



### The Terrorist

Previously in these letters, I have written extensively about my family. Specifically, in Letter on Leadership #54 “Eric Louis Kapitulik Jr.,” I shared the story of the struggle my wife and I had in having our second child. What I have not shared previously is how naive we were as first time parents while trying for our second child. For more than five years, between the birth of our two children, my wife and I high-fived each other on what great, exceptional parents we were for having raised our *perfect* son, Axel. We would see misbehaved children throwing tantrums and think to ourselves “what are those parents doing!?! Don’t they know how to parent? Don’t they know how to raise a perfect child... like *our* son?”

Step 1. Communicate your team’s (ie. family’s) Core Values.

Step 2. Set Standards that reinforce those Core Values.

Step 3. Provide benefits for meeting and exceeding those standards. Enforce consequences for not doing so.

Step 4. Enjoy your well- behaved, perfect child... like our son.

And then...



Anastasia was born... and she was a terrorist.

My wife and I immediately knew that everything we thought we had known about raising perfect children was complete bullshit. We communicated our Core Values. We set Standards that reinforced those Core Values. We provided benefits for meeting and exceeding those Standards, and enforced consequences for not doing so. We followed the 4 Step process!

And she was a terrorist.

Let me pause briefly, in case you are thinking that she is “Daddy’s Little Girl” who I let get away with everything. Or maybe you are thinking, we raised her differently because she was our second child? Or if you really don’t know me, maybe you are thinking that I treat her differently because “she is a girl?” I want to be very clear on this point, if you are in close, physical proximity to me and suggest any of these, I will punch you in your face!

She was *born* a terrorist!

Many well- known leadership and team building authors write fiction books to reinforce their leadership lessons. They *tweet* motivational sayings. Many have never actually led a team, let alone a team with an Anastasia on it. There is no 4 Step process with Anastasia! With Axel, there is, and if I follow the 4 Steps, I can expect great behavior from him; great behavior today, tomorrow, next week, next year. He is a rational human being. Anastasia is a terrorist. If I follow the same 4 Step process, I can expect nothing, NOTHING from her today. Tomorrow is anybody’s best guess. Next week? Next year? My wife and I hope and we pray...

We raise our son to be a strong man, and our daughter to be an equally powerful woman. What and how we did so to help ensure this occurs was exactly the same with both. Exactly! And therein lies our mistake. Our son and daughter are different.

WW I German Army Captain Adolf Von Schnell highlights in *Battle Leadership* that people are not machines, “but human beings who must be led. Each one of them reacts differently therefore each must be handled differently. Furthermore, each one reacts differently at different times and must be handled each time according to their particular reaction. To sense this and to arrive at a correct psychological solution is part of the art of leadership.”

Axel makes me *feel* like a great leader. Anastasia challenges me to actually become one. *What* the best leaders provide is a structure within which both their Axels and their Anastasias can both flourish. Core Values and the Standards that reinforce them are that structure. Anastasia has



taught me, as a leader though, *how* I provide benefits for meeting those standards and enforce consequences for not doing so must be different if both of my “different perfect,” children are going to in fact, flourish.

*How* I lead is not based on who I am, it is based on who my teammates are. It is a lesson that I challenge you to never forget.

And no, of course my daughter isn't a terrorist. She is a princess. One bad ass, warrior princess. And I love her with my whole heart.

Be great teammates and great team leaders on all the teams that we are privileged to be a part.

**Eric Kapitulik**  
Founder and CEO

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