

# Managing the Assignment



**Organization:** Solid organizational skills will help students cope with the many unexpected occurrences and competing responsibilities inherent in daily clinical practice. Help the student develop an organized approach to patient care assignments. Insist the student formulate a daily routine and plan. Encourage the student to observe other coworkers' methods of organization and then formulate their own. When students use a different organization method than yours, determine if it is merely different or if it is ineffective.

**Prioritization:** Help the student learn how to juggle multiple responsibilities for multiple patients. Without the ability to prioritize, students tend to handle whatever issues arise in the order that they arise. This can result in delayed interventions on urgent patient care matters. Help students categorize duties based on their urgency, the level of skill required to complete the tasks, and the consequences of delay or inaction.



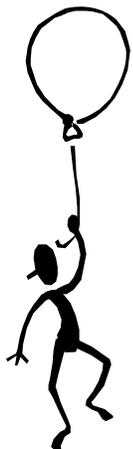
**Asking for Help:** Help the student understand that s/he cannot do everything alone. Help the student become comfortable with seeking assistance from coworkers when needed.

**Confidence Building:** Preceptors who act as resources and encouragers can help



students develop confidence and self-assurance. Confidence is built slowly over time as skills are successfully performed and appropriate decisions are made. It can easily be damaged by unsolicited advice, inappropriately challenging learning experiences, and hypervigilance. As students develop their own practice habits and manner of organizing and accomplishing their work, guidance and advice can become increasingly unwelcome. Preceptors need to remember that their way is not the only way and to be accepting of

other methods as long as they meet safety and practice standards. Students have an increasing need for independence as their skills increase. Assignments should gradually increase in complexity with highly challenging patients reserved until the latter part of preceptorship.



**Guided Independence:** Preceptors need to refrain from hypervigilance and the tendency to take control of problems and issues as they arise. Except for situations where a patient's safety is in jeopardy, preceptors are not helping the students by rescuing them from difficult decisions or situations. Preceptors need to coach students through the decision-making process by stimulating the students' thinking and problem-solving skills. Students will not develop independent problem-solving skills if they are continually "saved" by the preceptor.

Sources: Baltimore, 2004; Myrick & Yonge, 2005.

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