

# Nurses Supporting Nurses

## Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program

### Orientation Partner Training: Facilitator's Manual

## Training Overview

### About This Manual

This manual supports facilitators in delivering the Orientation Partner training and preparing nurses for their role within a Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP).

The full training is approximately 4 hours, but the modular format allows content to be shortened, adapted to the needs of the home, or delivered as individual concepts and activities. The training uses a blended, engaging approach that includes experiential, collaborative, self-reflective, and discussion-based learning activities.

An accompanying, fully editable slide deck is available to guide participants through the content and activities in this manual. See Toolkit Resource 7: Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program Orientation Partner Training Slide Deck.

The manual and slide deck are part of a larger toolkit designed to support long-term care homes in implementing a NOPSP. While much of the training content focuses on leadership, mentorship, and peer support and is applicable across long-term care settings, NOPSP-specific content should be adapted to reflect how the program is implemented in each home.

For additional resources, including the full implementation guide, see Perley Health's Nurses Supporting Nurses: Building an Orientation Peer Support Program.

### Toolkit

- **Access the Full Toolkit**  
[PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program](https://PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program)



## How to use this Manual

This manual outlines the key teaching points and educational content included in the training to support facilitators in preparing for and delivering the session. It is designed to be used alongside the accompanying slide deck and provides high-level guidance rather than detailed presentation scripts. Facilitators can use the manual to guide their preparation and delivery while adapting discussions and examples to suit their audience and setting.

## Intended Audience

The training is intended primarily for point-of-care nurses who have agreed to become Orientation Partners. It can be used with nurses who are new to the role as well as those with previous Orientation Partner experience.

Reflection and discussion activities can be adapted to the participants' experience. Experienced Orientation Partners may reflect on past experiences, while those new to the role can consider similar situations from their practice or respond to hypothetical scenarios.

This training is best delivered in small groups of approximately 4 to 20 participants to support active participation, discussion, and completion of the learning activities. However, the modular format allows the training to be adapted to different home environments and delivery needs, including one-to-one sessions where appropriate.

## Facilitating a Safe and Meaningful Learning Experience

Ideally, facilitators should have experience in long-term care leadership and demonstrated skills in nursing leadership, peer support, and mentorship, ideally within long-term care.

Facilitators play an important role in creating a positive, respectful, and psychologically safe environment where participants feel comfortable asking questions, sharing experiences, and learning from one another. Because the training involves reflection on real experiences and challenges, participants should be encouraged to contribute without fear of judgment or criticism.

Facilitators are encouraged to:

- **Create a safe space for questions and discussion.** Invite questions throughout the session and reinforce that it is appropriate to ask for clarification, share uncertainty, or discuss challenges.
- **Encourage participation and shared learning.** Use personal stories and examples where appropriate to make the content relatable and invite participants to share their own experiences and perspectives.
- **Model the behaviours expected of Orientation Partners.** Discussions should be positive, respectful, and constructive. The training is not an opportunity to criticize, discipline, or address individual performance concerns. Feedback should focus on learning, growth, and practical strategies that can support new nurses.
- **Respond to concerns constructively.** When challenges or differing perspectives arise, acknowledge them without judgment and guide the discussion toward solutions, learning, and supportive approaches.
- **Support connection and comfort.** Simple touches, such as providing snacks and maintaining an upbeat, welcoming atmosphere, can help participants feel comfortable and encourage engagement.
- **Invite participants to help maintain a safe learning environment.** At the outset, participants should be encouraged to listen respectfully, maintain confidentiality where appropriate, and contribute to a space where everyone can learn and participate.

# Nurses Supporting Nurses

## Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program

### Orientation Partner Training



## Accompanying Slide Deck

All modules and content in this manual correspond to a specific slide in the accompanying slide deck. Note that slides 1 and 2 contain facilitator information and are not intended to be presented. The training presentation begins with slide 3. The title on the slide and in the manual may not always match, but the content will reflect each other.

Access the fully editable slide-deck see Perley Health's Nurses Supporting Nurses: Building an Orientation Peer Support Program.

## Toolkit

- For a downloadable version, please see **Toolkit Resource 6 – Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program Orientation Partner Training Slide Deck** - [PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program](https://PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program)



## Training Evaluation:

It is important to evaluate the impact of the training to identify opportunities for improvement. Evaluations can include questions about the participant experience, relevance to the learning objectives, intent to apply what was learned, and overall satisfaction.

Keep evaluations brief, with a completion time of approximately 5 minutes, and make them easy to complete. Consider using Likert-scale questions rather than primarily open-ended questions. Evaluations can be completed in print or digitally; however, time should be allotted during the training for participants to complete them to maximize response rates. Participation in evaluations should always be optional.

The evaluation for this training is not included in this manual and should be developed in advance of the training session.

## Time Allocation

Total training run time if the training is approximately 240 minutes, or 4 hours.

- There are 7 distinct modules with a run time of approximately 30 minutes each.
- There are 2 planned health breaks, 15 minutes each.

## Training Materials

Training materials for this training include:

- A comfortable, private space suitable for both small- and large-group discussions.
- A computer and projector.
- Snacks and refreshments, if available
- Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program Orientation Partner Training Slide Deck (NOPSP Slide Deck).
- Handout: Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program Information Flyer (NOPSP Information Flyer). Appendix A - page 20.
- Handout: Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program Overview: Outlining Roles, Expectations, and Scope. (NOPSP Overview). See Appendix B - page 21.
- 2-5 flip chart stands with paper
- 2-5 markers
- Blank paper for each participant.
- Pens for each participant.
- Handout: Supportive Environments Discussion Scenarios. See Appendix C - page 24.
- Handout: Adapting Peer Support - Case Studies. See Appendix D - page 25.
- Handout: Orientation Partner Tip Sheet. See Appendix E - page 26.
- Evaluation form

# Training Content and Facilitation

## Module 1 - Welcome and Introduction

Objective: To welcome participants, provide an overview of the NOPSP, and foster connection among participants to create a meaningful and productive training experience.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

