

In the Know, Inc. Inservice Club  
presents  
A Professional Growth Module:  
**Professionalism & Work Ethic**

We hope you enjoy this Inservice, prepared especially for nursing assistants like you. You work very hard, and we appreciate the effort you make to complete these educational materials. It shows your desire to continue learning and growing in your profession.

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

- Discuss the work ethic in America.
- Explain how you feel about work and work ethic.
- List at least six qualities that demonstrate professionalism.
- Describe at least six nursing assistant skills that demonstrate professionalism.
- Discuss how a positive attitude relates to professionalism and work ethic.
- Demonstrate professionalism in your daily work.

### Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please:

- Read through all the attached materials. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and circle the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You pass the quiz with at least six correct answers! Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself, and turn in the quiz page to  
\_\_\_\_\_ no later than \_\_\_\_\_.
- Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to  
\_\_\_\_\_ so that it can be initialed.

**THANK YOU!**

# IN THE KNOW

*The Inservice Club for Nursing Assistants*

## How Does the Dictionary Define Professional?



"Professional" means...  
*"to be courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in the workplace."*

## How Does the Dictionary Define Work Ethic?



"Work Ethic" means...  
*"a belief that work is morally good."*

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## Professionalism & Work Ethic

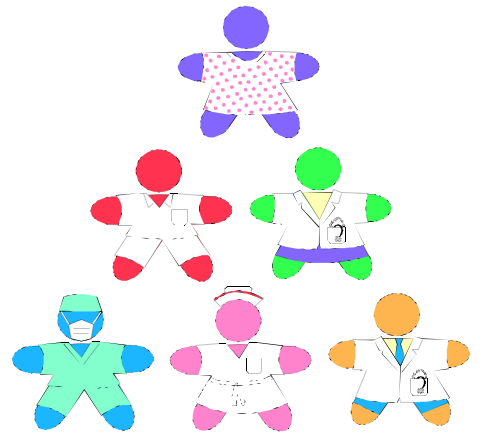
**D**o you see yourself as part of a professional health care team? You are. As a nursing assistant, you make a valuable contribution to your clients and your coworkers. This is true whether you work in a nursing home, a hospital, a client's home or some other setting.

For health care employees, being *professional* means acting in a kind, but businesslike manner. It also means that:

**You have the knowledge to do the job**—you have studied how to be a nursing assistant.

**You have the skills to do the job**—you have learned how to use the equipment and do the tasks needed in your work.

**You have empathy for your clients**—you can put yourself in their shoes and understand how they are feeling.



Throughout this inservice, you will learn more about professionalism and how to put your best foot forward at work.

**D**o you see your job as a necessary evil that you have to put up with to get a paycheck or as an important part of who you are and what you stand for? The way you view work is called your *work ethic*. Each individual has a work ethic and our society has an overall work ethic too. This inservice will review the work ethic of the United States and help you decide what work really means to you. You will also learn how important your attitude is to a successful working life and how attitude affects your professionalism.

## What Is the Work Ethic of the United States And How Did It Get That Way?

**T**he work ethic in the United States was shaped mostly by the early settlers—the immigrants that came here from many different countries around the world. They came to this country when it was just a wilderness, and they weren't afraid of hard work. They had to build their homes, their schools and their towns. They had to grow their own food and make their own clothes. People who didn't work hard had a very rough time, so hard work was seen as the best way to have a happy life. The early settlers took great pride in their work and in the "new world" they were building.

**A**s the United States became more developed, so did the national work ethic. Children were taught in school that it was



important to work hard at reading, writing and arithmetic. "Doing nothing" was seen as a sure sign of laziness and failure.

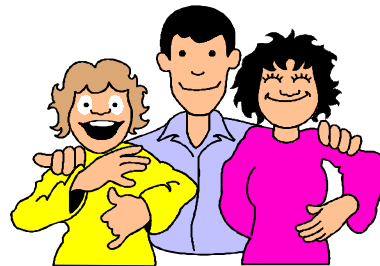
**I**n the late 1800's, big businesses boomed in America, and, unfortunately, some of them abused their workers. Many employees, especially women and children, were forced to work nonstop for sixteen hours a day, earning only pennies an hour. During this time, most people saw work as a drudgery, not as a pleasure.

**I**n the last fifty years, companies have become more focused on workers' rights and have created "human resource" departments to support their employees' needs. Labor laws have helped make workplaces

safer and work hours shorter. The work ethic has changed slightly to include the ideas that:

- All work is important and can give employees satisfaction.
- Supervisors should help motivate employees by encouraging them to continue learning and developing on the job.
- Employees should try to pick a job that interests them. This will help them do quality work and give them the most personal satisfaction and pleasure.

