

THE AMAZING RACE TO UNIT EXCELLENCE:

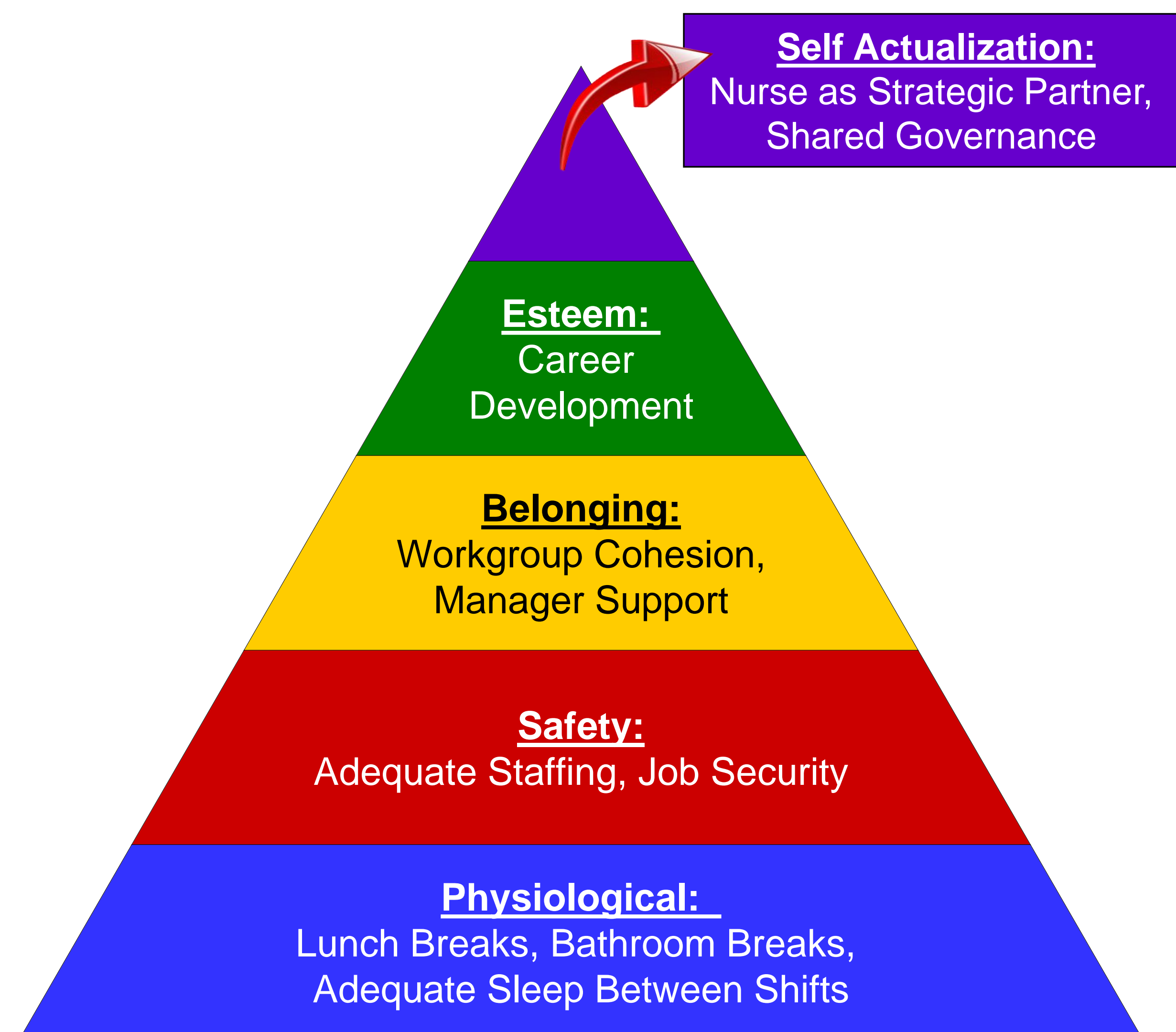
Developing Professional Practice Behaviors to Impact Patient Care

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Purpose & Background

Shared Governance is an organizational model that allows nurses to exert control over their practice. Healthcare staff that consider themselves to be valued, supported, and empowered can have a positive impact on overall patient care.



