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Important 'Soft Skills' for a Job in Healthcare

Developing more than technical skills is an integral factor for success

**By Kirsten Malenke**

You've invested years in training and education and obtained the technical skills required for the job. Now, you're performing your job search but are wondering what will really make you a success. This is when "soft skills," also known as "personality skills," come into play. These skills influence how you work and communicate with other people and can make a big difference in your career. Though the range of soft skills is quite extensive, *ADVANCE* has compiled a core set that are vital in most [healthcare professions](http://www.advanceweb.com/jobs/search/title.html).

**Strong communication and interpersonal skills.**The ability to communicate effectively is arguably one of the most important skills in any workplace, but especially in the healthcare field. Communicating with patients requires you to both listen attentively and explain clearly. Communicating well with team members and fellow colleagues leads to successful collaboration. Having strong interpersonal skills will allow you to work well with the variety of people you will encounter in the healthcare field.



**Emotional stability.**It is important to properly handle your emotions so they do not interfere with your work, especially when it is common to interact with sick people who are in pain on a daily basis. Exemplifying a positive outlook and enthusiasm for your job will help you deliver the best care to your patients. There may be situations when you must relate bad news to patients or family members, and expressing empathy makes a big difference.

**Flexibility.**Healthcare professionals are often required to work overtime, holidays, weekends, or late or overnight shifts. Being flexible will help you adapt to this type of lifestyle and schedule. The healthcare field is also constantly changing. It is important to be aware of the developments in your field and adapt to those changes as necessary to ensure you are delivering high-quality care.

**Strong work ethic and time management.**Long shifts, the occasional overloaded schedule, and having to manage multiple patients at once requires solid work ethic and time-management skills. Timeliness can make a big difference when people are relying on your care.

**Ability to deal with pressure.**Employers are looking for people who can perform their job well under pressure, as this is bound to be a part of working in the healthcare field.

**Self-confidence.**Patients need to know that they can trust you; if you don't have confidence in yourself, they won't feel confident about you either.

**Ability to deal with criticism.**You will most likely encounter criticism at some point in your career, whether from a superior or patient. When dealing with a difficult patient, it is necessary to maintain a positive attitude. If receiving negative feedback from a superior, see it as an opportunity to learn from your mistakes and improve your work.

**Attention to detail.**Within a healthcare setting, it is necessary to pay attention to even the smallest detail. Administering drugs, performing surgery, and simply listening closely to your patients all require focus and intentionality. Paying attention to the details can make the difference between simply getting a job done and doing a job well.

It helps to conduct an honest evaluation to assess the skills you already have and those you need to improve upon. Talk with someone you trust who can point out your strengths and weaknesses. Try to volunteer or join a professional organization that will allow you to [develop the skills](http://www.advanceweb.com/jobs/healthcare-news/career-development-articles.html) you are lacking. When interviewing, remember to emphasize your strengths, as this may set you apart from other candidates. Even if you've been in your position for a number of years, it never hurts to look for areas in need of improvement!

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