In general, though, the work ethic in the U.S. has not changed much from the beginning. Working hard is still seen as the best way to have a happy life.



# How Do You Feel About Work?

To figure out how you feel about work, you might try answering these questions:

- While you were growing up, what were the messages you got about work? Did your parents work? Did they enjoy their jobs?



- Did you have to do chores as a kid? If so, how did you feel about doing these chores? Did you have summer jobs to earn spending money? Did you feel proud of earning your own money?

- When you were in school, did you have teachers who praised you when you worked hard? If you got a bad grade, did you take responsibility for it?

Did you feel proud when you worked hard and got a good grade?

- Do you feel that work is an important part of your life? Do you look forward to coming to work most of the time? Do you enjoy being part of a health care team? Do you take pride in doing a good job? Do you get satisfaction from helping your clients?
- If you won a lottery and suddenly had millions of dollars, would you still want to work? If not, what do you see yourself doing all day, every day? Do you think your life would be satisfying without work?

**T**here are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Only you can understand the “messages” you got about work as you were growing up. And only you can decide what work means to you today. Just keep in mind that most employers are looking for people who have a strong work ethic—people who believe that the only job worth doing is a job done right.



## Remember:

**A strong work ethic improves the quality of your work and the atmosphere of your workplace.**

# What Are Some Professional Qualities?

Since no two people are alike, we all demonstrate our professionalism in different ways. However, there are certain qualities that supervisors look for when they are assessing someone's professionalism. These qualities include being:

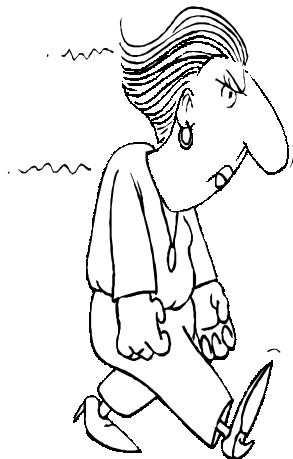
- |              |                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|
| Helpful      | Enthusiastic                 |
| Patient      | Dedicated                    |
| Pleasant     | Productive                   |
| Cooperative  | Dependable                   |
| Hard working | Reliable                     |
| Cheerful     | Honest                       |
| Friendly     | Punctual                     |
| Loyal        | Willing to follow directions |
| Efficient    | Careful                      |



# What Qualities Are Unprofessional?

We all know unprofessional people when we see them. Many of them go through their work day being:

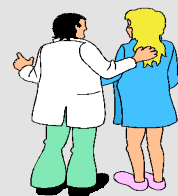
- Hostile
- Rude
- Selfish
- Irresponsible
- Careless
- Tardy
- Negligent
- Uncaring



No one is perfect...we all have bad days. But someone who is unprofessional demonstrates these negative qualities nearly every day.

***“From what we get in life, we can make a living.  
But, from what we give, we can make a life!”***

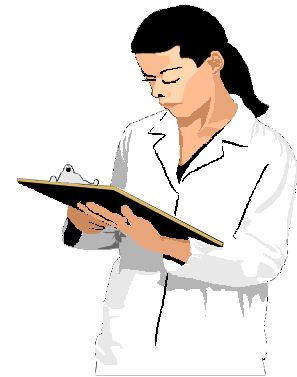
A quote by Arthur Ashe, champion tennis player



# Working As a Nursing Assistant

**H**ealth care employees with a strong work ethic get a number of benefits from their jobs. These benefits include:

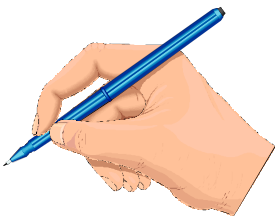
- Satisfaction from being able to help other people.
- Respect from clients and coworkers for doing a good job.
- The opportunity to continue to learn new things on the job.
- No time spent being bored on the job!



