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# THE PROGRAM

## LETTERS ON LEADERSHIP

### - LETTER ON LEADERSHIP #79 -



**Commitment:** *NOUN* 1. The state or quality of being dedicated to a person, cause, activity, etc. 2. An engagement or obligation that restricts freedom of action.

The “kids these days,” that so many adults lament, do not sign themselves up for numerous sports and activities. The kids these days’ parents do. To what benefit and to what cost?

If your 10-year-old son or daughter has some level of talent and plays the same sport or does anything five or six days a week, every season throughout the year, they will be a star 10-year-old hockey, soccer, lacrosse, or basketball player, artist, violinist, or karateka. At 10

years old, your son or daughter will be better than other kids who do not play that sport or participate in that activity five or six days a week, every season throughout the year. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect.

But is doing so physically healthy for that child? I recently had a Dad proudly tell me that his 11-year-old son had played in 68 baseball games that Spring between his town and travel baseball teams. There was still a month left in the Spring baseball season. His son was then going to transition to summer ball. Google “adolescent overuse injuries.”

Is playing the same sport year-round mentally or emotionally healthy for that child while also participating in numerous other sports and activities? Google “overscheduled adolescents.” I have had parents tell me, “Yes, but my child loves it. They want to do it.” Yes, I am sure they do. We are the adults, though, and are supposed to know what is best for them. They don’t.

The purpose of this Letter on Leadership is not to highlight the physical, mental, or emotional damage playing a single sport and/or overscheduling does to young people regardless of the overwhelming amounts of scientific reports that highlight it. Rather, I write it to highlight the lesson we are teaching our 10-year-old children who, because of their very busy and overlapping schedules, must pick and choose what practices and games they show up for and which ones they don’t. Case in point, I have had the good fortune of coaching my 11-year-old son’s football, basketball, and lacrosse teams for the past 4 years. During that time, I have never coached a team whose every member attended every practice during the week or games on the weekend. Think about that. Most of his teammates are so busy that he has never competed on a team whose every teammate is committed to it. Instead, they are kinda committed to it...

Commitment. Fewer and fewer parents are teaching it. Instead, by having their son or daughter signed up for numerous teams or activities simultaneously, they are teaching their child that it is perfectly acceptable to be partially committed to anyone or anything. Worse, they are teaching their child that the single most important thing in their child’s life is themselves.

I attended one of the most select universities in the world. I was a Division 1 athlete. I served 8 years in the United States Marines Corps as an Infantry Officer and Special Operations Officer. I jumped out of airplanes and dove into the ocean. I have competed in and completed 8 Ironman Triathlons and summited 5 of the 7 Summits, the tallest peaks on each of the 7 continents. I started my own company and married a successful woman. Together, that has all afforded me a very comfortable lifestyle.

I could care less if my son or daughter does any of those things. I did them. I don’t care if they do them. Why do so many parents (interestingly, many of whom did NOT do those things) care that their child accomplishes them!? Attending a select university or being a Division 1 athlete is truly important? I think that is just sad. For the parent and the child. Ask my son what I want him to accomplish and, more importantly, who I want him to be in life. He will answer, without hesitation, “happy.” Period.

Attending a select university, being a division 1 athlete, and living a comfortable lifestyle does not make us happy. Meaningful relationships do! And how do we develop meaningful relationships? Through selflessness, by putting others before ourselves, and being a great teammate on all the teams we're privileged to be a part of. Always. Not just on 70-degree and sunny days but when faced with adversity. When we must sacrifice. For someone or something else. Like a teammate. Or a team. However, this is difficult when we attend half of our practices. Meaningful relationships are a unicorn when we are kinda committed to any teammate, be they the teammates on the three lacrosse teams we have signed our child up for or in our own relationships with, for example, our spouse.

My resume, my material possessions, and my dream home aren't what make me happy. The relationship I have with my wife, who helped me achieve and afford those things, the relationship I have with my children, and the relationship I have with my Program teammates and our friends - those relationships make me happy. Commitment is the foundation of all of them.

We must teach it.

Attack!

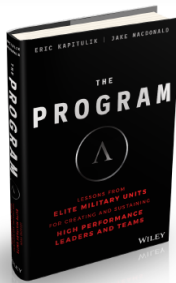


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