



How to Model, Encourage, and Teach Professional Identity Formation and Professionalism

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Background: The 2010 Carnegie report recommended that medical educators focus on **professional identity formation**. Therefore, our goal is to *support professional identity formation* while we model, encourage, and teach *professionalism*.¹

1. **Define professionalism** for *your organization* with clear support and active input from the leadership, faculty, and learners, and in the context of values and accreditation requirements, including competencies and milestones). The term professionalism is used to encapsulate the complex and essential features of who we are as physicians; competent, committed, compassionate, and patient-centered caregivers who are guided by a sense of social responsibility.²
2. **Share definitions widely and explicitly.** According to the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), ‘Making standards explicit, sharing them with the public, and enforcing them, is how the profession maintains its standing as being worthy of public trust.’³
3. **Prioritize supportive learning environments** (classroom, clinical, and organizational culture)
 - a. Align stated organizational values with learners’ needs by addressing the hidden curriculum (culture) to ensure that stated values are also the values being demonstrated.
 - b. Encourage behavioral awareness, reflection, and accountability for all members of the community (leaders, faculty, staff, learners, patients, families) through clear policies, education, monitoring, re-education, and targeted interventions when required.
4. **Foster an interconnected web of supportive relationships** for learners (peer and faculty) through community building and learning opportunities within the domain of professionalism.
5. **Emphasize successes** and accomplishments over failure or lapses in professionalism.
6. **Remember that professionalism is most effectively promoted by supporting the professional identity formation of learners.** Professional identity formation is the ‘development of **professional values, actions, and aspirations** built upon a **foundation of clinical competence, interpersonal skills, ethical understanding**, and including aspirational goals in **performance excellence, accountability, and humanism.**’¹
7. **Provide faculty development to help faculty succeed** as role models who hold themselves to the highest professional standards as engaged, caring teachers committed to helping learners gain expertise and as mentors, advisors, and coaches dedicated to assisting learners in envisioning and achieving their highest professional goals.
8. **Provide learners with opportunities for reflection** and self-improvement through regular formative feedback, goal setting, and accountability.
9. **Foster a growth mindset, self-compassion, and well-being** through faculty development and role modeling, explicit dialogue, and a demonstrated willingness to be vulnerable - especially in roles of teacher and coach. (Nyquist JG, PhD, unpublished book chapter 2020, *ICS and Professionalism: Promoting and Assessing Learning*)
10. **Formal curricula beyond professional identity formation** should:
 - a. Reinforce the cognitive base (knowledge, skills, attitudes) related to elements of professionalism, including professional ethics and humanistic values.
 - b. Align with the current Pediatric Anesthesiology Milestones: Three domains were included in version 1.0: 1) Participation at the institutional, regional, and national levels, 2) Giving and receiving feedback, and 3) Basic professionalism, well-being, and work/life integration.

References:

1. Irby DM, Cooke M, O'Brien BC. Calls for reform of medical education by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: 1910 and 2010. *Acad Med.* 2010;85(2):220-227.
2. Cruess RL, Cruess ST, Steinert Y, eds. *Teaching Medical Professionalism: Supporting the Development of a Professional Identity.* 2nd ed. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 2016
3. <https://www.abms.org/media/84742/abms-definition-of-medical-professionalism.PDF>. Published January 18, 2012. Accessed November 13, 2020.