

Balancing Commitments and Communication: A Workplace Conflict at UAMS

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What to Expect

- I'll be using **Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT)** to explain the communication challenges and show how positive communication could improve similar situations.
- *Thesis Example:* **This presentation explores how communication breakdowns in authority relationships can harm trust, motivation, and professional growth.**

Background

- Full time, PCT on the F6 Med-Surg unit a
- What Happened?
- How did this make me feel? Unheard and unvalued, showing a lack of empathy and professionalism.



Personal Case Study

- Situations like this are common in healthcare, where employees juggle personal and professional responsibilities.
- Poor communication can damage morale, increase stress, and reduce teamwork.
- Respectful dialogue between employees and supervisors builds trust and encourages motivation.



Theory Overview: Relational Dialectics Theory (RDT)

- Developed by Baxter & Montgomery (1996).
- Focuses on ongoing tensions that exist in relationships (called **dialectical contradictions**).
- Conflict isn't always bad it's natural and can lead to growth if handled with dialogue.
- In the workplace, this helps explain why misunderstandings happen between authority figures and employees.

Tension 1: Openness vs. Closedness

- This is the balance between sharing information and holding back.
- I wanted to explain why my dance scholarship mattered but felt judged.
- Because my supervisor was dismissive, I closed off and avoided sharing more.
- When openness isn't encouraged, it shuts down trust and connection.

Tension 2: Integration vs. Seperation

- This refers to balancing involvement in work with personal independence and goals.
- My supervisor wanted full job loyalty, ignoring your academic and personal responsibilities.
- This created pressure to choose between education and employment, which isn't realistic or healthy.
- Managing this tension requires flexibility and empathy from leadership.

Communication Breakdown

- Supervisor used authority instead of dialogue (Baxter, 2011: “unproductive dialogue”).
- No space for mutual understanding or collaboration.
- Lack of empathy increased emotional strain and decreased trust.
- Communication became one-sided focused on control, not support.

Positive Communication Practices

- **Relational Openness:** Listening with empathy and validating the other person's perspective.
- **Collaborative Negotiation:** Working together to find a solution that meets both sides' needs (Whetten & Cameron, 2016).
- **Assertive Communication:** Expressing needs respectfully without aggression (Adler et al., 2018).
- Example: Supervisor could have said, "Let's look at scheduling options that still meet unit needs."

Lessons Learned :)

- Learned the importance of standing up for yourself respectfully.
- Assertive communication protects your goals and dignity.
- Supportive dialogue promotes fairness and motivation.
- Healthy communication is key to building respectful workplace environments especially in healthcare.



References

(Use APA 7th Edition formatting)

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