

WAYS TO FIT IN AS A TRAVELER

Sometimes, being a traveler can leave you feeling at odds with your co-workers. At first, you may face some resistance and jealousy from permanent staff. Some places are more accepting than others, but this resistance is inherent in any workplace involving temporary staff. What else can you do besides being friendly? In this article, I will share a few tips beyond friendliness that will make your life a little easier.

Be Flexible

Most facilities feel that their way is the “only way.” From a simple patient transfer to a complicated procedure, they have a particular way of it should be done. Then there is your way. You are used to doing things a certain way and you know it works. In one place your way is standard procedure, yet in this new place everyone looks at you like you are insane. When all eyes are on you, you can either try to explain why your method works and how other facilities do it that way or you can be flexible and do it “their way.” Unless you are going to jeopardize your patient, I suggest doing it “their way.” Until you are accepted, your suggestions won’t be appreciated.

Be Observant

While being shown around the unit your first day, observe how other nurses are doing their jobs. Note any subtle norms of the workplace. For example, in the Operating Room, I have seen a variety of methods to transfer patients from the operating room table to the bed. I was amazed at how many methods exist and how personal each facility feels about their particular method. Some simply use a towel on a roller to transfer, while others use a sheet. Some use lifters and others use sliders. Taking note of what I call, “the norms” will help you fit in faster.

Be Tactful

Not only is it tempting to do things the way you are used to doing them, but it is also equally tempting to explain yourself by saying..... “This is how we do it where I came from.” I had to learn the hard way. Nobody wants to hear how you did it somewhere else. To them, this indirectly implies that their way isn’t good enough. Therefore, I have found a few starter phrases that not only imply cooperation, but also leave them wondering and perhaps asking how you did things other places. The following questions can make a difference in how you get along with staff:

- What is your policy here on
- How do you like tohere?
- What do you use here for.....?

People love to tell you how they do things. Meanwhile, while they are explaining how they do things, they begin to wonder how you might do it differently. This can open the door for you to begin to teach them a few tricks of your own without seeming forceful. After all, travelers can be extremely valuable in bringing new practices to new settings. Travelers learn many methods and procedures while traveling. Most people get this in their day to day practice.

Whether you know a better way or not, being flexible, observant, and tactful will get you along way with your co-workers. Getting along can make more of a difference at times than how you did something. You can be the best nurse on the floor, but if you don’t get along with the staff.....you might as well be the worst.