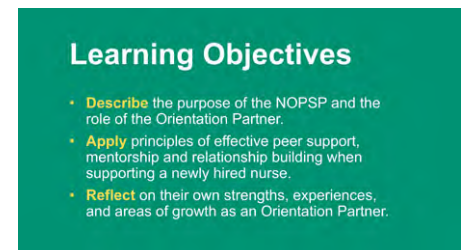
### Materials:

- **NOPSP Information Flyer**
- **NOPSP Overview**

Accompanying Slide Deck: Slides 3-10

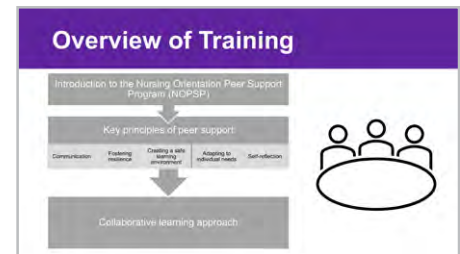
### Facilitator Notes:

- **Opening Remarks (Slide 3) ≈ 2 minutes**
  - Welcome participants to the training.
  - Explain purpose of the training.
    - This training is designed to give Orientation Partners the tools and knowledge to be an effective peer support for new hire nurses.
    - A good Orientation Partner can make all the difference during a newly hired nurse's transition, especially if they are new to the nursing profession.
    - This training will provide valuable knowledge and help participants succeed as Orientation Partners regardless of their previous peer support experience.
- **Learning Objectives (Slide 4) ≈ 2 minutes**
  - By the end of the training, participants will be able to:
    - Describe the purpose of the NOPSP and the role of the Orientation Partner.
    - Apply principles of effective peer support, mentorship and relationship building when supporting a newly hired nurse.
    - Identify strategies and resources available within their home to support the Orientation Partner.
    - Reflect on their own strengths, experiences, and areas of growth as an Orientation Partner.



- **Overview of Training (Slide 5) ≈ 2 minutes**

- Give overview of content for the training.
  - This training will cover the following topics:
    - Introduce the Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP)
    - Explore key principles of being an effective Orientation Partner
      - Communication
      - Fostering resilience
      - Creating a safe learning environment
      - Adapting to individual needs
      - Self-reflection
  - This training is designed to be engaging and interactive. Learning activities will give participants the opportunity to learn from each others' experiences, perspectives and ideas.



- **Learning Activity- Icebreaker (Slide 6) ≈ 8 minutes**

- NOTE: Use the included icebreaker or substitute with another favourite icebreaker.
- Explain the purpose of the icebreaker.
  - To encourage participants to get to know each other.
  - To begin building rapport in the group and foster meaningful discussion throughout the training.
  - To help participants understand that everyone has different experiences, ideas, strategies, and knowledge.
- Facilitate the icebreaker activity:
  - Go around the room and have each participant answer the following questions aloud.
    - What is their name?
    - What is their role/designation? (Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse)
    - How long have they been a nurse?
    - How long have they worked at the home?
    - What was their experience transitioning into your role?

### Icebreaker

1. What is your name?
2. What is your role/designation?
3. How long have you been a nurse?
4. How long have you worked at *[Home Name]*?
5. What was your experience transitioning into your role?

- **Overview of NOPSP (Slide 7) ≈ 4 minutes**

- NOTE: The content in this slide may need to be tailored to the home.
- Refer participants to the informational flyer.
- Provide an overview of the NOPSP as it is implemented and delivered within the home.
  - The NOPSP is a structured initiative designed to support newly hired nurses as they transition into practice within a long-term care home.
  - Orientation Partners are paired with a new hire nurse during the new hire's first 6-weeks of independent practice by phone, email, or in person.

### Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP)

A **Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP)** is a structured initiative designed to support newly hired nurses as they transition into practice within our team at *[Home Name]*. Orientation Partners are paired with a new hire nurse during their **first 6-weeks** of independent practice.

- Orientation Partners may not always be in an active partnership because pairing is dependent on the volume of new hires and number of available Orientation Partners.
- Partnerships are made based location, shift, learning needs, experience, and perceived capability.
- Partnerships are managed by the NOPSP Coordinator.
- The NOPSP Coordinator will connect with the Orientation Partner to confirm their participation before every partnership.
- Partnership introductions will happen via email.

• **Overview of the Orientation Partner Role (Slide 8) ≈ 4 minutes**

- NOTE: The content in this slide may need to be tailored to the home.
- Refer participants to the program overview handout.
- Provide an overview of the Orientation Partner role as it is defined within the home
  - An Orientation Partner is a Registered Nurse or Registered Practical Nurse who works at the point of care.
  - Direct the new hire to appropriate policies, procedures, resources, and subject matter experts.
  - Answer the new hire's questions and provide guidance, as required.
  - Be a supportive listening ear for the new hire's concerns or challenges.
  - Avoid performing clinical skills or tasks on behalf of the new hire; focus on guidance and support. Redirect the new hire to the NOPSP Coordinator.

• **Defining the Scope of the Orientation Partner (Slide 9) ≈ 5 minutes**

- NOTE: The content in this slide may need to be tailored to the home.
- Refer participants to the program overview handout
- Define the scope of the Orientation Partner role as it is defined within the home
  - Invite 1–2 participants to share an experience of a new hire seeking support outside the scope of the Orientation Partner role and how they responded.

• **Benefits of Peer Support (Slide 10) ≈ 3 minutes**

- Review the benefits of peer support and mentorship in nursing, as presented on the slide.

