

Grand Stewards of Trust in Health Care: Where do we go from Here?

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Our nation has continued to endure the exhilaration of hope and the heartbreak of setbacks. This Grand Stewards of Trust conversation was born out of and due to that environment. It was framed by two individuals I had been talking with during the pandemic. One is a former youth pastor, the other a CEO of a major international company. Though the conversations were primarily about COVID-19, the underlying deeper issue of trust was uncovered. Over each part of this series, we have covered what it means to be a Grand Steward of Trust, summarizing it through the areas of, but not limited to:

- [Being Present](#)
- [Promoting Credibility](#)
- [Demonstrating Hospitality](#)

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 their journeys. In [Part 3](#), we illustrated that creditability is an essential ingredient to building trusting relationships. Promoting credibility requires one to be open-minded and willing to change when new valid information is presented. In [Part 4](#), we contented that demonstrating hospitality through kindness and honoring dignity will yield enormous dividends for all.

In this final part of our series, we explore where to go from here. On the surface the answer is pretty simple. Just keep showing up. Keep getting in the arena. The purpose of this series wasn't to discover new methods or to provide a shiny new object. It was to remind each of us of what is already there. Sometimes we just need to dust off the grime, fatigue, frustration, criticism, and, in the wake of COVID, the sense of being taken for granted. As Grand Stewards of Trust we must remain engaged. We are the believers, the influencers and the action takers.

As Teddy Roosevelt observed, *"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."*

We've all heard it said, "We have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak." This adage seems to carry extra weight these days. The rise of COVID-19's Delta variant has once again caused our health systems to be overwhelmed. It has strained our providers and our communities. The chasm between what is true and what is misinformation continues to widen. The "messengers" move from their corners to grapple in the middle. With all of the noise it is difficult to find those who need to be heard. This is where Grand Stewards of Trust take a different tact. We must remain engaged in actively listening to all sides of the conversation. We must be the ones to consider all aspects, and then move forward based on what we know and do each and every day...care for our communities. We must create and protect the environment where someone is safe and free to be vulnerable and ask for help.

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“Listening is an art that requires attention over talent, spirit over ego, and others over self.” –Dean Jackson

Active listening is an affirmation to the speaker that they are heard and valued. The cornerstone for earning trust is laid when someone knows they are valued. As we step into yet another wave of COVID-19, and the inequities of our health system are highlighted, our patients will want to share their fears, opinions and even solutions. They will have arrived at their decisions through a myriad of avenues, being inundated with wise and unwise counsel. Our job is to first listen, then advise. Again, quoting Teddy Roosevelt's wise words, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care." Only after engaging in actively listening and meaningful conversations will our expertise as professionals rise above the rancor and discourse to bear the health outcomes for which we strive.

As for me, I will keep the conversations open through actively listening, which honestly, has sometimes not been the case. It's often easier to stop listening and communicating than to uphold my charge as a Grand Steward of Trust (I know...the hypocrisy and irony is not lost on this author). I share that to say this is hard. It goes against our instincts for self-preservation and in some cases, our best judgement. It means putting ourselves out there for seemingly nothing in return. But isn't that the core of health care—doing for others what they are either unable or unwilling to do for themselves? That's why they come to us. That's precisely why they seek us out. We have taken up the mantle and answered the call. The phone is ringing. The sirens are blaring. The intercom is squealing. This is our arena! Keep stepping back in! We are the professionals to be counted on, who are there to listen, converse and guide. Moving forward, I will be that Grand Steward of Trust. Will you? I encourage you to actively listen and hear those yearning for your trust. They are out there and they need each one of us.

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