



Super Bowl

Thoughts on leadership
by Karl Pister



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To start, a bit of a backstory.

Many of you know that I am a father of four. While they are now all adults, there is a very soft spot for children with me. Add three grandchildren to the mix and it becomes even softer.

Back in 2014 I had the amazing opportunity to work with a PICU charge nurse staff to help them build their leadership capabilities. Under the leadership of a superb nurse manager, this group of eleven women hit it out of the park.

I continually marveled at how they were able to keep their level of engagement so high when, what they did, many times, had very sad results.



I remember the very first day, as the initial evaluation interviews were taking place. I had just sat down and had not yet shut the conference room door, and saw a nurse, dressed in dark purple scrubs, walking slowly down the hall. Holding on to her hand was a little girl, dressed in her floral hospital gown. There were no words that I heard. I was just in awe of the moment. Complete vulnerability. Complete trust. Complete "I have your back, little one". All without words.

I turned to the nurse that I was about to interview, and with significant emotion in my voice, stumbled out the question: "*How* do you do this?"

I had a similar experience yesterday with a pediatric intensivist who I was interviewing as part of a current project I am working on. I have never met this individual, but soon I could note that he was deeply invested in his work.



So I asked him the same question, and I would like to share with you his answer, because it is leadership at its best.

But a little bit more backstory first. Most of you that read these messages have worked with me, so it should come as no surprise that I am a hard-driving, Type A, control freak. In my personal life I have had five times when a family member has been wheeled away from me through the OR doors. Not a good setting for my personality. No control, no nothing.

So back to the doctor's response. I wish I had recorded it, but I wrote it down as best as I could, since I knew that I was capturing leadership gold.

"Every situation with us is the Super Bowl. The stakes are that high. We have to do the right things for the right reason. We have to stay on top of our game. We have to know the research. The families depend on us".



Do we ever? Wouldn't you love to have your child cared for by this physician?

To take it to another level, wouldn't you love to be led by a leader who considered every day she/he showed up a personal 'Super Bowl' because the stakes were so high because you were involved?

And to take it to another level yet, do the people you lead feel the same way about you?

Certainly, things to think about and act on. But they have to be acted on or this piece of learning is wasted.

To close, might I offer a profound 'thank-you' to this physician for inspiring me yesterday, and hopefully you today.





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