### What is an Orientation Partner

- A direct point-of-care RPN or RN who is paired with a newly hired nurse to:
- Provide peer support and mentorship
- Facilitate integration into the team and culture of the home
- Promote a positive onboarding experience

| Within the Scope of an Orientation Partner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Outside the Scope of an Orientation Partner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer questions</li> <li>Guide the new hire to policies, procedures, and other resources</li> <li>Share personal experiences of onboarding</li> <li>Discuss concerns, offer advice, and support new hire in problem solving</li> <li>Promote confidence and encourage new hire</li> <li>Provide constructive feedback</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate clinical skills</li> <li>Offer informal buddy, or shadow, shifts</li> <li>Complete tasks for the new hire</li> <li>Develop and monitor a performance improvement plan</li> <li>Offer peer support outside of scheduled work hours</li> </ul> |

### Why do we need peer support?

Research suggests that:

1. Having peer support at onboarding can help newly hired nurses feel more supported in their transition into the profession – **higher job satisfaction**
2. Mentorship and peer support help nurses develop **critical thinking, problem-solving abilities**
3. Provides a **safe space** to ask questions and gain confidence
4. Improved patient outcomes, through better **communication skills**
5. **Emotional support**, offer encouragement and help newly hired nurses navigate the **emotional aspects** of patient care



## Module 2 - Key Concepts of Effective Mentoring

Objective: Establish a foundational understanding of what makes an effective Orientation Partner and peer support partnership.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

### Materials:

- 2-5 flipchart stands with paper
- 2-5 markers

Accompanying Slide Deck: Slides 11-12

### Facilitator notes:

- **Learning Activity- Qualities of an Effective Orientation Partner (Slide 11) ≈ 20 minutes**
  - Divide participants into 2-5 small groups and assign a flipchart stand and marker to each group.
  - Give participants about five to ten minutes to discuss and record their answer to the following question:
    - What are the most important qualities that an effective Orientation Partner should have?
  - Walk around as groups discuss their answers, offering encouragement, but minimal feedback.
  - Afterwards, facilitate a large group discussion that explores the small groups' answers.
    - Ask each group to share their answers to the larger group.
    - Encourage discussion and shared anecdotes.
- **Effective Peer Support Relationships (Slide 12) ≈ 10 minutes**
  - Explain the value of peer support in nursing.
    - The literature speaks to nursing mentorship and the NOPSP builds on these principles.
    - Mentorship is crucial for professional growth, retention and job satisfaction.
    - Research suggests that new nurses who have mentors are more likely to stay in their roles and experience less burnout.
    - Mentorship is a dynamic relationship that evolves through stages. It starts with the initial orientation and then deepens as the mentor, or in this context, the Orientation Partner, helps the new hire navigate challenges, improve their skills, and gain confidence.
  - Qualities of an effective Orientation Partner
    - NOTE: Some of these may get covered in the learning activity discussion. The facilitator can skip or expand on individual qualities as required.
    - Review the qualities of an effective Orientation Partner as outlined in the literature.

### What Makes An Effective Orientation Partner?



Activity



**Group Task:** Think about the qualities that make an effective Orientation Partner. Write them down.

### Effective Peer Support Relationships

Building a strong peer support relationship involves creating an environment where your new hire feels **heard, understood, and supported.**

|                               |                              |                               |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Experienced and Knowledgeable | Empathetic and Supportive    | Good Communicator             |
| Patient and Understanding     | Approachable and Trustworthy | Encouraging and Motivating    |
| Adaptable and Flexible        | Professional and Ethical     | Strong Problem-Solving Skills |

- **Experienced and Knowledgeable:**
  - Strong clinical skills and expertise in nursing practices.
- **Empathetic and Supportive:**
  - Shows genuine care for the new hire's well-being and professional growth.
  - Provides emotional support during stressful situations.
- **Good Communicator:**
  - Clear and effective in giving constructive feedback.
  - Open and approachable for questions and concerns.
- **Patient and Understanding:**
  - Gives the new hire time to learn and make mistakes.
  - Demonstrates patience when new hires are adjusting to the role.
- **Approachable and Trustworthy:**
  - Builds a trusting, respectful relationship with new hires.
  - Creates a safe environment for new hires to ask questions and express concerns.
- **Encouraging and Motivating:**
  - Promotes confidence by highlighting strengths and progress.
  - Motivates new hires to set and achieve professional goals.
- **Adaptable and Flexible:**
  - Adjusts peer support approach based on the new hire's learning needs and personality.
  - Willing to modify approach as challenges arise.
- **Professional and Ethical:**
  - Models' high standards of professionalism, integrity, and ethical practice.
  - Acts as a role model for the new hire in all aspects of nursing.
- **Strong Problem-Solving Skills:**
  - Helps new hire navigate complex or difficult situations.

## Insight

### Level it up

To increase the level of the challenge, the facilitator can intentionally provide unclear or incomplete instructions when introducing this activity. This will create some initial confusion or frustration around starting the activity, but it can provide an additional example of how unclear communication can affect understanding and engagement.

## Module 3 - Communication Strategies

Objective: Provide strategies to communicate clearly, effectively, and empathetically with new hires as an Orientation Partner.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes

### Materials:

- Blank paper
- Pens

Accompanying Slide Deck: Slides 13-15

### Facilitator Notes:

- **Learning Activity:  
Communicating Without Words  
(Slide 13) ~ 20 minutes**

- Give each participant a sheet of paper and a pen.
- Divide participants into pairs and have each pair sit so they cannot see the other's paper.
- Ask one participant in the pair to draw a simple line drawing on their paper.
- Once drawn, have the participant communicate the instructions for drawing the same picture to their partner using only nonverbal communication. They cannot speak, write words, or point directly to the paper.
- The partner draws what they believe the participant is communicating.
- Once completed, have the pair compare their drawings. How close did they get?
- Lead a group discussion about the experience with a focus on the importance of clear communication skills.
  - Ask participants:
    - What was easy or difficult about communicating without words?
    - What does this demonstrate about clarity, assumptions, checking understanding, and adapting communication to another person's needs?
    - How did that feel when they were given no verbal instructions?
    - What types of challenges happened?
    - What would have made this exercise easier?
    - How does this relate to being an Orientation Partner?
  - Relate observations and experience back to the Orientation Partner experience.

#### Communication Strategies For Effective Peer Support



##### Group activity:

Work in pairs to draw a line, but with one key challenge

1. You cannot speak or write instructions.
2. Each person has a blank sheet of paper and a pen
3. One person will start drawing, while the other will try to replicate it based solely on non-verbal cues without looking at each other's paper

- Though not the same, similar communication frustrations can interfere with effective peer support relationships with new hires.
- Sometimes personal assumptions or lack of clarity can lead to confusion and mistakes.

