

Your learning environment needs to be **RESPECTFUL**

Respectful learning environments = greater health and wellness

Being disrespectful to med students might make for interesting drama to watch on TV but it creates a lousy workplace.

“The dynamics of working with medical students are unique when teaching in high-pressure environments,” acknowledges Beth Beaupre, Executive Director of the Region’s Joint Medical Staff Division. “There is an overlap of scope that requires awareness of, and respect for, what each member brings to the team. Being respectful isn’t just a nice idea. It lies at the heart of Collaborative Care and helps build a healthier workplace that can contribute to better health outcomes.”

A disrespectful learning and working environment can result in loss of productivity, compassion fatigue, time-consuming investigations and complaints. But perhaps its highest cost is the potential loss of skilled, talented people – many of whom find other places to work when their learning or work environments are unhealthy and disrespectful.

But I didn’t mean it that way

Where does tough love and constructive criticism cross the line into disrespectful or even abusive behaviour? The answer lies in how a person interprets the interaction or experience.

Yes, health care can be a high-pressure environment where decisions need to be made quickly. But it’s precisely those situations where it’s important to remember that shouting, swearing or belittling are not ways to encourage collaborative patient care.

Communication is in the details

Up to 93 per cent of communication is non-verbal. So if you’re focused on what you’re saying instead of how you’re saying it,

you could be seen as disrespectful. The words you choose may be overshadowed by your voice’s volume or pitch and your body language (especially your facial expressions). Factors such as age, gender or culture may also impact the way you communicate (or how your communication is interpreted). A liberal dose of compassion, combined with a greater effort to be mindful of these factors helps contribute to healthier communication.

The Region’s Guiding Principles on Collaborative Care include students and learning environments. Visit www.wrha.mb.ca/collaborate for tips, tools and resources.

Read the Region’s respectful workplace policy at: <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/professionals/respectfulworkplace/index.php>

Read the University of Manitoba’s Respectful Work and Learning Environment Policy: http://umanitoba.ca/admin/governance/governing_documents/community/230.html



Bridge the generational gap

Sometimes, “don’t do unto others” is the best thing to remember. Teaching methods designed to prompt students to think on their feet, traditions or rituals for initiating medical students...once again, these concepts make for interesting television drama but unhealthy workplaces.

And because we may have experienced those things at the hands of someone else doesn’t mean it’s smart, respectful or even helpful to pass those traditions down to the next generation of health providers.

A little extra care and thought when it comes to communication between two generations can help create a more respectful exchange. “You have an important role to play in making the learning experience a positive one,” says Beaupre.