Preceptor ★ News

8.5 Preceptor News

Time Management Tips

Effective time management will help you accomplish more each day, which is critical for a preceptor. It also has important health benefits. Managing your time wisely will minimize stress and improve your quality of life.

- Plan each day. Share your plan and how you made it with the preceptee.
- Prioritize your tasks – your *big rocks*.
- Say no to nonessential tasks.
- Teach preceptees to know when and how to say no appropriately.
- Delegate when appropriate.
- Take the time you need to do a quality job.
- Break larger, time consuming tasks into smaller parts. This can be particularly helpful if preceptees are overwhelmed.
- When working on a large project, set a time line to stay on track.
- If able, practice the 10 minute rule. Work on a dreaded task for 10 minutes. Once you get this far, you may be able to complete it.
- Evaluate how you spend your time and discuss this with your preceptee.
- Get plenty of sleep and exercise.
- Take a break when needed.
- Create some time management goals.
- Don't waste time waiting; have other tasks to do if you need to wait.
- Establish routines and stick to them as much as possible.

Use Big Rocks to Manage Your Time and Priorities

One of the most important things you will do as a preceptor is to teach your preceptee how to prioritize their nursing tasks. You might even take this to the next step by showing how to prioritize and balance one's professional versus personal life.

Stephen Covey tells a great story: One day, an expert in time management was speaking to a group of high-powered overachievers. As he stood in front of a group, he pulled out a one-gallon Mason jar and set it on the table. He proceeded to place some large rocks carefully in the jar. When the jar was filled to the top, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone said "Yes."

He then proceeded to put some gravel in the jar and shook it, causing the gravel to work down into the spaces between the big rocks. He asked again, "Is the jar full?" The audience replied, "Probably not." He then filled the spaces between the rocks and gravel with sand. "Is the jar full?" he asked. The audience shouted, "NO!" He then added water until the jar was filled to the brim.

"What is the point of this demonstration?" he asked. One person said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things in it."

The speaker replied, "No. That is not the point. The truth of this illustration teaches us that if you don't put the big rocks in first, you will never get them in at all. What are the *big rocks* in your life? Your family, loved ones, education, dreams, your health? Remember to put these *big rocks* in first, or you will never get them in at all. If you sweat about the little stuff, then you'll fill your life with little things and you'll never have the real quality time you need to spend on the big, important stuff."

One of the keys to time management as a preceptor is knowing how you generally manage your time and discussing this with your preceptee. For example, it is important to tell them the rationale of why you are doing certain things at certain times. Because of your experience and expertise, you see the big picture of everything that needs to be accomplished and have the confidence that it will be completed. The preceptee not only needs this assurance but also needs to know you are intentionally managing and optimizing your time. Characteristics of good time management include reliability, commitment, flexibility, confidence and vigilance. Time management is an on-going life-learning process for all of us.

Some days, it may help to identify the *big rocks* at the beginning of the shift, such as learning how your hospital completes an incident report or a new technique for the preceptee, and then actually planning when that will be accomplished.

As preceptors, discuss time management with your preceptee. More important, role model these time management skills daily.

Time Management

Nurse Mentoring Toolkit