### Effective Communication Techniques (Slides 14-15) ≈ 10 minutes

- Review four effective communication techniques as presented on the slides.
- Encourage discussion and anecdotes from the participants.

### Effective Communication Techniques



**Non-verbal communication:**  
**What it is:** Using body language, eye contact, tone of voice, and facial expressions to enhance your message.  
**Why it's important:** Non-verbal cues can reinforce empathy, support, and openness. Positive body language (nodding, leaning slightly forward).



**Empathy:**  
**What it is:** Understanding and acknowledging the new hire's feelings and perspectives, without judgment.  
**Why it's important:** Empathetic communication creates a safe space for the newly hired nurse to open-up. It shows that the Orientation Partner genuinely cares about the newly hired nurse's emotional and professional well-being, fostering a more supportive peer support relationship.

### Effective Communication Techniques



**Positive Reinforcement**  
**What it is:** Providing encouragement and constructive feedback that emphasizes strengths and progress (e.g., "You're doing great, and I can see you're improving in this area").  
**Why it's important:** Positive reinforcement motivates the new hire, boosts their confidence, and helps them stay engaged in their learning and development. It encourages growth through affirmation and support.



**Clarification and Paraphrasing**  
**What it is:** Restating or summarizing what the new hire has said to ensure clarity and prevent misunderstandings (e.g., "So, what I'm hearing is that you're feeling overwhelmed by your current workload. Is that right?").  
**Why it's important:** Clarification helps ensure that both the Orientation partner and newly hired nurses are on the same page. It prevents miscommunication and allows the new hire to correct any misunderstandings before they escalate.

## Module 4 - Fostering Resilience

Objective: Equip Orientation Partners with strategies to promote emotional resilience in themselves and the new hires they support.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

### Materials:

- None

Accompanying Slide Deck: 16-17

### Facilitator notes:

- **Learning Activity – Fostering Resilience (Slide 16) ≈ 20 minutes**
  - Introduce resilience:
    - Resilience is the ability to adapt to challenges, recover from setbacks, and keep moving forward.
    - Resilience is vital in the nursing profession. It helps us face the challenges of the job without burning out.
  - Divide participants into small groups of 2 or 3.
  - Give groups about 10 minutes to discuss the following:
    - How they've maintained resilience during challenging times within in their nursing career (outside of being an Orientation Partner).
    - What strategies have helped them navigate difficult or stressful experiences?
    - Circulate the groups and offer insights and prompt conversation, if needed.
  - After the small-group discussions, invite participants to share key insights or takeaways from their discussion with the larger group.

### Fostering Resilience

*Resilience is vital in the nursing profession. It helps us face the challenges of the job without burning out.*



**Group Activity:**  
 Discuss how you've maintained your resilience in tough times, in your nursing career. What strategies have worked for you?

- **Fostering Resilience (Slide 14) ≈ 10 minutes**

- Explain the strategies for fostering resilience in others as described on the slide.
- Highlight the following key learning points:
  - The literature discussed here focuses on new nurses. While the context is different, these strategies may also be relevant for newly hired nurses, particularly in the unique long-term care environment. Additionally, many new hires in LTC are new to the profession, as well.
  - Orientation Partners encourage new hires to identify and articulate their stressors, then provide tools for managing those stressors.
  - Orientation Partners can share their stress relief and mindfulness strategies.
  - Orientation Partners can support new hires in building connections within the team by introducing them to supportive colleagues, encouraging conversations, and helping create opportunities for others to get to know the new hire.
  - Orientation Partners can share clinical strategies and problem-solving insights they have developed through their professional experience.
- Validate new hires' experiences and remind them that setbacks are a normal part of learning, while emphasizing that how they respond and move forward matters most.



## First Wellness Break

Objective: Provide participants with an opportunity to recharge, attend to personal needs, and return to the session refreshed and ready to engage.

Duration: At least 15 minutes

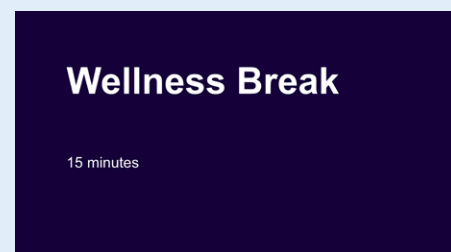
### Materials:

- **Snacks and refreshments, if available.**

Accompanying slide-deck: Slide 18

### Facilitator notes:

Participants are provided with a 15-minute wellness break, but it is recommended that the facilitator assess the energy in the room and extend the break duration as needed. Facilitators can encourage participants to stretch, have a snack, get a drink, or step away briefly before returning to the session.



## Module 5 - Creating a Safe Learning Environment

Objective: Equip Orientation Partners to create a psychologically safe space where new hires can learn, make mistakes, and grow.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

### Materials:

- **Supportive Environments Discussion Scenarios (Appendix A)**

Accompanying slide deck: Slides 19-21

### Facilitator notes:

- **Elements of a Safe Learning Environment (Slide 19) ≈ 5 minutes**
  - Describe the importance of creating safe learning environments for new hire nurses.
    - A safe environment is one where trust, mutual respect, and open communication are prioritized.
    - It's an environment where trust, mutual respect, and open communication are prioritized.
    - In psychologically safe environments, newly hired nurses are more likely to ask questions, seek help, try new approaches within appropriate limits, and learn from mistakes—essential for learning.
    - A safe learning environment is crucial for new hires to thrive.
- **Strategies for Creating a Safe Learning Environment (Slide 20) ≈ 5 minutes**
  - Review the three key strategies for creating a safe learning environment as described on the slide.
  - Invite participants to share their thoughts on these strategies to the group.
- **Learning activity: Creating Supportive Environments (Slide 21) ≈ 20 minutes**
  - Divide participants into small groups of 2 or 3 and give each group a copy of Supportive Environments Discussion Scenarios handout.
  - Invite groups to review and discuss the three different scenarios outlined on the handout. For each scenario have them answer the following questions:
    - How could they create a supportive environment in this situation?
    - What specific actions or strategies could they use to support the new hire?
    - How might these actions influence the new hires confidence, sense of belonging, or willingness to ask questions?
  - Give approximately 10 minutes for the discussion.
  - Afterward, review each scenario with the larger group and invite participants to share insights and ideas from their small-group discussions.

