

Clinical Mentorship of Nursing Students: The Staff Nurse's Role in Creating a Positive Learning Experience

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Clinical learning experiences, during which prelicensure nursing students help care for actual patients, allow students to apply information learned in the classroom. These experiences provide opportunities for students to develop their role identity as a member of the nursing profession and within the interdisciplinary healthcare team. Staff nurses play a pivotal role during clinical learning, serving as formal and informal guides, mentors, and preceptors. Clinical experiences impact students' academic success, clinical self-efficacy, perceived preparedness to transition to practice, and likelihood to stay in the profession.

This article offers nurses some clinical dos and don'ts to help ensure a positive experience for nursing students, staff, and patients.

Dos:

1. Do be patient, kind, compassionate, empathetic. Remember, what it was like when you were a student. What did you need from your mentors, instructors, and preceptors.
2. Do recognize the importance of your role as teacher, mentor, guide, and role model. Everything you do (or don't do) role models behavior for the students.
3. Do ask for a list of skills the student can perform and what level of supervision they need. Ask what the students are learning in the classroom and help them find real-life clinical examples related to those topics.
4. Do request that students get help from their faculty for patient care tasks or to help answer their questions. Nursing faculty are there to facilitate learning for their students,

think of them as your partners in teaching and mentoring.

5. Do showcase your expertise in efficiency and effectiveness in providing and managing safe patient-centered care. Students appreciate tips and tricks shared by their clinical mentors.
6. Do include nursing students in your interprofessional communication; in-person, on the phone, or via the EHR secured messaging system.
7. Do appreciate the contributions nursing students make in caring for your patients.

Don'ts:

1. Do not devalue or subvert the nursing process, care planning, or best-practice recommendations your students are putting into practice during clinicals.
2. Do not encourage or allow students to practice outside their scope. If they have not learned how to administer medications or draw blood, let those experiences wait until the proper time.
3. Do not gossip or role model incivility towards other staff, patients, nursing leadership, or members of the interdisciplinary care team.
4. Do not refuse to mentor students, intentionally leave them out, or ignore them. (It is ok to ask their faculty to give you a break from mentoring for the day, just not for the rest of time).
5. Do not feel like you need to entertain the students every minute; they can have quality learning experiences without being attached to your hip.
6. Finally, do not be surprised if nursing students teach you something new. After all, they are exposed to the

most up to date knowledge and the latest evidence-based practice recommendations. ■

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