

What is Nurse-to-Nurse Hostility?

It's the persistent downgrading experienced from your peer that eventually undermines your confidence and self esteem. It's a serious problem in nursing due to increased tasks and job pressures, decreased time together and a history of powerlessness – **but the biggest problem is that nurses accept these behaviors as "normal"**. Nurse to nurse hostility prevents us from coming together to face our current challenges and threatens our profession on every level.

OVERT: Name calling, bickering, fault-finding, backstabbing, criticism, intimidation, gossip blaming, raised eyebrows, shouting using put-downs etc.

COVERT: Unfair assignments, sarcasm, eye-rolling, ignoring, refusing to help, sighing, whining, refusing to work with someone, isolation, sabotage, exclusion

EFFECTS

Feelings of decreased self esteem, anxiety, fear, guilt, shock and anger, vulnerability, loss of confidence, humiliation, stress related illnesses and a profound sense of isolation

SOLUTIONS

At an individual level:

- Confront the aggressor. Check out any situation that causes you worry by directly speaking to the aggressor in private. Begin with the details; then share the impact.
- Never be a silent witness: never stand by and listen as one co-worker slams or talks negatively about another co-worker.
- If it continues: keep a log of incidents, ask for help from your manager or human resources, make a formal written complaint and as a last resort, take legal action

At a unit level:

- Adopt a unit philosophy that clearly states that these behaviors are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Seek nursing leadership report and report these behaviors.
- Educate staff about hostility (call it what it is). Then seek education classes on assertive communication such as the DESC model or crucial conversations.

At an organizational level:

- Adopt a zero tolerance policy
- Take complaints seriously and follow up in a timely manner
- Embrace transformational leadership: take a stand, inspire and have a positive vision

In the end, we all want the same thing: to come to work and be recognized, valued, and appreciated for the talents and skills that we alone bring to our team; to take care of our patients with skill and care and feel confident and proud to be a NURSE!