through enthusiasm with the EI skills enumerated. To be able to reflect upon their own style, as well as the style of their fellow workers, so that they have a better understanding of the work climate, as a team approach, the lights and shades of the work environment can in turn assist them to understand the feelings of anyone with whom they come into contact, including patients. An emergency department (ED) is a place of high activity and intensity. Most patients will cope well with the situation, and many will even be positive and reinforcing with regard to patient care. However, frustration and

detractors are just as much a part of the emergency environment as the positives. By creating an emotionally intelligent workplace, ED staff can cope better with both their environments and the stressors within those environments. This in turn will not only benefit the patient but make being and working as a staff member all the more pleasant. The healthcare industry is a significant employer. One of the biggest complaints of patients across the world is the hospital experience. Promoting a more positive workplace with staff that is skilled in EI can assist in fostering more positive patient experiences. Notes for more effective practice: placing items and people nurses will be working with in a way that reduces physical barriers exercises the empathy "muscle."

#### 4.1. Empathy and Compassion

##### Empathy

Empathy and compassion are considered fundamental components of emotional intelligence within the healthcare industry. Empathy is the ability to understand the emotional state and needs of oneself or another person. In the case of healthcare, the patient is the individual to whom we must extend empathy in order to provide care that aligns with their emotional and, by extension, physiological and mental needs. Delivering empathic healthcare may result in reduced patient anxiety, facilitating better management and understanding of their disease processes, and may even have an impact on adherence to treatment plans. In identifying and addressing patient emotions and acknowledging their impact upon patient understandings of their healthcare and preconceptions of treatment outcomes, healthcare professionals can work alongside the client to develop care strategies tailored to their emotional needs, thereby providing care that is truly holistic.

##### Compassion

It is suggested that the core purpose of compassion is to alleviate the suffering of the other person, which is a central tenet of healthcare practice. Offering compassion might also result in an increased level of psychological resilience and commitment among healthcare professionals, who are taught to consider the suffering of others as an aspect of their reflective clinical practice. It is proposed that in receiving compassion, patients' perceptions and recollections of their experiences of care may be positively influenced, as may their long-term health and recovery. Compassion delivered by colleagues during times of difficulty might also result in care that is defined by teamwork and a sense of purpose, rather than by negative or hostile attitudes among those delivering care, which may result in suboptimal patient care. In addition, numerous coping theories propose that applying coping strategies may have a protective effect on individual well-being and psychological health at work. Therefore, healthcare professionals who demonstrate compassion toward themselves and others may encourage positive coping strategies, creating a protective and tenable work environment that may also impact positively upon the recovery experiences of the patient.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this essay provides insights regarding professionalism and positivity. High-quality care depends on their ongoing presence in challenging hospital environments, where patients may feel alienated and treatments may be associated with uncomfortable or painful side effects. Nurses and doctors also need to continually process experiences and emotions in order to live with themselves and their daily choices amidst frequent exposure to personal tragedy. Challenges include the undermining of teamwork due to frequent redeployments, especially for agency staff; unrecognized unconscious bias; negative spirals associated with emotional contagion; compassionate withdrawal; and hurting pain from patients. To get anywhere in coping with problems, it is necessary to become aware of what they might be, and so we end with an overview of strategies including workshops and reflective sessions about possible unconscious biases; anticipating team instability through better welfare support; and numerous suggestions for proactive crisis intervention strategies such as active responding, preemptive empathy, and assertion. Navigating such 'troubled' encounters on one's own and the importance of being emotionally intelligent in doing so has been highlighted by earlier discussion.

Indifference and negativity are self-perpetuating states, as are optimism and positive behavior. Awareness-building is therefore the first key to mitigation. There is no easy road to ending prejudice, but simply being aware empowers the individual, however messy the journey. To foster this awareness is to advocate support, as there is evidence to suggest that individuals working in supportive clinical teams manifest less burnout. Finding support raises qualities that are the opposite of prejudice - for example, creativity, adaptability, the ability to reflect and learn. By increasing options for care, co-worker empathy can be increased. In empathizing with the behaviors of perceived 'different' patients and finding strategies for dealing with them that are flexible, workers who are further along the individual stress equation can empathize better with patients. Issues can be addressed, coping strategies can be realistic, and particularity can be appreciated, rather than assimilated into the 'angry-lunatic-patient' or 'nasty-xenophobic-staff member' stereotype. This could not only improve care but develop integrative creativity by negating attitudes of 'all-for-self.'

### 5.1. Summary of Key Points

This final subsection summarizes the key points of the essay. Professionalism and positivity in times of workplace stress directly impact patient care and the hospital work environment. The essay identifies the primary challenging environmental issues that hospital managers and clinical leaders must proactively manage. Those difficulties present an archetypical picture of many of our hospital's hallways. Eight strategies are offered to help individuals and organizations regularly and positively respond to these difficult environments. The strategies are based on constructs from emotional intelligence and communication. They specifically target improvement in the relational aspects of the healthcare workplace. Although the benefits of being professional may not be immediately realized in a patient's outcome, holding positive regard for other individuals in our care is both imminently possible and therapeutic. As the responses to these strategies become cumulative, they will serve to support the structural changes necessary to improve both the quality of a healthcare

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professional's everyday work life and the quality of patient care. This professional paradigm assures educational initiatives will remain enduring activities of study and exchange with the potential to continue offering direct service to our patients.

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