

THE PROGRAM

LETTERS ON LEADERSHIP

To access our full archive of The Program Letters on Leadership, please visit
[Letters on Leadership - TheProgram.org](http://LettersonLeadership-TheProgram.org).

- LETTER ON LEADERSHIP #101 -



Our son, Axel, switched schools during his 8th-grade year to play basketball for a coach and a team that he preferred. He had a great year, and his team competed for the League Championship at the end of the season. Throughout Championship Weekend, students from opposing schools (including some of his old classmates and schoolmates) attended the games he competed in and booed him during warm-ups and throughout the games. It was loud and incessant.

My wife, Melissa... she was NOT happy. So much so that she “mentioned it” to one of the girls' mothers, whom we know well, and expressed her disappointment. Although she did so calmly, she was hurt that Axel was being treated that way, and I could see it upset her.

I told her to “CALM DOWN!”

As it turns out, this was NOT well received... and I would suggest a different, more emotionally, uh, “nuanced” approach to other spouses in a similar situation.

Melissa’s response surprised me, though, because she has often discussed “The Let Them Theory” by Mel Robbins, NY Times best-selling author, with me. In it, the author challenges the reader to stop wasting energy on things outside of their control, and instead “reclaim their energy by focusing on what they can shape: their own actions, choices, and joy.” For those who haven’t read it, or who might be a bit older and remember Stephen Covey’s “7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” Ms. Robbins’ book is a modern-day version of Mr. Covey’s Circle of Concern vs. Circle of Influence principle. A lot of things *concern* us in life (i.e., we have a really big Circle of Concern), but we have true influence over very few of those things (i.e., our Circle of Influence is a very small circle inside of a much bigger Circle of Concern). The most successful individuals and organizations have disciplined themselves to focus only on what they can influence. Ms. Robbins further highlights that, if we do so, we will not only be more successful but, most importantly, much happier.

I agree. So too does my wife. Melissa adheres to this philosophy and embodies it when dealing with situations or people (like her husband...) who are disagreeable. If she gets booed (figuratively), if she has haters (literally), she embodies “let them.” However, when it comes to her children being booed...

Back to our story: while Melissa was losing her mind (my opinion, not hers), Axel and I stood on the court together (I was an Assistant Coach on his team). Axel, of course, is human and 14 and was bothered by it for about a minute, but as I said to him, “Dude, this is great! You are freaking 14 years old. Fourteen! And you have kids from other schools booing you! How great is that!?” As motivational speaker, author, and former U.S. Navy SEAL, David Goggins, has pointed out, “there has NEVER been a hater doing better than you!” I was an adult before I had someone boo me, before I had haters. He’s 14!

As we stood on the court together, listening to the boos, I told him how proud I was of him. They were booing because he made himself different. He made himself into the league’s best player. Sure, he has some talent, and talent helps all of us, but that talent didn’t make him the best. He did that by staying focused on those things he has influence. He wakes up before school and lifts weights. After school, he shoots and works on his game. Every single day.

Further, no one who is average gets booed. The best athletes and coaches in any sport at any level do; the best salespeople, the best directors and supervisors, the best CEOs, the best women, and the best men do in any walk of life. Because the best, by definition, are different. If you want to be different, though, you must truly *be* different. Thirty-five years ago, I was a Midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy. In an attempt to get a reprieve from more Electrical Engineering, my classmates and I asked our professor what the biggest surprise had been to her since she left her former Ivy League school and started teaching at the Naval Academy. I have shared her response with my children (too often, according to them, but they can suck it) and all their friends. I have shared it with every single athlete I have ever coached, and I will continue to do so. Our professor explained that she thought we, the Midshipmen, would “all be the same.” We all had the same clothes (i.e., uniforms) and the same haircuts. We all had to live in the same building on campus. She thought the military wanted us all to be alike. However, since she started teaching at the Naval Academy, she realized just how wrong she was: that by having all of us have the same haircut, wear the same clothes, live in the same building, etc., etc., etc., the military was

forcing us to actually *be* different. Your clothes, your jewelry, your car, your house, etc., do not make you different. You must make yourself different!

We do so not only by working hard (as lots of people do) but also through sacrifice. There will always be bad referees and bad coaches (I have been accused of being one!). You don't become a great basketball player, though, by focusing on either. There will always be challenging economic conditions and "dumb" prospects. You don't make yourself a great salesperson or business leader by focusing on them either. Lots of people and things concern us, but if we have no influence over them, we must not spend one second of time or ounce of energy on them. Instead, we must invest our time and energy in what we can influence, working hard and making sacrifices.

And if you do - you, like fourteen-year-old Axel standing on the court with me before the game, will not only be as successful as possible, but also, most importantly, happy. And then, let them boo.

Attack!

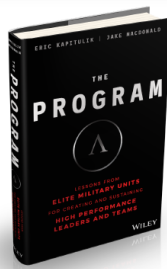


Eric Kapitulik
Founder and CEO, The Program LLC

"Letters on Leadership" are published periodically by The Program, a leadership development and team-building company that works with the nation's leading corporations as well as professional and collegiate athletic teams. To sign up to receive them, please visit <https://theprogram.org/letters-on-leadership/#signup>.

For information on developing better leaders and more cohesive teams at your organization, visit <https://theprogram.org/>.

THE PROGRAM BOOK



THE PROGRAM, CEO, Eric Kapitulik, and Lead Instructor, Jake MacDonald, share great wisdom and insight on building world class teams in the co-authored book, The Program, Lessons from Elite Military Units for Creating and Sustaining High Performance Leaders and Teams.

#THEPROGRAMPODCAST



Dive deeper into your knowledge of leadership by following #THEPROGRAMPODCAST. Listen to great insights from corporate leaders, coaches, authors and our Program teammates by subscribing and listening to our podcast. Follow by clicking the buttons below.

**PURCHASE
BOOK HERE**



SERVICES PROVIDED



GREAT TEAMMATES. GREAT LEADERS. WORLD-CLASS TEAMS.



The Program, LLC, 48 Quinebaug Road, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255, USA, (781) 281-0751

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)