

# March More Voices: Courage

Category: Courage

written by Paul Gross | March 1, 2022

Dear *Pulse* readers,

Recent days in Ukraine have reminded us of what courage looks like. I'm sure that I'm not the only person wondering whether they could be as brave as President Zelensky:

"I don't need a ride. I need more ammunition."

Or as brave as the millions of "ordinary" Ukrainians showing themselves to be, in fact, extraordinary. What would it be like to pick up a military rifle for the first time and contemplate firing it at a tank or a soldier?

What have I done in my own life that could compare?

In truth, nothing comes close. My displays of courage are from another lifetime that has operated under different rules.

I've picked up a guitar, stood alone at a microphone in front of an audience and sung an original song.

Not exactly like tossing a Molotov cocktail. I knew that no one would be aiming a gun at me while I sang.

Even so, the prospect of climbing onstage frightened me and made me want to run away. But I did it anyway.

In a medical setting, it took courage to be an intern. My first day, I was assigned to the ICU, where I'd be working a 24-hour shift, looking after the very sickest patients in the hospital.

It was brave of me to show up—although, to be honest, it would have taken even more bravery not to show up. Still, it did take courage to walk up the hill to the hospital, feeling frightened, and courage to pretend that I was a doctor, when I felt more like a second-grader on the first day of school.

And during residency there were days when my courage flagged. When I wondered whether getting into this doctoring business hadn't been a really bad idea. These days, the most courageous thing I do as a doctor may be telling the truth:

- "The CT scan doesn't look good."
- "I'm worried about your breathing."
- "Could we talk about where things are heading?"

In this instance, courage has an immediate reward. Gently telling the truth may be the greatest gift I can give a patient.

Most courageous acts, however, carry elements of risk and uncertainty.

Ukrainians who stand up to Russian invaders don't know how the day will end. They do know that the odds are stacked against them—and that makes their courage all the more breathtaking.

March's More Voices theme is [Courage](#). Send us your lived experience of finding or losing courage—as a patient, a caregiver or healthcare provider.

And while you're at it, have a look at last month's theme: [Listening](#).

For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#)—or go directly to the [More Voices Submission Form](#).

Remember, your health-related story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry,

please.

We look forward to hearing from you.

With warm regards,

Paul Gross

Editor