#### Creating A Safe Learning Environment

**A safe learning environment is crucial for newly hired nurses to thrive.**

*What does this environment look like?*

It's one where trust, mutual respect, and open communication are prioritized. When we build psychological safety, newly hired nurses are more likely to take risks, ask questions, and make mistakes—essential for learning.

#### How can you create a safe learning environment?

1

**1. Establish trust and mutual respect**  
What it is: Build trust by demonstrating honesty, reliability, and consistency. Show respect for the new hire's experiences, opinions, and emotions.

2

**2. Foster a non-punitive feedback culture**  
What it is: Provide constructive feedback in a supportive manner. Focus on development rather than punishment. Use feedback as a tool to enhance skills and promote self-improvement.

3

**3. Model Vulnerability and openness**  
What it is: As an Orientation Partner, model vulnerability by sharing your own mistakes and the lessons learned from them. Be open about your own growth process.

#### Creating Safe Learning Environments

Review 3 scenarios and discuss how you would create a supportive environment for each.

## Module 6 - Adapting to Individual Needs

Objective: Learn how to tailor peer support partnerships to the individual needs of each new hire and distinguish between appropriate support and situations that fall outside the Orientation Partner's scope.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

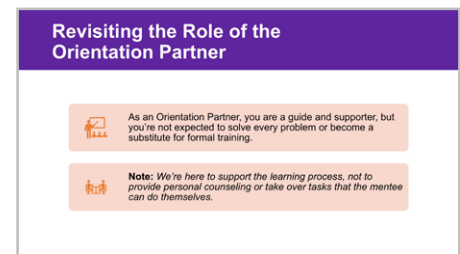
### Materials:

- **NOSPSP Overview**
- **Adapting Peer Support: Case Studies**

Accompanying Slide Deck: Presentation slides 22-23

### Facilitator Notes:

- **Revisiting the Role of the Orientation Partner (Slide 22) ≈ 10 minutes**
  - Refer participants to the NOPSP Overview handout
  - Briefly revisit the boundaries and scope of the Orientation Partner within the NOPSP and share the following key points:
    - Orientation Partners are a guide and support to new hires but are not expected to solve every problem or become a substitute for a clinical educator.
    - Orientation Partners support the learning process but are not meant to provide personal counseling or take over the new hire's care tasks.
    - Orientation Partners should not be contacted outside of their scheduled work hours.
    - Respecting the scope of the Orientation Partner role is important because they also have their own clinical assignment and the NOPSP should not take unnecessary time away from resident care.
  - Invite participants to reflect on past peer support experiences that felt onerous, overwhelming, or frustrating, whether within or outside the Orientation Partner role. For those without peer support experience, invite them to consider hypothetical situations they may feel uncertain or concerned about.
    - Some examples include:
      - Being dismissed by the person they are trying to support.
      - Chasing the other person to participate in the peer support program.
      - Being asked to help with time consuming clinical tasks.
      - Being asked to shadow the new hire, or be shadowed, outside formal buddy shifts.
      - Being called outside scheduled work hours
      - Being asked to keep inappropriate secrets.
      - Being called upon for support constantly.
      - Personality and/or values clash.



- Facilitate a group discussion on effective strategies for redirecting situations back within the scope of the Orientation Partner role.
  - For example, Orientation Partners can redirect by:
    - Active listening to better understand the underlying need of the new hire and offer solutions within their scope.
    - Offer emotional support and then refer them to a useful resource or appropriate team member who can help.
    - Set a boundary with the new hire by reviewing the role and scope of the Orientation Partner.
    - Escalate the situation to the appropriate person (e.g., NOPSP coordinator, manager, clinical educator).
    - Practice patience.
    - Minimize comparing new hires to each other.
    - Adapt and tailor the approach to each individual new hire. An approach that works well for one new hire may not work as well for another.
  - **Important:** This is a key point that transitions into the next discussion. If participants do not identify this, the facilitator should highlight it.

- **Learning Activity: Adapting to Individual Needs (Slide 23) ≈ 20 minutes**

- Divide the participants into small groups of 2 or 3 and give each group a copy of the Adapting Peer Support: Case Studies handout.
  - Alternatively, this learning activity could also work well with the participant group divided in two.
- Invite participants to review both case studies and talk through the discussion prompts as written on the handout.
  - Alternatively, each group could be assigned a specific case study.
- While working through the case studies, participants should be encouraged to consider what the underlying individual needs are of the new hire, for example:
  - Guidance vs autonomy
  - Feedback vs emotional support
  - Fostering autonomy vs advocating for additional
  - Patience vs setting a boundary
  - Disrespect vs world view differences
  - Etc.
- After about 10 minutes, facilitate a large group discussion around each case study.
  - Focus conversation on:
    - Identifying the individual needs of the new hire in each case study.
    - Brainstorming strategies that can help an Orientation Partner adapt their approach to these individual needs.
    - Compare and contrast the needs and required strategies from both case studies. How are they similar? How are they different?



## Second Wellness Break

Objective: Provide participants with an opportunity to recharge, attend to personal needs, and return to the session refreshed and ready to engage.

Duration: At least 15 minutes

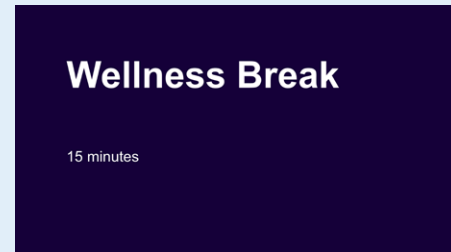
### Materials:

- **Snacks and refreshments, if available.**

Accompanying slide-deck: Slide 24

### Facilitator notes:

Participants are provided with a 15-minute wellness break, but it is recommended that the facilitator assess the energy in the room and extend the break duration as needed. Facilitators can encourage participants to stretch, have a snack, get a drink, or step away briefly before returning to the session.



