



***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.

FRATERNIZATION DEFINITION

In this context, it is when nurses establish personal working relationships between themselves that curtail their working professional relationship. This behavior is contrary with the expectations of their nursing assignment and the job description.

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 *our monetary income and validation of our worth by others*. Actualization goals (as an 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 to 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 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 successful and positive 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

It 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 the nursing staff in any situation, whether it be in the workplace or 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 are hired. It 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 good! Believe it or not—all 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 non-productive.

BENEFICIAL UNCERTAINTY

When trying to curtail fraternization among employees, being close 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 (that 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. It will usually bring an understanding of negative (fraternizing) behavior(s). Your recognition and their response will often 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 Mr. Dobbs is helping you to succeed? (or)
2. I see that Mr. Jones came in this morning. How is working closely with Mr. Jones, helping you to understand the computer charting better?

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, is Mr. Dobbs helping you to succeed? (or)
2. I see that Mr. Jones came in this morning. Is working closely with Mr. Jones, helping you to understand the computer charting better?

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 have 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 THOUGHT

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

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. How often and in what circumstance do you, as a nursing leader, encounter unnecessary fraternization?

Answer: _____

2. Under what circumstance(s) would you consider fraternization as appropriate behavior?

Answer: _____

3. What is an example of an open-ended question?

Answer: _____

4. What is an example of a closed-ended question?

Answer: _____

5. What type of question (open-ended or closed-ended) encourages an employee to be more likely to use fraternizing behavior?

6. Answer: _____

7. What is "Beneficial Uncertainty"? What is one example of using this method successfully?

Answer: _____

8. What is an example of fraternization you have seen in nursing behavior?

Answer: _____

9. What have you done to discourage negative fraternization?

Answer: _____

10. When is positive fraternization considered appropriate?

Answer: _____

RECOMMENDED READING

Job Description: Development and Application by this author

Communication: Novice versus Professional by this author

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

AUTHOR: Carolyn R. Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.