

Preceptor News

Written by: Kimberly Cornwell, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC
The University of Kansas

May/June 2024

Role Modeling Self-Awareness

Preceptors with strong emotional intelligence may be better positioned to help new employees navigate challenges while facilitating their transition into a new role. As you continue to develop self-awareness, you can role model what it looks like for your preceptee.

You can help your preceptee to build self-awareness by remembering the following.

1. Providing constructive feedback (both reinforcing and redirecting). Your preceptee may not be aware of the gaps in their performance and how to fix them.
2. Encouraging reflective journaling. This can help your preceptee to self-identify strengths and weaknesses and their reactions to them.
3. Admitting when you are wrong and apologizing.
4. Modeling positive conflict resolution skills. This includes focusing on the issue, not the person, ensuring the message was received as intended and being respectful.

"If your emotional abilities aren't in hand, if you don't have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can't have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far." – **Daniel Goleman**

References:

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2024). <https://www.aacnursing.org/5b-tool-kit/themes/self-awareness>

Self-Awareness: A Key Component of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify, interpret, demonstrate, evaluate and use emotions to communicate with and relate to others effectively and constructively. Some experts believe that emotional intelligence is more important in determining life success than IQ is. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be continuously developed as we grow and learn from our experiences. A positive relationship has been found between the emotional intelligence of the preceptor and the degree of confidence the preceptee has in them. Additionally, self-awareness has been identified as one of the key components of emotional intelligence.

Characteristics of Emotional Intelligence

Self-Awareness: The ability to understand one's emotions, recognize one's strengths and weaknesses and acknowledge how one's emotions and moods impact others.

Self-Regulation: The ability to control emotions and impulses.

Motivation: The ability to manage one's behaviors and feelings to achieve one's goals.

Empathy: The ability to identify with and understand the emotions and viewpoints of other people.

Social Skills: The skills needed to handle and influence others' emotions effectively, e.g., good communication, conflict resolution.

Why Self-Awareness Is Important to Being a Preceptor

By developing a clear sense of self-awareness, preceptors can engage in the best manner possible with their preceptees, patients, families and other health care team members. The preceptor who is self-aware will be able to assess one's strengths and areas for improvement; pivot when needed in evolving situations; prevent situations from getting out of control; maintain self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-acceptance; be confident in difficult situations; build strong skills in the areas of resilience, decision-making and communication; and improve interpersonal and professional relationships (AACN, 2024).

Helpful Hints to Build Your Self-Awareness

Self-awareness centers on recognizing and managing one's emotions. Some helpful tips to build your self-awareness include the following.

- Slowing down and allowing time to process when dealing with difficult situations
- Observing your reactions with others; how do others respond to you?
- Ensuring that your reaction is measured and appropriate and not flawed by emotional responses
- Taking time to reflect on your emotions and how they influence behavior; being curious about who you are
- Seeking feedback from others who you trust to be open and honest with you
- Embracing mindfulness (pause, deep breathing, rethink your strategy)
- Taking ownership of your actions and apologizing
- Practicing humility