## Module 7 – Self-Reflection as an Orientation Partner and Conclusion

Objective: Encourage self-reflection and personal growth to strengthen confidence and support skills. Conclude the training session.

Duration: Approximately 30 minutes.

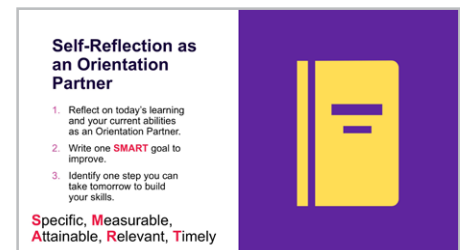
### Materials:

- **Orientation Partner Tip Sheet** handout
- **Blank sheets of paper**
- **Pens**
- **Evaluation form**

Accompanying slide deck: Slide 25-30

### Facilitator notes:

- **Learning Activity: Self-Reflection as an Orientation Partner (Slide 25) ≈ 15 minutes**
  - Refer participants to the Orientation Partner Tip Sheet handout as a quick reference for the skills covered in this training and a resource to support them in their role as Orientation Partners.
  - Explain the value of self-reflection as a tool for building confidence and strengthening nursing and leadership skills, particularly in the Orientation Partner role.
    - Honest self-reflection helps identify areas of strength as well as areas of self-improvement.
    - Self-reflection can support building confidence as an Orientation Partner by promoting continual and intentional improvement while also making it easier to recognize personal successes.



- Ensure all participants have a blank sheet of paper and a pen.
- Invite participants to reflect on their learning from the training session and their personal experiences of being an Orientation Partner, (or an informal peer support for a colleague).
- Ask them to identify and write down:
  - Personal strengths and successes as a peer support.
  - Opportunities to improve and grow as a peer support
- After about 5 minutes, encourage the participants to choose one identified opportunity for growth and make an actionable goal that they can work towards after the training.
  - Encourage participants to keep their goals SMART:
    - Specific: Be clear on what is being accomplished.
    - Measurable: Determine how it will be known that the goal has been achieved.
    - Attainable: Choose a goal that is achievable, realistic, and possible within the person's ability or resources.
    - Relevant: Ensure the goal is meaningful to the Orientation Partner role.
    - Timely: Set a specific timeframe for achieving the goal.
    - Some examples include:
      - By the end of next month, I will demonstrate the ability to actively listen to someone I am peer supporting.
  - For each goal, participants should also identify a clear first step they could take tomorrow towards meeting their goals.
  - Examples of a SMART goal and action could be:
    - SMART goal: By the end of next month, I will demonstrate the ability to actively listen to someone I am peer supporting.
    - First step: I will review the actions associated with active listening and then practice them in a conversation with someone.
- **Key Takeaways (Slide 26) ≈ 3 minutes**
  - Recap the key learning objectives from the day.
    - Understand the value of a NOPSP and define the role of the Orientation Partner.
    - Use effective peer support, mentorship, and relationship-building strategies.
      - Clear communication.
      - Fostering resilience.
      - Creating a safe learning environment.
      - Adapting to individual needs.
      - Self-reflection.
    - Recognize their strengths and identify opportunities for growth as an Orientation Partner.
  - Invite participants to share any final comments, questions, or reflections on the training session to the larger group.
  - Identify next steps for Orientation Partners within the homes NOPSP.

### Key takeaways

- **Understand** the value of a NOPSP and define the role of the Orientation Partner.
- **Use** effective peer support, mentorship, and relationship-building strategies.
  - Clear communication.
  - Fostering resilience.
  - Creating a safe learning environment.
  - Adapting to individual needs.
  - Self-reflection
- **Recognize** their strengths and identify opportunities for growth as an Orientation Partner.

- **Evaluation (Slide 27) ≈ 8 minutes**

- Ensure every participant has access to the evaluation form.
- Inform them that completing the evaluation is optional and anonymous.
- Explain the value of receiving participant feedback.
  - Participant insights are invaluable for improving future training sessions and ensuring their training needs as Orientation Partners are met.
- Invite attendees to complete the evaluation form for the training session.

- **Thank You! (Slide 28) ≈ 2 minutes**

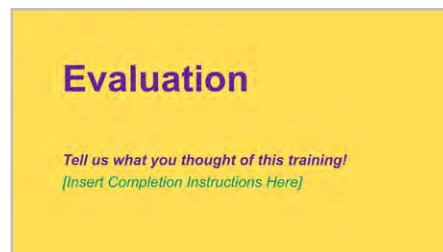
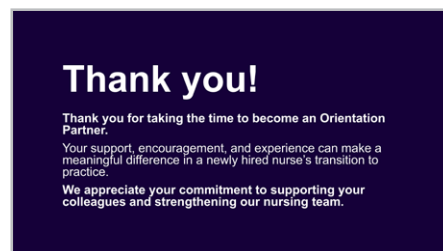
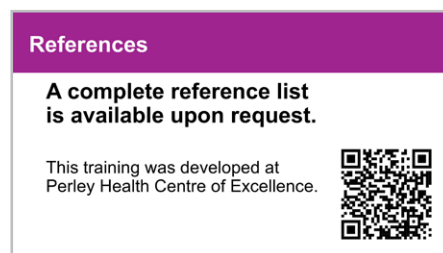
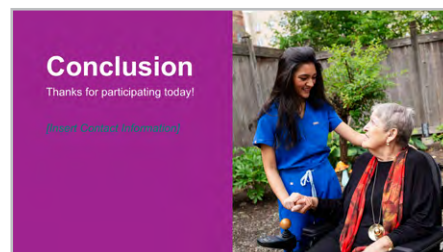
- Recognize the participants by thanking them for their time, effort, and dedication. NOTE: This is particularly important because Orientation Partners typically participate voluntarily in a NOPSP.
  - TIP: Writing personalized thank you cards, offering small tokens of appreciation, and/or providing certificates of participation to participants are a great way to demonstrate that they are valued as Orientation Partners by the home.

