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Leadership: Guiding the Future

A strong leader is someone who sets an example for the people around him or her. A leader must possess the ability to inspire others, to offer advice, and that leader must have strong problem solving skills. A good leader is brave, responsible, and trustworthy. My stepfather, over the last sixteen years of my life, has shown me what a great leader is and has been an amazing example for me. He has taught me courage, shown me bravery, and has had a sense of humor while taking on the challenge of raising us while my mother took on her own challenge of returning to school full-time and starting a new career.

Every leader must be responsible, and to be responsible as a leader, you may have to choose to not always follow the popular opinion. You must stand on your own and do what you think is best for those around you. You choose to step into the role of leadership. My stepdad took on a huge responsibility of raising us almost by himself even though he didn't have to. Nobody told him that he had to be there at the time to take care of us. Even before he married my mom, he chose to be there for us. He started dating my mom when she was pregnant with me, and he supported her and helped her even though I was not biologically his child. He also started helping my mom by babysitting while she had to work and had other things to attend to, but best of all he was there to make dinner for us because my mom was a terrible cook. He is probably the most responsible man I have ever met in my entire life. It was not his responsibility to be there, but he always was.

Two other traits of good leaders is they are brave and they contribute without asking for anything in return. My stepdad was definitely brave coming into a family with three kids that were all a year apart. When he would babysit, he never asked for money or anything else in return. This was a blessing to my mom because as a single parent, she did not have much.

What means the most to me and the one thing that led me to choose my stepdad as my example of leadership is that he has been there ever since I was born and has never required me to call him "Dad." My brothers and I *choose* to call him Dad. He gave us that choice. Great leaders contribute to the good of others but never ask for anything in return. He is a great leader; he is my Dad.

One last trait that every leader must possess is the ability to inspire and motivate others. There were times my mom was overwhelmed with school and having three young kids, but my stepdad managed to inspire her to continue with school and to keep going. He made her feel like what she was doing was important. In a way, my stepdad's courage and bravery helped her become a caring competent nurse, and held our family together. He inspired her and was the foundation of our family through good and bad times. He dedicated his life to a family that didn't start out being his. That really inspires me. It has taught me that not everyone in the world is cruel and heartless. It takes a real man to sit home on his days off from work and babysit. He has taught me a lot about life, and I thank him for that.

My stepdad is a great leader and my hero, and I do not know what I would do without him or who I would be today if it were not for him. I am more than grateful that I had the joy of him being my Dad. Growing and learning from him over the years, appreciating his sense of humor, and sometimes even seeing him angry because he didn't agree with the choices I was making all has made me a better person. I would not have it any other way. It is true when they say real leaders are not born, they are made, and it all depends on who we want to be and who we want to follow. I hope someday I can inspire and touch the lives of others the way my Dad has touched my life and inspired me.