

## Trust: The Ultimate Test

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This is the second of a series of articles based on Dr. Sanna's book, *Breakthrough Thinking*.

Whom can you trust? It's a common complaint heard from business owners everywhere - they don't trust their employees. Do you sometimes feel the same way? The lack of trust is a common complaint in many areas of life, no matter if we are discussing patients, family, friends or politicians! Patients don't trust their doctors - they think they are padding the bill. Parents don't trust their children - they're fearful of the music they listen to. Car owners don't trust their mechanics - they think they're going to be gauged for repairs. People don't even trust green traffic lights any more - they're afraid that someone is going to run through the red. The chain of mistrust goes on.

Where does trust come from? For trust to exist, there must be an expectation in our mind as to a person's ability to carry out a depended-on action, based upon a shared set of values. It's unfair to trust that someone will fulfill your expectations if you don't even know if you share common values. We trust people as long as they fulfill our expectations. When they do not, trust can evaporate quickly and take a much longer time to replace.

Where do expectations come from? Expectations come from values. And where do values come from? That's an interesting question - we'll come back to it later.

### Expectations Come From Values

The great philosophers tell us that suffering comes from expectations. You're human and you have expectations. That's where much of your suffering comes from. The bottom line is that we all want people to fulfill our expectations. But why would anyone want to do anything to fulfill your expectations? Because you're nice? Because you're interesting? Because you're a good doctor or practice team member? There's a secret that will empower you to motivate people to fulfill your expectations - people will only want to do something for you if you have shared values.

When you value something, you expect everyone else to value it as well, and to act accordingly. Occasionally, you will naturally fall into the perfect fit with someone who shares your values. More often than not, this will not be the case - so don't assume that others share your values. You can't trust that others have the same values you do. Each of us has our own set of values. You are responsible for communicating your values to others, and you are responsible for finding out their values. Once you have accomplished this, it is your responsibility to link the two sets of values together.

### Link Your Values

Remember a time in your life when you were a patient. Remembering your own experience as a patient will help you identify the values of your patients. Maybe you valued getting better, getting out of pain or getting back to an activity that pain prevented you from doing. Remember the link: Unless you seek to uncover those values that you share, you can't hope to align others with your vision of the future.

Confirm that your patients understand your values and confirm what you can expect from them. Don't just assume that they've got it - confirm it by asking. Guide your patients to restate your values. Ask, "What does that mean to you?" And listen. Then ask again, "Tell me more about that part." This process helps you know what you can expect from your patients and helps them know what to expect from you. When patients restate what you communicate with them in their own words, they have internalized it.

Your patients will naturally link their values with yours - or not. People fear not being liked and most will follow your lead. If patients are in the "or not" category, they will antagonize your values and make you defend them. It's been said that 27% of the people (including patients) you come into contact with on a daily basis can be classified as antagonizers. Antagonizers cannot help but challenge your values; it's their nature to challenge everything! By challenging your values, they show their trump card - you know that you're dealing with a member of the 27% group. When a patient challenges your values - for example, by challenging your recommendations - don't put him or her in a position to trust you. You shouldn't recommend a complete program of care - because antagonizers are only capable of trusting you bit by bit - so say, "We'll go visit-by-visit." This will enable you to take control of the relationship and build trust over time, in increments that the antagonist is comfortable with.

When people challenge our values, we think they are bad, out of touch, uncooperative or strange. We have a hard time liking them. We withdraw and limit our interaction with them. On the other hand, when people support our values, we think they are good, cooperative, smart or understanding. We like them. We feel free to reveal ourselves to them. If you find it difficult or uncomfortable to deal with antagonizers, remember that you are not alone. No one likes dealing with them!

## How To

If you are coming up short on how to express your values, here are some strategies to help you. Be sure to give your patients the opportunity to express themselves. Re-examinations are excellent times to ask for their response. Ask your patients, "Let me share my vision with you." - "Now tell me, what do you picture after you hear that?" or "I'd like to share something important to me and find out how it sounds to you." - "How does that sound to you?" or "This has a lot of meaning for me. I'd like to know if you see it the same way." - "How do you feel about it?" or "Here's my problem ... how do you think you can help me to solve it?" - "What ideas do you have?"

Have you ever been asked about what you value? Most likely not. The fact that someone asks connects us with one of our shared values: "I am an individual and I am worthy of being listened to." Listening to someone touches upon our shared value of acknowledgment of self. When you acknowledge someone as more than just a cog in the wheel of your practice machine, you make a deep connection.

You build trust when you act consistently with your values. The poet and philosopher Emerson said, "What you do speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying." Trustworthiness is effortless when you act in alignment with your values - it takes a lot of effort when you don't! If you value commitment, you naturally fulfill your commitments. Want your patients to do what they say they will do? Do what you say you will do. Value time? Be on time with your appointments. Value follow-up? Make follow-up a priority. If you want to trust your team members to do what you value as important, you'd better have regular team meetings with them to tell them what is important.

## Commit to Creating Trust

Now is the time to start building your own, your team's, and your patients' performance around your shared values. Speak up. Speak wisely. And listen. Become a master at uncovering the common denominator - those shared values which create the bonds of trust that enable others to align their values with yours. In a value-sharing environment, you get out what you put in. Commit to sharing your values and you will pass the ultimate test - you'll experience the compelling difference the bonds of trust make in your practice and personal relationships.

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