FRATERNIZATION:
PUBLIC *vs.* PRIVATE

FRATERNIZATION: PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE RELATIONSHIPS

GOALS

1. Apply Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to the role of a nursing leader.
2. Control fraternization so as to remain an effective nursing leader.
3. Determine effective open-ended questions as a nursing leader.

KEYWORDS FOR APPLICATION

1. Fraternization
2. Self-Actualization
3. Objectivity
4. Autonomy
5. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs
6. Work Crowd vs. Private Crowd
7. Consequences of Sharing
8. Beneficial Uncertainty
9. Nurse Administrator (DON)
10. Nurse Leader (RN)

OBJECTIVITY VS. FRATERNIZATION

You were (or will be) hired to do a job! That means that when you were hired, you were trusted and considered competent to make difficult, logical, fair, and progressive decisions. You might have a board of trustees (or whatever your advisory people are called) to make decisions; however, because *you* are the nursing leader, you are legally accountable for your decision-making role according to your job description. The most powerful and accurate decisions on your part are an outgrowth of your leadership experience and the ability to be objective. Objectivity and viewing the work world is often clouded by inappropriate fraternization—that is, association with others in the work situation as a nursing leader in an inappropriately friendly way.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION AS A GOAL

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs gives rise to the fact that food, housing, safety, and loving and belonging needs are crucial to the ultimate upward attainment of Self-Actualization. To be Self-Actualized is to recognize personal potential through leadership growth and to have the autonomy to seek your highest levels of leadership capability.

Our stated needs (on the way to personal self-actualization) come from and are fulfilled by *our personal monetary income and our validation of our personal worth by others*. Actualization goals (as a final

outcome) are or have been encouraged, supported, and enhanced by effective management and leadership of others. Employees will admire and respect a nursing leader for the ability to help others and remain *focused on tasks* during the workday as they work toward *their* work assignments, as indicated by their job descriptions. Helping nursing employees toward *their* ultimate actualization goals is the job of a nursing administrator and nurse leader through validating their personal worth as a health care provider.

If daily employee interactions or personal conversations by the nursing leader occur regarding work assignments, the message is clear to employees that accountability for the accomplishment of work is the number one job expectation. The emphasis on work and job expectations will help to curtail fraternization in the workplace.

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

This almost sounds like you should be a robot and isolated from the everyday communication of the office/work staff. No—this simply means that you are aware and CHOOSE the information that you share in the workplace and with staff in any situation, whether it be in the workplace or in a social gathering. You must decide where the line is between public and private information and personal work relationships. There is a "work crowd," and there is a "private crowd." The communication between the two "crowds" often does not mix successfully for getting work done in the manner for which you and others were hired. This also means that there is a geographical line you cross it on your way home or elsewhere after your hard day's work, which changes the climate of your very being from work to personal/private existence. The separation of the two "crowds" will mean successful work and successful private life.

The consequences of sharing personal information are not all bad. Sharing commonalities may be a good thing if you are trying to establish a close working relationship with another person. However, to maintain a nursing leadership role and influence on a leadership hierarchy with staff requires some restraint. The problems of *excessive* personal sharing with other employees can lead to attempts of employee manipulation, blackmail, or misrepresentation of the shared comments to others in an untoward manner. Before sharing your personal information, the question for you as a nursing leader might be: "How could this information be misconstrued, misused, or how could it be used against me as a nurse administrator or nurse leader?" If this concern appears paranoid—well, so be it for your own good! Believe it or not—<u>all </u>of your cohorts and subordinates DO NOT have your best interest in mind.

The personal sharing (fraternization) between employees is time-consuming, distracting for getting the job done, and basically non-productive.

BENEFICIAL UNCERTAINTY

When trying to curtail fraternization among employees, being in close proximity to employees at *unexpected* moments will tell you if they are on task. Your presence as an unexpected person watching job performance is called BENEFICIAL UNCERTAINTY. In other words, they never know for sure when you are going to be present or plan to be present. If you notice a fraternizing behavior that deviates an

employee from expected work performance, merely ask the employee a specific open-ended question (cannot be answered by "yes" or "no") about the job they were hired to do or simply draw attention to your observation of fraternization without drawing judgment on the fraternization. They will usually draw judgment on their own negative (fraternizing) behavior(s). Your recognition and their response will usually refocus their attention on their job assignment.

Open-ended questions related to a specific job might include: (*Cannot* be answered by "Yes" or "No.")

Open-ended questions (examples) might be---

1. Sally, tell me how the new infant formula is being dispensed. (or)
2. I see that Mr. Jones came in this morning. What did he say about his symptoms?

Closed-ended questions related to their specific job might include: (*Requires* an answer of "Yes" or "No.")

Closed-ended questions (examples) might be---

1. Sally, the new infant formula is being dispensed now? (or)
2. I see that Mr. Jones came in this morning. Have his symptoms improved?

Legally, as a responsible nurse administrator or nurse leader, you can be held accountable for what you say, do, and don't do. Learn the discipline (related to your job) and always calculate your words and behavior wisely. You are to be an example of correctness in all situations. Your restraint and professionalism are why you were given a leadership responsibility. Know WHY you do what you do---don't just DO!

Remember, you were hired as a nurse administrator or nurse leader because you were special. Prove it! That most often means you know the difference between performing job-related expectations and job-related fraternization.

LAST THOUGHTS

*THE POWER COMES IN THE SECRET POWER TO CHANGE UNNECESSARY JOB FRATERNIZATION INTO PRODUCTIVE JOB-RELATED BEHAVIORS.

*SHH—NOW YOU KNOW THE SECRETS OF HOW TO RECOGNIZE NEGATIVE FRATERNIZATION AS IT RELATES TO JOB AND GOAL ATTAINMENT.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How often and in what circumstance do you, as a nursing leader, encounter unnecessary fraternization?
2. Under what circumstance(s) would you consider fraternization as an appropriate response?
3. What is an example of an open-ended question?
4. What is an example of a closed-ended question?
5. What type of question (open-ended or closed-ended) encourages an employee to expound on a fraternizing behavior?
6. What is "Beneficial Uncertainty"? What is at least one example of when this method can be used successfully?

RECOMMENDED READING

1. Job Description: Development and Application by this author

2. Communication: Novice versus Professional by this author

3. What Are the Dangers of Fraternization in the Workplace https://smallbusiness.chron.com/dangers-fraternization-workplace (Several articles on the website)