



### Eric Louis Kapitulik Jr

My wife and I got married later in life. I was 37 years old. Melissa was 35. We had our first child, a son, shortly thereafter. Our plan was to have three children all two years apart in age.

Life just didn't agree with our plan.

Instead, after giving birth to Axel, my wife suffered multiple miscarriages and had numerous surgeries to repair her uterus. Due to age and a host of medical factors, after enduring 4 ½ years of In- Vitro Fertilization (IVF), we had one last chance to get and stay pregnant. Our doctors would have liked to reinsert three embryos back into my wife, but by this point, we had only one viable embryo left. That *one* is now our three-year old daughter, Anastasia, our second child.

Throughout IVF, we never lost hope, but as the number of viable embryos dwindled, we decided that we would try to adopt what we hoped would be our third child. We attended all the necessary classes, completed all the required background checks and home studies, and eventually were approved to adopt. After enduring four years of waiting to be selected by a birth



mother and suffering disappointments in various forms, this past February, we made the painful decision to forgo adoption and instead become Foster Parents.

The following week, our adoption agency called to tell us that a birth mother had selected us. After discussing it at length with each other, my wife and I spoke with our son and daughter and decided to move forward with the adoption of our third child. Two weeks ago, the birth mother delivered a healthy baby boy.

Throughout his life, he would know that he did not come from us biologically. At some point, this might make him question if we love him differently than our biological children. Although he might question this, we would always hope that he knew the answer. In an effort to ensure it, we decided to name him “Eric Louis Kapitulik Jr.”

Due to the decisions made by those in positions of authority about the Coronavirus, my wife and I could not be in the hospital for the birth of “Junior.” Instead, two days after it, I drove to New York City, picked up our son and drove him home to meet his Mom, brother and sister. After eight long years of trying, our family of five was now complete.

Six days later, the birth mother changed her mind.

I left our home with her son thirty minutes after receiving the call from the adoption agency. My wife, son and daughter were huddled together on the kitchen floor holding each other and crying as I departed. On the way back to New York City, my wife texted me and asked me if it was ok for our son, Axel to miss school the following day. I readily agreed. However, as I drove home a few hours later, after having an opportunity to think about it, I texted my wife, told her that I had changed my mind and asked if it was ok for us to send him to school.

Axel was still awake when I arrived home. I told him that I had a “surprise” for him and that I wanted him to get out of bed to get it. Late that night, my wife, Axel and I sat down to eat McDonald’s (his “surprise”) and talk.

Following is what I said to him:

Axel, I want to tell you how I define “success” and “failure.” I do not define it as “winning,” and “losing.” “Winning” and “losing” is winning and losing. Winning makes us happy and losing makes us sad. And I would rather be happy than sad! Winning is important. Don’t ever let anyone tell you that it isn’t. It is!

It just isn’t how I define “success.” Success is giving 100%. It is giving and doing our best, in both our preparation and during our *execution* (taking a test in school, competing in an athletic contest,



performing at a musical recital, climbing a mountain, conducting a sales meeting etc). Failure, therefore, is not giving our 100%. Tonight, you are learning a valuable lesson though; that if you give your 100% in your preparation, it doesn't guarantee that you will always win in your execution. You can give your 100% and unfortunately, sometimes you will still lose.

This evening, our family, and you personally, experienced a great loss, but I want to tell you that you did everything you could have done for that little baby boy as his big brother. I also know that this loss hurts badly right now, but I want to make sure that you know that if you can remain disciplined, and be physically, mentally and emotionally strong enough to continue to always give your 100%, although you may unfortunately experience more loss, more hurt, more sadness, you will provide yourself with an opportunity to be a success.

Second, Daddy may not know a whole lot about Smart, but Daddy knows a little bit about Tough. Axel, tough guys (people) cry. They have emotions. Really tough guys can talk about their emotions and really, really tough guys ask for help when dealing with them. You cried tonight. Maybe next week or next month, something will happen to remind you about the loss we experienced this evening and you will feel like crying then. Do so. Tough guys do. Talk about it. Really tough guys do. And know that Mom and Dad are always here to help. Ask for it. Really, really tough guys do.

But Axel, never forget that tough guys go to work. We move forward. Tomorrow morning, your Mom and Dad are going to go to work. And you are going to go to school. That is also what really, really tough guys do. And I know you are one. This is an opportunity to prove it; an opportunity to prove it to your Mom and me. Most importantly, it is an opportunity to prove it to yourself. I know you will.

You are my only son in this whole world. Thankfully, you are the greatest son I could ever have in it... I am so proud of the young man you are and I love you with my whole heart.

I love my children so much and wish that I could guarantee their "success." Unfortunately, I can't. They must do so. They must first be able to accurately define it and then, they must get to work. So too must all of us.

**ATTACK!**

**Eric Kapitulik**

The Program Founder and CEO



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