

5 tools to protect your nursing license and your livelihood

March 15, 2014 6:00 am by [Lorie Brown](#) | 0 Comments



Over the past 20 years, I've represented more than 300 healthcare providers before the various licensing boards. I've seen nurses accused of practicing medicine without a license for misunderstanding the dosage, nurses accused of neglect for failing to answer another nurse's patient's alarm like when the other nurse said she would answer it, and nurses accused of abuse for removing a patient's hand off a foley catheter as the patient was trying to yank it out.

It surprised me that so many healthcare providers would find themselves in this position. I looked at my cases and noticed there were similar issues that ran through them. I figured if I could develop a system that could help healthcare providers prevent being before the board, it would be helpful.

As a result, I developed the GIFTS system. GIFTS is an acronym for five different tools which, when used together, can help healthcare providers protect both their licenses and livelihood. Here's the system:

G is for Giving. This is not only giving to your patients, but also to your coworkers, administration and to yourself.

I represents Integrity. This includes being truthful and honest, and also acting in line with your core values. Honesty includes proper documentation in medical records, on employment evaluations and on license renewal applications.

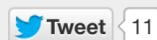
F has a dual meaning as it stands for Focus and Follow Through. This seems to be the biggest area where healthcare providers find themselves in trouble. We're called in so many directions and have so many things on our mind that it can be difficult to keep track of it all. Sometimes, we simply lose focus and our brain goes on "autopilot" because we've executed a task so many times.

For example, have you ever been driving and realized that you just missed your exit ramp because you were distracted? Or, take a look at this sentence: "FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS." How many F's did you notice in that sentence? Most people see three, but that is not correct. If you saw four, you also are incorrect. Five? Still wrong! If you look at the sentence again, you will see six of them. That is because when we see the word "of," our mind processes it with the letter "v," which is the sound of the word when spoken.

T is for trust. Trust your gut and yourself! Sometimes we can look at a patient and know that they don't look quite right, but the objective data shows that everything is fine. Yet, when we don't trust our instincts and ignore what's right in front of us, we can run into problems.

And lastly, S stands for source. You are the source of everything that happens to you, your work environment and your patients. I don't mean that you are the source in terms of blame or fault, but you are the source in that, the source, is a position to stand in. If you are the source, you can make another choice. You may not like the choices, but you still have a choice.

A healthcare provider must use all of their GIFTS to keep their license safe. The GIFTS sound easy, but they truly are a practice— a muscle that you need to build. After the fact, it is easy to look in retrospect to see which one of the GIFTS you were not using when a problem occurred. If you take the time to implement your GIFTS on a daily basis, you are able to better protect your license and your livelihood.



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Lorie Brown is a registered nurse, nurse attorney and author of Law and Order for Nurses. She is the founder and CEO of Empowered Nurses, a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating nurses on how to protect themselves from malpractice and license discipline. At Brown Law Office in Indianapolis, she assists healthcare providers in license matters and fellow attorneys with medical issues in their cases. Brown frequently participates in conferences and speaking engagements, where she shares her valuable advice with nurses around the nation.

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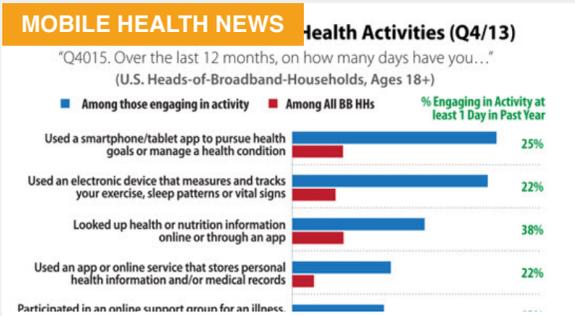
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