To Lead

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I am blessed to be able to witness the work of and work with many great leaders. Few days go by when I don't learn from a member of my own board, from colleagues with whom I sit on other boards, or from members of the management teams and boards I have the privilege of advising. With three different lenses through which to see leadership in action, I'm grateful for what feels like a kaleidoscopic view. Reflecting on what I have experienced in recent weeks, I wanted to share a personal take on what it means… to lead.

Leadership means…

- Inviting feedback on your toughest decisions—knowing full well that some of that feedback will be critical;
- Having the courage to be transparent about the decisions you make as a leader;
- Never believing that you are the smartest person in the room and entering every boardroom eager to learn from others;
- Bringing your toughest questions, rather than your brilliant solutions, to discussions with other leaders you trust and respect;
- Being truly humble by living up to your commitments;
- Learning to disagree without being disagreeable;
- Being on the lookout for emerging leaders who can take your place, take the baton or add strength, talent or a contrary point of view to the ranks;
- Recognizing when it's time to step away or step down and leave an organization you love in the trusted care of others; and
- Always treating peers, partners, direct-reports, volunteers and donors in the manner you wish to be treated in return.

Melanie Lockwood Herman is Executive Director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center. She welcomes your ideas about any risk management topic, feedback on this article and questions about the Center's resources at Melanie@nonprofitrisk.org or 703.777.3504. The Center provides risk management tools and resources at www.https://nonprofitrisk.org/ and offers consulting assistance to organizations unwilling to leave their missions to chance.