

Grand Stewards of Trust in Health Care: Incredible Hospitality

“...vulnerable people are very concerned with being known, heard and maintaining their dignity.”



Theodore Roosevelt once said, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.” He was absolutely right. There is something incredibly intimate about feeling known. Whether that’s being a part of a community, club, team, school or health care system, we desire to be treated as more than just a number. I have fond memories of certain TV show theme songs that made me instantly feel connected and appreciated, like I was known and part of the group. For those next 30 minutes, I felt like I was around friends, and as the song goes, I was where, “Everybody knows your name and they’re always glad you came.” Do you have similar memories? What do you think causes those feelings?

Have you ever thought about what keeps you going back to your favorite restaurants or hotels? Can you pinpoint what exactly woos you back? It’s likely their products or offerings aren’t unique and their prices aren’t likely the lowest, but something keeps bringing you back. That something is probably the way they make you feel. In a word, it’s probably their hospitality.

In this five-part series, I have focused on how we, in the health care community, can be Grand Stewards of Trust. In [Part 1](#), we defined a Grand Steward of Trust as someone who is sought out by the vulnerable. Grand Stewards of Trust seek to understand, and they hold that responsibility in high regard. They create and protect the environment where someone is safe and free to be vulnerable and ask for help. Grand Stewards of Trust do not take advantage of others, when in their weakness and vulnerability, they demonstrate strength and trust by asking

for help. In [Part 2](#), we reviewed empathetic intentionality—being present with those we serve, taking time to hear their stories and to walk with them. In [Part 3](#), I illustrated that credibility is an essential ingredient to building trusting relationships. In this fourth installment, I discuss that Grand Stewards of Trust must **Be Present, Promote Credibility and Demonstrate Incredible Hospitality.**

As health care professionals, delivering incredible hospitality should be easy for us. We know that each person we see is an individual with unique experiences and unique needs. Though we can't tailor the overall experience of each person walking through our doors, we can make every person feel like they are the most important person to ever walk through our doors. This recipe is simple: Be Kind and Honor Dignity. Always.

“True hospitality is marked by an open response to the dignity of each and every person.”

Kathleen Norris

Hospitality means being welcoming. It means welcoming the stranger and the vulnerable. Despite appearing easy to deliver, hospitality is often hard. On its face, it's unnatural for many. It requires us to put others ahead of ourselves. This is especially true for those whom we do not perceive to be like us for whatever reasons. However, as health care professionals we have an advantage. This is our lane. This is our whole deal. This is our calling. We gravitated to this profession because we wanted to serve others in a way that is unique. We want strangers to be our neighbors, and we want our neighbors to be our friends. We want them to come as they are—sick, tired, broken, hopeful, fearful and vulnerable. We will meet them there and offer compassion, comfort, hope, kindness and dignity. We offer them hospitality.

As we highlighted in Part 1, “Trust is built when someone is vulnerable and not taken advantage of.” Every one of our patients seeks us out because they are in a position of vulnerability. Among other things, vulnerable people are very concerned with being known, heard and maintaining their dignity. When we are kind and offer true hospitality, we meet their needs and their expectations. What does being kind look like? An easy answer is applying the Golden Rule—do unto others as you would have them do unto to you. That's a great start, but we know it loses some of its traction when the rubber hits the road. Here are some practical, objective steps that can be put into practice to deliver incredible and authentic hospitality:

- 1 Use words that build-up, not that tear down (Remember T.H.I.N.K. Is what I'm going to say **T** rue, **H**elpful, **I**mprove on the silence, **N**ecessary, **K**ind?)
- 2 Smile with your eyes
- 3 Laugh (if it's appropriate)
- 4 Tell the truth and apologize when needed (refer to Part 3)



Honoring dignity is showing respect. We do so by recognizing one's intrinsic value and serving them open-handedly. Our patients—and the community at large—rely on us. They represent the continuum of the care and life spectrum. Some are able to communicate their needs and be active participants in their care plans. Others are not. Regardless, they each rely on us as health care professionals and that distinction has no merit on the level of respect and dignity that each individual deserves to be shown. What they must receive is absolute kindness and hospitality. Period. Each should be considered a human being who has placed their trust in **us** to care for them. It is our obligation and our privilege to be a grand steward of their trust. It is our obligation (and calling) to offer them the best there is to offer.

If you need a jumpstart, or simply a refresh, here are some practical steps to immediately put into practice that honor your patients' dignity while simultaneously delivering incredible hospitality as you care for them:

- 1 ACTIVELY LISTEN:** Why are they there? What do they need?
- 2 ASK QUESTIONS:** Dig deeply to determine root causes for their challenges and requests.
- 3 COMMUNICATE CLEARLY:** Repeat their requests to ensure accuracy and then communicate details of anticipated steps for care.
- 4 BE PATIENT:** Each case won't be immediately recognized or easy to understand or treat.
- 5 MAKE SPACE FOR GRACE:** Many members of our community simply need someone to offer them grace and kindness.

As Grand Stewards of Trust, if we continue to demonstrate incredible hospitality by being kind and honoring dignity, we will ensure that our patients and our community members will always feel like they have gone to a place, "where everyone knows their name and they're always glad they came". Cheers!

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