## Professionalism On the Job

**A**s a nursing assistant, you have learned—and continue to learn—a number of important skills. You use these skills in your current job, but they can also help you in other jobs throughout your life. Here are a few of the skills that show your professionalism every day:

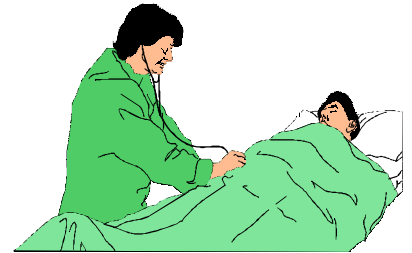
- Meeting the personal care needs of ambulatory and bed bound clients.
- Reviewing paperwork to check for errors and to make sure it is complete.
- Serving clients meals that are nutritious and help improve their health.
- Promoting client and staff safety by following all workplace safety guidelines.
- Making suggestions to the health care team about how to better meet the needs of your clients.



- Documenting your client care according to workplace policies.
- Completing your assignments as ordered and on schedule.
- Delivering quality client care under the supervision of a nurse or therapist.
- Ensuring client safety by using the proper equipment at all times.
- Motivating your clients to keep up with exercise plans set up by their therapists.
- Maintaining confidentiality about clients and coworkers.

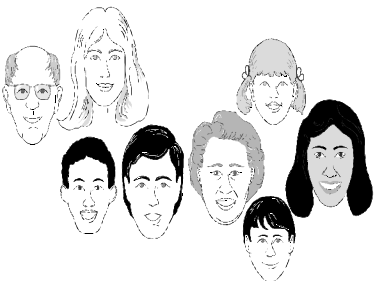
## Working As a Nursing Assistant, *continued*

- Continuing to learn new things by participating in all scheduled inservices and staff meetings.
- Prioritizing your client care so that all your client's needs are met.
- Encouraging client independence by having your clients' participate in their care.
- Identifying when you need help and then asking for it.
- Helping to teach and train new aides.
- Utilizing all your knowledge and skills to bring a better quality of life to your clients.
- Following nursing and physician orders exactly.
- Observing your clients for problems and reporting them right away.
- Helping coworkers when necessary to promote teamwork in your workplace.
- Maintaining a high standard of quality in your work at all times.



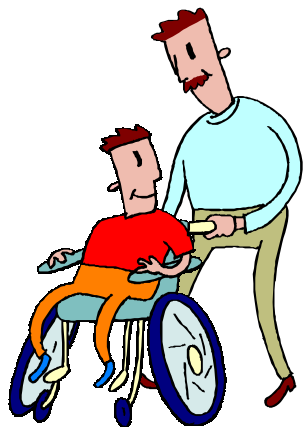
## The Job Outlook for Nursing Assistants

**D**id you know that the U. S. Department of Labor has recognized the importance of your job? It lists nursing assistants, home care aides and personal care aides as three of the most needed jobs for the year 2000 and beyond. Our country will need more and more people with the skills that you already have. This is because our population is getting older (All those "baby boomers" aren't babies anymore!) There will be more need for nursing assistants and aides to help elderly people who have chronic illnesses.



**R**emember, your work is very important to your clients and to your supervisors. You may not always hear "thank you" or "good job", but you can leave work every day knowing that you really made a difference in your clients' lives.

## Having Fun at Work



**D**oes being professional at work sound like you have to be “stuffy” or “prissy” or “boring”? That’s not true! Having fun at work—and still getting the job done—shows that you really enjoy your work.

**L**et’s face it. Healthcare is a *human* business. Your work brings you in touch with lots of people...clients, their families, coworkers, supervisors, and other medical professionals. Your job is very different from someone who sits in front of a computer all day or who works on an assembly line at a factory.

**C**an you think of another very human business? How about education? Think of all the years you spent in school. Did you learn more from a teacher who was always serious and taught strictly by the book or from a teacher who brought fun and playfulness into the classroom? Chances are, you learned more if the teacher added some fun into the school day.

**N**ow, think of your clients and your coworkers. Put yourself in their shoes for a minute. How do you think they feel every day when you come to work? Are they glad to see you because they know you will be pleasant and fun to have around? Do they know that you take your work seriously—but not yourself? Is your workplace better because you are there?



**Did you know that when you say, “I love my work!” you reduce your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and ulcers?**

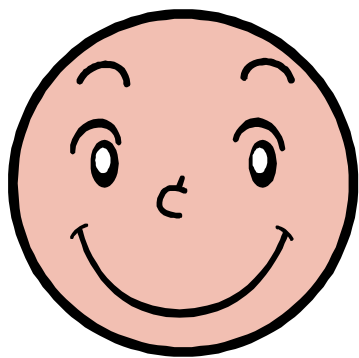
***(Unfortunately, studies have shown that only 1 out of 10 people say they love their job. What about you?)***



## Having Fun At Work, *continued*

**H**aving fun at work doesn't mean that everyone at your workplace should clown around all day and not get anything done. Work won't be fun for you, your clients or your coworkers, if no one gets their job done. **Client care always comes first!** Your work must be done safely and carefully—but there's no rule that says you can't smile, laugh or share a joke at the same time.

