



### Becoming Influential: A Guide for Nurses

Eleanor J. Sullivan. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall; 2004. 175 pages. ISBN: 0130485195.

Reviewed by Dorrie K. Fontaine, RN, DNSc

**T**his little jewel is no dry, dull, theory-based leadership text. Eleanor Sullivan's newest contribution to nursing will make you smile, make you angry, and, as she hopes, "make you a better nurse." I enjoyed every one of its 175 pages. A skilled author who also pens mystery novels starring a critical care nurse sleuth, Sullivan's illustrative vignettes draw from her varied experience as dean, president of Sigma Theta Tau International, and keen observer of nurses and the future of our profession.

This is just the book for someone ready to dive into an essential non-

clinical subject. Frankly, we cannot be casual any longer about patient safety. And patient safety relies as heavily on the influencing skills that Sullivan puts forward, as it does on understanding mechanical ventilation and hemodynamics.

The book's 3 sections offer manageable 10- to 20-page chapters. Understanding influence covers the rules of the game and politics. Using influence outlines making connections, negotiating, and dealing with difficult people. Putting influence to work rounds out the book with managing your career, preparing your successors, and leaving a legacy. Ending every chapter with a "What you know now" summary is masterful. Even casual readers will become believers.

Weaving quotes and tips from familiar experts including Stephen Covey, Marie Manthey, Suzanne Gordon, and Melanie Chenevert, Sullivan has created a quick read packed with important practical tips on gaining influence. In one book, she has gathered self-assessment networking tools, Manthey's priceless Commitment to My Coworkers, and specific examples of how to handle bullies and power plays.

Thanks to meticulous editing, Gatsby-like stories that could span several pages are presented in tight memorable paragraphs adorned with "pearls of wisdom." Even complex topics like the power of image are easier to understand. Every chapter ends with a powerful exercise. I've already used *Becoming Influential* with new orientees, a nurse manager discussion group, and a leadership

class for advanced practice graduate students. It hit the mark every time.

This valuable book has many uses. Ask your nurse manager to buy it for your unit and discuss discussing a chapter at a time at team meetings. As a mentor or with a mentor, read the book together to help both of you grow and develop in new directions. This is especially useful for preceptors to novice nurses. As a faculty member, make Sullivan's book required reading. It may not help pass state boards, but it will help us in grooming a generation of confident patient advocates whose influence will transform the health-care system into one that is genuinely driven by the needs of patients and families.

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