



### **Letters on Leadership #9: Hard vs. Challenging (The Mother's Day Issue)**

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On April 14th, 2003 Corporal Jason David Mileo (USMC) was shot and killed while fighting insurgents in Baghdad, Iraq. Two days later and 6,000 miles away, my commanding officer came to visit me in my office. He asked me if I would do him "a favor." He couldn't order me to do what he was about to ask me to do. I had to volunteer for the role.

Fifteen minutes later, I left work, drove home and changed into my Marine Corps Dress Blue uniform. I drove sixty miles to Centreville, MD and proceeded up a long, winding, gravel driveway. I parked my vehicle, walked to the front door, took one deep breath and rang the doorbell. I stood there, waiting for the front door to open so that when it did, I could tell Corporal Jason Mileo's Mom (and father) that her son had just died in Iraq.



The corporations, student-athletes, coaches and teams with whom I have had the privilege of speaking, are aware that I have completed eight Ironman Triathlons (a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride and then a marathon). I have adventure raced from both one side of the Kalahari Desert in South Africa to the other and from the Pacific Ocean across Costa Rica to the Caribbean. I have competed in the Canadian Death Race Ultra Marathon, an 80 mile run through the Canadian Rockies in Grand Cache, Alberta. I have competed in and completed more marathons than I can remember and I have summited five of The 7 Summits, the tallest peaks on each of the 7 continents. I have climbed and stood on the summit of Mt. Everest.

I have done one thing in my life that is “*hard*.” And it was NOT racing in the Ironman or climbing one of the world’s tallest mountains... One time, I had to tell Leah Hall (Mileo) that her son had just died in Iraq. I had to ring the doorbell and wait knowing that when the door opened, I was going to ruin this woman’s life. I was going to deliver the worst news that any parent could ever possibly receive. And I had no other choice. I had to ring that doorbell. I had to stand there and wait. I owed it to her son that I had never met to tell his Mother face to face what happened to him. I could not fake an injury and stay in the training room. I could not “call in sick.” I had to do it.

If you have a sick family member, or are dealing with the death of a colleague, a teammate, friend or family member, and you want to talk about how “hard” it is to do so, you will never get any argument out of me or any of my teammates at The Program. We, however, take very strong exception to our clients talking about how “hard” it is to play at a particular “away” stadium, how “hard” a practice you had, how “hard” it is to deal with a particular client or how “hard” it was to wake up that morning and get to whatever playing field, battle field or corporate board room that you compete on or in.

Instead, we highly encourage you to think of the things that we do in our day to day lives as “*challenging*.” Make it a habit to start thinking about those things in our day to day lives as such. *Our thoughts become our words and our words become our actions. By human nature, we just want to get through things that are “hard,” but as warriors, we LOVE and ATTACK a*



*“challenge!”* Start to think about them as such. You will then talk about them as such, and you will then ATTACK them as such.

Finally, Happy Mother’s Day to my wife and my Mom and all of the Mothers out there. Your sons and daughters and I are so fortunate that you do what you do for us and are extremely appreciative of your sacrifices. Most importantly, Happy Mother’s Day to all of the Moms that have ever opened their front door and seen an Airman, Sailor, Soldier or Marine wearing his dress blue uniform standing there. Happy Mother’s Day to Leah Hall...

Attack!

**Eric Kapitulik**

Founder and CEO

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