**R**emember, you probably spend more waking hours with your coworkers and your clients than with your family! If you don't bring a positive attitude to your workplace, you are wasting a big part of your life being unhappy. And, keep in mind, that happiness is contagious! If you come to work happy and you spread those good feelings around, they will rub off on your clients, their families and your coworkers.



**W**orking with clients who are sick, and sometimes dying, can be depressing at times. Bringing a positive attitude with you to work every day can help balance out the sadness that is part of every health care worker's job. Being professional means that you use your knowledge and skills to perform your job well, and that you use qualities like kindness, consideration and a sense of humor to get along with your clients and coworkers. And, having a healthy work ethic requires that you have a positive attitude toward your job.

***"People will be just about as happy as they make up their minds to be."***

A quote by Abraham Lincoln

**(Have you made up your mind to be happy at work?)**



# Putting It All Together

**Remember, to “show off” your professionalism:**



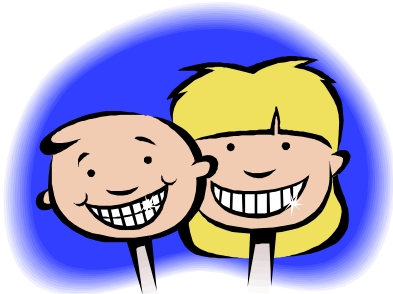
1. Use all the knowledge you have gained about your job. Keep your “thinking cap” on at all times. And, be sure to follow each client’s care plan and your workplace policies exactly. Think of every day as an opportunity to learn something new.

2. As you perform your client care, use all the skills you’ve learned as a nursing assistant. If you are assigned a task you know you can’t do, be sure to ask for help. (Part of being professional is knowing when to ask for help!) Document everything you do in a timely manner, according to your workplace policies.

**USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BE THE BEST NURSING ASSISTANT YOU CAN BE!**

3. Keep a positive attitude and try to spread it to your clients and coworkers. For example:

- Ask your client what his/her favorite color is, and then wear something that color (if it’s not against the dress code in your workplace).
- Ask a client to tell you about a special childhood memory, a nearby photograph or a special “knick knack”.
- Smile at everyone you see at work. What happens when you smile at people? They usually smile back! Then, they will be more likely to smile at the next person they see...and so on! Smiling is contagious!

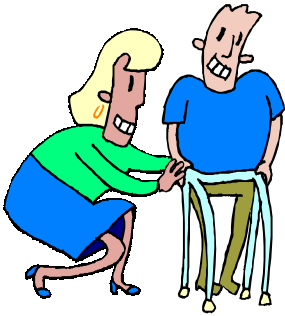


## Some Facts About Smiling

- The muscles you use to smile send messages back to the brain telling it to feel happy!
- Women smile eight times more than men—and women live about eight years longer than men. Does smiling help you live longer? Maybe...
- Smiling actually cools down your brain, while frowning heats it up.
- It takes a lot more energy to frown than it does to smile. You use about 43 muscles for a frown, but only 17 muscles for a smile. So, don’t waste energy frowning!

## Putting It All Together, *continued*

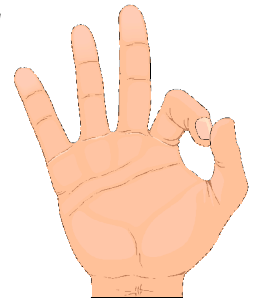
- Praise people as much as you can. Praise tends to have a wonderful effect on people. For example:



If you say to your client, *"Thanks for walking with me today, Mr. Jones. I really enjoyed it and you did a great job."* ...don't you think Mr. Jones will feel good about himself and be more eager to walk tomorrow?

Or, if you say to your coworker, *"Thank you, Sarah, for helping me transfer Mrs. Smith. I couldn't have done it without you. Now, can I help you with Mrs. Johnson?"* ...you will be letting your coworker know how much you appreciate her help.

- Don't forget to praise yourself. We are all good at giving ourselves negative messages such as, *"How could I forget that. I am so dumb!"* or *"I feel so grumpy. I'm no good to anybody."* The hard thing for most of us is to give ourselves positive messages. How about trying this: At the end of each work day, tell yourself a few things that you did really well that day such as, *"I finished all my client care on time today."* or *"I really feel good about how I handled that disagreement with Susan."* or *"Mrs. Smith and I had such a good conversation during her bath today."* Remember that being professional means that you admit your mistakes and your achievements, too!