- **References (Slide 29) ≈ 1 minute**

- Highlight reference slide to participants as shown on the slide.
- References are available in this manual should an Orientation Partner request them.

- **Conclusion (Slide 30) ≈ 1 minute**

- Conclude the training.
- Thank everyone for attending
- Remind them that they are supported and who they can contact in follow-up to this training.
- End with a positive final statement. Some examples include:
  - Through building trust and offering support, Orientation partners can strengthen teams and advance their own leadership skills.
  - It is exciting to anticipate the impact the participants will make as Orientation Partners within the home.



## End of Training

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# Acknowledgements

This training was developed at Perley Health, as part of Perley Health's Nurses Supporting Nurses: Building an Orientation Peer Support Program. Acknowledgements for this training content and manual goes to Yetunde Temi Ibidun, Michaela Adams, and Daniela Acosta. A special thanks also goes to the dedicated team of Orientation Partners at Perley Health, whose commitment to supporting their colleagues has helped many newly hired nurses feel welcomed, supported, and confident as they begin their practice.

# Appendices

## Appendix A-E

# Nurses Supporting Nurses

## Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program

**Connect. Support. Grow. Succeed.**



The Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP) is a structured 6-week peer mentorship program that supports newly hired RNs and RPNs as they transition into the long-term care (LTC) environment.

It enhances confidence, competence, and connection—leading to stronger teams and better resident care.

### How it works.

|                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>                                                                                                                                              | <b>2</b>                                                                                                                                   | <b>3</b>                                                                                                       | <b>4</b>                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>5</b>                                                                                                                                                         | <b>6</b>                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Built into Orientation</b>                                                                                                                         | <b>Matched with an Orientation Partner</b>                                                                                                 | <b>6-Week Partnership</b>                                                                                      | <b>Connect Regularly</b>                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Supported Every Step</b>                                                                                                                                      | <b>A Safe and Inclusive Environment</b>                                                                                                                |
| A distinct phase in the onboarding process.<br>Begins after classroom orientation and unit shadow shifts, when new hires start working independently. | Each new hire is paired with a trained, experienced nurse (Orientation Partner).<br>Partnerships are facilitated by the NOPSP Coordinator. | A dictated 6-week peer support partnership.<br>Introductions and regular check-ins are facilitated throughout. | Paired nurses connect weekly through in-person meetings, phone calls, or email.<br>Conversations focus on learning needs, resources, workplace culture, and reflecting on experiences. | Orientation Partners provide both scheduled and responsive support to the new hire.<br>The NOPSP Coordinator offers ongoing support to the program participants. | Orientation Partners foster a respectful, inclusive space where new hires feel comfortable asking questions, sharing challenges, and growing together. |

### Why it matters.

|                                                             |                                                         |                                                                   |                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                             |                                                         |                                                                   |                                                                    |
| Eases the transition into practice in complex LTC settings. | Builds confidence, competence, and professional growth. | Strengthens connections and integration within the clinical team. | Supports retention and high-quality, person-centred resident care. |

**Together, we support new nurses.**

# Nurses Supporting Nurses

## Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program

### Program Overview: Outlining Roles, Expectations, and Scope

A one-paged handout for long-term care homes to give to participants of their Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP).

#### Instructions for implementing long-term care home

The handout below is intended to inform NOPSP participants, both Orientation Partners and new hires, about the roles, expectations, boundaries, and scope of the program.

The handout below is a template and can be edited to align with your home's needs. Any text that is *[Green]* may need to be personalized, such as names.

For more information about using the NOPSP Program Overview handout as part of the NOPSP implementation in long-term care, please see Perley Health's *Nurses Supporting Nurses: Building an Orientation Peer Support Program*. [PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program](https://perleyhealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program)

#### Toolkit

- **Access the Full Toolkit**  
[PerleyHealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program](https://perleyhealth.ca/orientation-peer-support-program)



# NOPSP Pre-Implementation Questionnaire

## Program Overview: Outlining Roles, Expectations, and Scope

### Program Purpose

The *Nursing Orientation Peer Support Program (NOPSP)* is designed to help new nurses feel welcomed, supported, and connected as they begin their journey at *[Name of Home]*. Over six weeks, newly hired RNs and RPNs are paired with experienced staff Orientation Partners who provide encouragement, share organizational knowledge, and help new team members navigate their transition into their role and the *[Name of Home]* community.

### NOPSP Roles, Responsibilities, and Expectations

---

#### New Hire

New hires are expected to:

- Check-in once a week with your Orientation Partner in-person, by phone, or by email
  - Engage actively in peer support conversations and activities.
  - Ask questions, seek clarification, and use the Orientation Partner as a resource during their transition.
  - Be open to feedback, reflection, and learning from both successes and challenges.
  - Communicate learning needs, challenges, or barriers that may impact their transition.
  - Demonstrate professionalism, respect, and person-centred care in all interactions.
  - Identify concerns early and connect with the NOPSP Coordinator when additional support is required.
- 

#### Orientation Partner

Orientation Partners are expected to:

- Check-in once a week with your new hire in-person, by phone, or by email
  - Provide encouragement, guidance, and organizational support within the scope of the role (see below)
  - Create a safe and welcoming environment where questions and conversations are encouraged.
  - Share knowledge about the *[Name of Home's]* environment, resources, and workplace culture.
  - Identify concerns early and connect with the NOPSP Coordinator when additional support is required.
- 

#### NOPSP Coordinator

The NOPSP Coordinator supports successful partnerships by:

- Providing guidance and clarification regarding program roles, expectations, and processes.
  - Supporting participants with challenges related to the peer support partnership.
  - Connecting participants with additional organizational resources, supports, and subject matter experts.
  - Helping ensure consistent implementation of the NOPSP across the home.
-

Appendix B: NOPSP - Program Overview: Outlining Roles, Expectations, and Scope

Scope of the Orientation Partner

The table below demonstrates what support is appropriate for an Orientation Partner to provide for a new hire.

| Within the Scope of an Orientation Partner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Outside the Scope of an Orientation Partner                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Answer questions</li><li>• Guide new hire to policies, procedures, and other resources</li><li>• Share personal experiences of onboarding</li><li>• Discuss concerns, offer advice, and support new hire in problem solving</li><li>• Promote confidence and encourage new hire</li><li>• Provide constructive feedback</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate clinical skills</li><li>• Offer shadow shifts</li><li>• Complete tasks for the new hire</li><li>• Develop and monitor a performance improvement plan</li><li>• Offer peer support outside of scheduled work hours</li></ul> |

If the new hire demonstrates a higher need for support outside the scope of an Orientation Partner, the new hire should connect with the NOPSP Coordinator for guidance.

