

THE UNCANNY CAMARADERIE AMONG EMERGENCY NURSES



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Camaraderie is defined as a mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together (sounds like a bunch of emergency nurses, right?). I absolutely love the camaraderie that I have experienced—and continue to experience—over the years with my fellow emergency nurses!

Trust must be earned with this camaraderie, and trust is an incredible asset among emergency nurses. When your coworkers trust you, you have reached the highest pinnacle of professional success. Value this attribute, for it's not easily attained. I need to be able to trust a nurse I'm closely working with. When you think about it, we often spend more time with our coworkers than with our own family—especially during the many holidays we are required to work. Emergency Nurses Association (ENA) members have worked side by side with their own coworkers for many, many years. Emergency nursing is one of the few professions where we have nurses from every generation working side by side. In a term of endearment, we have many “work daughters” or “work sons” that we have helped to orient and mentor. Although in recent years, the tenure in emergency nursing has certainly changed, that dynamic synchrony of an experienced weekend crew or our awesome night shift staff can never be forgotten! How many of us are guilty, when asked to pick up a shift, of checking the schedule first

before delivering an answer to see who is working? If it's a good crew—sign me up! Generally, most of us enjoy being busy in the emergency department. During those busy times, there's a certain positive flow and energy that is palpable, and it somehow fuels our soul. And yet, those days when it is literally out of control as you hit the ground running, it can absolutely drain us like nothing else! Verbalizing “we can do this” or “we've got this today” can go a long way. We are all willing to work hard along with somebody. It's a little more frustrating to work for somebody when they're not showing the same amount of effort. After a quick report, we often look around to see “Who are my people today? Who's got my back? Who will help me when I don't even ask for help (but they can tell I need help by the look on my face)?” We've all worked with another nurse who never asks for help, and if they ever do, we know they're drowning!

Or there may be a situation when you suddenly hear a coworker start to use a louder or different tone of voice, either in speaking to a family or in asking for help, and you know it's “all hands on deck” right now! But there's also that feeling you get when you see a fellow emergency nurse getting stressed over a patient's changing condition. You immediately know that if they are stressed, everybody should be too! In camaraderie, nonverbal communication can be at an all-time high. A slight eye roll, a head nod (or shake), and a certain physical posturing can speak volumes to our coworkers! We tend to read our coworkers like a book!

With camaraderie comes wisdom. We can tell immediately when a coworker is troubled or stressed, especially if it's beyond the work environment. A tenured coworker automatically pitches in and helps, as the unspoken support is what's needed most. And a thank you from the recipient is never expected; it's just what we do to help each other.

In addition, we also have a unique camaraderie and familiarity with our physicians and providers, unlike any other area of nursing. We work alongside them 24/7—think about that. They know us and we know them—their quirks, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Those providers know when an experienced nurse comes to them expressing concern about a patient, they had better listen up! We tend not to ever “cry wolf!”

This camaraderie carries over into our ENA work. It's very gratifying to see our members from around the world

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J Emerg Nurs 2023;49:151-2.
0099-1767

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jen.2022.12.010>

bond immediately at a conference, during a committee meeting, or at a local chapter meeting. We connect at a level that is often difficult to explain to someone outside the emergency nursing profession.

Cherish this camaraderie. I hope it inspires you as an emergency nurse. Nurture it and build on it. It's what great

teams are made of, and I'm so glad we have you on our ENA team!

Author Disclosure

Conflicts of interest: none to report.