



‘Responsible Leadership:’ Questions and Answers



Q “I’m a physician. I’ve paid my dues. Isn’t it enough to provide good care for my patients?”

Q “I’m an owner. I have a business to run, decisions to make, money at stake. Don’t I call the shots here?”

Q “I’m a manager. I have spreadsheets to analyze, schedules to make, sick calls...with all my responsibilities, how can I be expected to find time to be a leader?”

Q “I’m a front desk staffer. I just work here. Can’t I do my job and collect my check?”

A I’m sorry to break the news, sorry to disrupt your neatly drawn “job descriptions,” but you chose healthcare, and, as “providers” of healthcare, you have made a commitment to excellence, a commitment to lifelong learning...a commitment to “care.”

I’m also sorry to tell you that you cannot follow through with these commitments without dedicating yourself to “responsible leadership.”

Q “Okay, so what is ‘responsible leadership,’ and how do I get me some of that?”

A *Teach, motivate, adapt, learn, and reflect.* These five actions represent your commitment to “responsible leadership” and reflect your commitment to your patients.

Let’s look at each one individually:

■ *Teach:* We are all “guides.” Doctors guide patients, managers guide employees, owners guide practices. Our patients present to us with problems they can’t solve—physical problems, social problems, insurance problems. In order to guide them toward solutions, every one of us in the practice must participate. You made a commitment!

■ *Motivate:* Successful urgent care practice is the work of a team, and there is no “I” in team! Your practice is only as strong as its weakest link. Every day is a battle. To win the battle on behalf of every patient, you need all hands on

deck. When team members start to veer off course, forget their purpose, each and every one of us has a responsibility to rally the troops. You made a commitment!

■ *Adapt:* “Change? We hate change!” Change takes us out of our comfort zone and makes us feel vulnerable, out of control, and weak.

But, consider this: Those who seek opportunity in the face of change evolve, and medicine is an evolutionary discipline. Your patients depend on you to be willing to adapt and offer the promise of something better. You made a commitment!

■ *Learn:* Great learners are students for life. They are voracious consumers of new information. They actively pursue opportunities for learning and are creative at identifying sources.

Learn from your patients. Learn from your colleagues. Learn from experience (good and bad). Be a keen observer of situations, study the outcomes, then reflect and learn. Remind yourself not to judge. Judgments are convenient ways to avoid learning, because you cannot “learn” from what you already “know.” Instead of judgments, try listening. Seek solutions instead of “declarations.” You made a commitment!

And, finally...

■ *Reflect:* Identify your own failures when things go wrong, learn from them, and work toward developing skills to avoid them in the future. Being reflective makes you a better teacher, motivator, adapter and learner, and that defines a “responsible leader.” And, when you chose healthcare, that was your commitment!

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