Behavioral Objectives

After reading this newsletter the learner will be able to:

1. Discuss the importance of first impressions.
2. Describe five tips for making positive first impressions with customers.

An elderly gentleman, Mr. Smith, is being seen, for the first time, in a world renowned facility - perhaps it is yours. He is accompanied by his daughter. This family is “checking in” for his appointment. The employee at the receptionist desk is engaged in a personal conversation with a co-worker, leaning on her elbow on the desk, while smacking her gum, laughing and twirling her hair. The family waits...

Eventually the daughter “interrupts” the employee and says, “Excuse me, but my father is here for his appointment. Do we need to let you know we’re here?” The receptionist puts down the phone, while sighing and rolling her eyes, and says to the family, “What?!” The daughter repeats herself. The receptionist then puts a clipboard on the counter and says, “Have your mother fill this out.” The daughter says, “It’s my father”, to which this employee mumbles, “Whatever”, and resumes her previous conversation.

The first contact you, and any other employee in your facility, have with a customer, including patients, family members and visitors, is the most important. In the first 8 to 30 seconds, after a customer talks with or sees you, an opinion of you (and your facility) is formed. Sometimes the opinions others form about us are unconscious and based on intuition or a “gut feeling”. Others, like in the case of the Smith family, are conscious, blatant and unmistakable.

The saying, “You never get a second chance to make a first impression” is true. No matter how “world-renowned” your facility, or how intelligent, competent or caring individual employees are, first impressions matter.

And, every employee, from top to bottom, should do everything in their power to make them positive ones.

This newsletter will discuss tips for making positive first impressions with customers we meet, face-to-face, every day. Key factors, such as attire, facial expressions and posture, will be reviewed.

First Impressions

In your personal life, you come in contact with new people every day, such as passing them on a busy street. And, in such cases, it really doesn’t matter what they think about you. First impressions are important only if you care what the other person thinks about you. And, it does matter what customers think. Their impression of you represents their opinion of the facility you are representing, as well as, sometimes, their satisfaction with the entire experience. And, dissatisfied customers typically remember a negative experience for 20 years and in many cases, forever - much longer than the positive ones. You, truly, do only get one chance to make a good first impression. And, it takes just a few seconds to make lasting and positive first impressions by following a few basic tips, such as:

Greet customers. Except for extreme cases, such as an emergency, stop what you are doing, and, at minimal, greet the customer. Look up, acknowledge the customer and offer a greeting – “Hi”. This is just basic politeness and good manners. If you are in the middle of something very important, it’s appropriate to say, “I’ll be right with you.” Ignoring a customer or continuing a personal task, such as a personal conversation, is not.

Smile. Practice smiling so it becomes habit. It makes a great first, and lasting, impression.

Pay attention to your apparel. What you wear is the first thing people notice about you. Although today’s healthcare environment is much more casual than it was, even 15 years ago, it is still important to dress the part. Make sure your clothing is clean, unwrinkled, fits well and is appropriate. Your facility has a dress code for a reason - follow it. The last thing you want is for someone to think your facility is not concerned about its professional appearance.

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POPULATION/AGE-SPECIFIC EDUCATION POST TEST

Personal Growth... A Newsletter for All Staff

Sample 2011

Competency: Demonstrates Age-Specific Competency by correctly answering 9 out of 10 questions related to First Impressions Count.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

1. You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.
   a. True
   b. False

2. Customers make a first impression of you based on:
   a. the first 8 - 30 seconds of meeting you.
   b. the quality of care they receive.
   c. whatever your position is within the facility.
   d. the reputation of your facility.

3. Making a good first impression on customers is only important for receptionists.
   a. True
   b. False

4. You are planning days off with a co-worker when a customer approaches you. You should:
   a. say to the customer, “Hold on. This is really important.”
   b. ignore the customer until you have finished the arrangements.
   c. stop what you are doing and greet and help the customer.
   d. ask them to take a seat until you’re free.

5. When speaking to a customer, which of the following makes a positive first impression?
   a. Use slang terms, so the customer can understand you.
   b. Speak at a moderate pace, politely and courteously.
   c. Use as many medical terms as possible.
   d. Speak very loudly, especially when talking to the...