A Nurse's Hierarchy of Needs by Karen Cox, RN, PhD

Similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the diagram above depicts the special hierarchical needs of a nurse. The **Amazing Race to Unit Excellence** assists staff in satisfying lower level needs and pursuing higher level needs.

Methods

The **Amazing Race to Unit Excellence** provides a framework for developing the professional practice behaviors that are essential to achieving a culture of Shared Governance, or **Unit Excellence**. It is loosely based on a popular television reality game show in which teams race around the world receiving clues that provide directions for performing a task.

The staff of a 28-bed medical-surgical unit were divided into four teams with a balanced mix of nurses, aides, charge nurses, and unit secretaries. Each team was provided with a specially trained team mentor. Teams were awarded points, or **Merit Miles**, upon the completion of a task, or **Clue**. The 12-month project period was divided into 3 seasons. Team members and individual high scorers were awarded with a small prize after each season.

Season 1: Introducing Shared Governance

Throughout **Season 1** staff were exposed to the elements of Shared Decision Making and were assisted in the formation of a Unit Practice Council – from frequency and location of meetings to membership guidelines and charter development.

Clues for **Season 1** included attending another unit's Practice Council meeting; completing a Shared Decision Making Survey and a Self-Directed Study on Shared Governance; and creating a "wish list" of staff identified opportunities for change.

At the end of **Season 1**, two practice council sessions were underway with a charter and staff-elected practice council leadership team.

Season 2: Introducing Plan-Do-Study-Act

Teams were reshuffled and team mentors were reassigned at the beginning of **Season 2**. Teams were introduced to the **Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA)** improvement model and **Season 2** clues gave teams the opportunity to practice using the **PDSA** model to map out the steps necessary to implement small-scale quality improvement projects that could improve patient care delivery and staff satisfaction.

Clues for **Season 2** included completion of weekly **PDSA** paperwork and attendance at in-services, staff meetings, and the monthly unit practice council meeting.

At the end of the season, the unit was proficient at applying the **PDSA** model to staff-identified projects and two small-scale projects were completed.

Season 3: Independent Functioning

Voluntary participation during **Season 3** elicited 36 (out of 50) staff whom selected their own team according to 4 different focuses in alignment with the Hospital's vision statement, "To lead the Nation in Caring, Healing, Teaching, and Learning."

Team Caring

Focus: Patient Satisfaction
Project Examples: Activity Cart, Follow-Up Discharge Phone Calls

Team Teaching

Focus: Staff Education
Project Examples: Quick Reference Tools, "Snack Time Snippets" In-services

Team Healing

Focus: Quality Awareness
Project Examples: Unit Scorecard, Quality Bulletin Board

Team Celebration

Focus: Staff Cohesion
Project Examples: Staff Photo Board, Employee of the Month Program

Evaluation

Achieving "Unit Excellence" can be demonstrated by the following:

- ✔ Improved staff enjoyment and empowerment as evidenced by completion of multiple QI projects and enhanced staff participation in a variety of unit-based activities
- ✔ Observed professional practice behaviors through the development, implementation, and actions of a new unit-based practice council
- ✔ Improved patient quality outcomes including a reduction in total patient falls and improved patient satisfaction scores
- ✔ Improved staff retention/decreased turnover rates

Feedback from participants of **The Amazing Race to Unit Excellence** has included the following:

"The Amazing Race has really enhanced the teamwork on our unit. It helped us to realize that we have the ideas and resources in place to improve the quality of care that we provide to our patients. We were each able to demonstrate that we can be leaders – regardless of the position we hold on the unit. I feel like we are better prepared to take care of our patients!"

Conclusions

The **Amazing Race to Unit Excellence** is an interactive professional development model that uses the concept of gaming to elicit staff enthusiasm, participation, and friendly competition to enhance staff empowerment, build teams, and assist in the development of Shared Governance.

This project collaborated with the current literature on the importance of shared governance. Over the period of twelve months, this process has identified many informal leaders in the nursing aides, unit secretaries, and new graduate nurses.

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