



# Are You a Doctor Who Is Frustrated With Your Staff?

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email [office@drlindahancock.com](mailto:office@drlindahancock.com)

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Sometimes staff members do things that are irritating or incompetent. As a solo professional, you might feel that you are dependent upon that person because they do a specific job for you so you put up with the inappropriate behaviours.

It is not acceptable though for staff members to do any of the following:

1. **Acting in a disrespectful manner** - You, your patients and the other staff members all deserve to be treated in a professional manner. This means that they are spoken to politely and their needs are dealt with in the best way possible. Bullying or abuse in any form should not be tolerated.
2. **Being consistently late or absent** - When you are paying staff members to be there, they need to do so. When they are not there you are not getting your money's worth and the business is likely suffering because of this.
3. **Not doing tasks properly or on time** - Errors are costly and the fewer there are, the better. Your staff may be responsible for things that affect your profit and income so ensuring that they are done on time is important.
4. **Practising unethical behaviours** - If a staff member is stealing, lying or doing things that do not match your values, you will need to deal with this.
5. **Breaking confidentiality** - As a professional, you promise to maintain the confidentiality of your patients and your staff must do the same thing.

You are responsible for everything that goes on in your practice and it is not enough to ignore things that your staff might be doing (or not doing).

There are several things you can do to make sure that the above things do not occur or negatively affect the business:

1. **Start off right** - When you hire a staff member, make sure that the person knows exactly what is expected. It is best to have a Confidentiality Agreement and Job Description in writing for you to review with them. Provide ongoing training for staff and make sure that you monitor their work so that you know what is going on.
2. **Document** - Keep a personnel file for each of the staff members and document not only the training provided but also any discussions you have about problems with their work.
3. **Confront** - As soon as you realize that there is a problem, set up a time to speak with the employee about it. Be direct and communicate clearly about the issue. Explain exactly what you want to see happen from then on.
4. **Take appropriate action** - Do not hesitate to discipline or terminate a staff member.

It is far better to deal with problems when they are in the early stages than to let them build and become overwhelming and damaging with time.