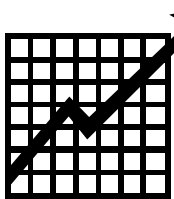
- Have fun at work! Bring your sense of humor to work with you every day. If a situation starts to upset you, try to see the lighter side of it. Share a funny story with your clients and coworkers, or sing a silly song while you work. Don't wait for someone else to make work fun. Take charge and do it yourself. Remember, time flies when you're having fun!



- Do something that makes you different from everyone else who does the same job. For example: Find a saying or a joke to share with your clients and coworkers every day like, *"Nature's wonderful. The older you get, the harder it is to see yourself in the mirror."* They will come to look forward to your daily messages! Or, find out the birthdays of your clients and coworkers. Give each of them a birthday card or sing "Happy Birthday" to them on their special day. The goal is to put some of your spirit into your work—and you'll get back more than you give!

## Doing Quality Work

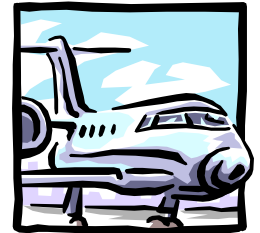
**D**o you think that it sounds okay to do quality work 80% of the time? Well, think of it like this. Aiming for 80% quality is like doing good work on Tuesday through Friday, but forgetting about quality every Monday. That's really not very professional and it's not acceptable, is it?



**H**ow about 90% quality? That's better, right? Unfortunately, that still means "messing up" for 48 minutes every day. Would you want your loved one to be cared for by someone who did poor work for nearly one hour every day? Probably not.

**O**kay, then how about 99.9%. That's got to be good enough, since no one is perfect. Well, if 99.9% quality is okay, then:

- 12 newborns will be given to the wrong parents every day.
- 18,322 pieces of mail will be sent to the wrong address every hour.
- 2,000,000 documents will be lost by the IRS this year.
- 2.5 million books will be shipped with the wrong covers.
- 2 planes landing at Chicago's O'Hare Airport will crash every day.
- 315 words in Webster's dictionary will be misspelled.
- 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions will be written by doctors every year.
- 5.5 million cases of Coke and Pepsi will have no carbonation.
- 291 heart operations will be performed incorrectly.
- 114,500 pairs of shoes at shoe stores will have two left shoes in the same box.



**P**retty shocking, isn't it? So, what should you do in your job? Aim for 100% quality. Tell yourself that you refuse to do less than excellent work! To do this, you may need to brush up on some old skills and/or learn some new ones. You'll probably make mistakes along the way. That's okay. Just try to figure out why they happened and what you could have done differently. Learn from your mistakes and keep going...always aiming for 100% quality!

# Are You "In the Know" About Professionalism & Work Ethic?

Circle the best choice and then check your answers with your supervisor!

**1. In the United States, the work ethic**

- A. Has been around for about 20 years.
- B. Is illegal in 36 states.
- C. Is based on the early settler's ideas about work.
- D. Has changed a great deal since the 1800's.

**2. True or False**

Having a strong work ethic means that you believe in living wills.

**3. All of the following are professional qualities, except:**

- A. Cooperative.
- B. Negligent.
- C. Efficient.
- D. Punctual.

**4. True or False**

Doctors always act more like professionals than nursing assistants do.

**5. To have fun at work you should:**

- A. Laugh at clients behind their backs.
- B. Play practical jokes on your supervisor.
- C. Tease your coworkers about their weight.
- D. Use your positive attitude to spread happiness.

**6. Your client, Mr. Smith, doesn't like to have a bath. Sometimes, he yells at you when you say it's bath time. To handle this situation professionally you could try:**

- A. Praising him after each bath, telling him how nice he looks.
- B. Trading clients with a coworker so you don't have to deal with him.
- C. Sneaking up on him while he's asleep and doing a bed bath.
- D. Yelling right back at him and going ahead with the bath.

**7. True or False**

Jobs for nursing assistants and personal care aides are going to decrease after the year 2000.

EMPLOYEE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

*I understand the information presented in this inservice. I have completed this inservice and answered at least six of the test questions correctly.*

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Inservice Credit: 60 minutes

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Self Study \_\_\_\_\_

*File completed test in employee's personnel file.*

Group Study \_\_\_\_\_