The NOPSP Partnership

The NOPSP is built on connection, encouragement, and shared knowledge. Together, new hires and Orientation Partners help create a supportive transition experience where new team members feel welcomed, informed, and connected to the *[Name of Home]*'s community.

# Appendix C:

## Supportive Environments Discussion Scenarios

### Supportive Environments Discussion Scenarios

Let's work through some scenarios in small groups. For each situation, discuss how you would create a supportive environment. Scenarios include things like a new hire feeling overwhelmed by a challenging task or struggling with communication in the team.

#### Scenario 1: Overwhelmed by a Challenging Task

- **Situation:** A newly hired nurse is assigned to a complex resident case that requires unfamiliar clinical skills. The nurse seems overwhelmed, and you notice they're struggling to complete the task efficiently.
- **Discussion Prompt:** How would you create a supportive environment to help this nurse feel more confident and manage the stress of the situation? What specific strategies can you use to provide guidance and emotional support during this challenge?

#### Scenario 2: Struggling with Team Communication

- **Situation:** A newly hired nurse tells you that they are having difficulty communicating effectively with the interdisciplinary team, leading to misunderstandings and delays in resident care. The nurse seems hesitant to speak up and is unsure how to navigate team dynamics.
- **Discussion Prompt:** How would you support this nurse in improving their communication skills within the team? What steps can you take to build their confidence in expressing their thoughts and collaborating with others?

#### Scenario 3: Coping with Criticism and Feedback

- **Situation:** A newly hired nurse has received constructive feedback about a recent medication error. As they tell you about it, they seem upset and discouraged, and you can tell they are taking the feedback personally.
- **Discussion Prompt:** How would you approach this situation to ensure the nurse feels supported and empowered to learn from the experience? What techniques can you use to normalize mistakes and promote a growth mindset?

# Appendix D:

## Adapting Peer Support - Case Studies.

### Adapting Peer Support - Case Studies.

Let's practice adapting our peer support approaches to individual needs. In your groups, review the case study and discuss and tailored approach to the newly hired nurse's unique needs. Consider the underlying individual needs, for example:

- Guidance vs autonomy
- Feedback vs emotional support
- Fostering autonomy vs advocating for additional
- Patience vs setting a boundary
- Disrespect vs world view differences

#### Case Study 1: The Overwhelmed New Nurse

- **Background:** Emily is a new graduate nurse who recently joined the care team. She has good clinical knowledge but seems to struggle with time management and prioritization during shifts. Emily often asks for help with tasks that she could manage independently, but she also seems hesitant to make decisions on her own, especially when things get hectic.
- **Challenges:**
  - Emily is easily overwhelmed by the pace of the unit.
  - She appears unsure of herself and seeks reassurance for even routine tasks.
  - She has a fear of making mistakes, which makes her overly dependent on others.
- **Discussion Prompt:**
  - How would you adjust your approach to remain supportive without feeling obligated to take over her tasks?
  - What strategies could you use to help Emily build confidence in decision-making and time management while still providing her with the support she needs?

#### Case Study 2: The Experienced Nurse with Specific Career Goals

- **Background:** John is an experienced nurse who has worked in various settings over the past 10 years. This is his first job working in long-term care but would like to transition into a leadership role within the next 2-3 years. John has expressed interest in gaining leadership skills and further developing his clinical expertise in long-term care.
- **Challenges:**
  - John is more experienced than many new nurses, but he lacks an understanding of long-term care. He also lacks leadership skills.
  - He has a clear career goal but is unsure how to align this with his current role.
  - John prefers autonomy in his work and may not require as much day-to-day clinical support but could benefit from guidance on leadership development.
- **Discussion Prompt:**
  - How would you approach supporting John in a way that aligns with his leadership aspirations while respecting his need for autonomy?
  - What steps would you take to help John integrate his career goals into his current role.

# Appendix E: Orientation Partner Tip Sheet

## Orientation Partner Tip Sheet

Nursing peer support is essential for guiding newly hired nurses through their professional journey, helping them build confidence and refine their critical thinking. By offering support and fostering a nurturing environment, Orientation Partners not only help to reduce new hire pressure but also inspire growth, job satisfaction, and ultimately improve patient care (Duchscher, 2009).

| Concept                                          | Importance                                                                                               | Tip                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Being an Effective Peer Support</b>           | Helps to support new nurses in a new environment.                                                        | Stay approachable, give clear feedback, and be patient.          |
| <b>Effective Communication</b>                   | Ensures clear understanding, reduces errors, and builds trust.                                           | Actively listen, ask questions, and confirm understanding.       |
| <b>Fostering Resilience</b>                      | Helps newly hired nurses navigate stress and maintain mental well-being in challenging situations.       | Encourage a positive mindset, highlight small wins.              |
| <b>Creating a Safe Learning Environment</b>      | Reduces fear of failure, builds confidence, and promotes growth.                                         | Nonjudgmental approach, provide constructive feedback.           |
| <b>Adapting to Individual Needs</b>              | Recognizes the relationship between Orientation Partner and a newly hired nurse and its evolving nature. | Be flexible, adjust approaches based on the new hire's needs.    |
| <b>Self-Reflection as an Orientation Partner</b> | Strengthens your ability to guide, build trust, and offer support.                                       | Reflect on your successes, seek feedback, and continue learning. |

Reference: Duchscher, J. E. B. (2009). Transition shock: The initial stage of role adaptation for new nurses. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(5), 1103-1113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2008.04898.x>