

URL: https://ecorner.stanford.edu/?post_type=snippet&p=56128

Sameer Dholakia, CEO of SendGrid, describes how his mother — and parents, in general — are the perfect example of servant leaders: They push you to be the best and do all they can to help you succeed, while holding you accountable, all out of love. Dholakia ends with a parable about how life's goal is to understand and share our unique gift with others before we pass on ourselves.



Transcript

- My closing comments to you, why do I focus on people so much? I will get through this without getting too sentimental, but No, actually I won't.. Who am I kidding? That's a picture of my mom, that's me as a I don't know, six month old, nine month old.. I believe my mom and she died when I was 15, just before I came here.. She was the best example of a servant leader I have ever seen.. People often hear servant leader and they think, "Oh, that's kinda soft," you know, back to the soft/hard thing.. "That's so soft." Well actually, the best servant leaders I believe, if you wanna look for a great example of a servant leader, go look to your parents.. Parents are extraordinary servant leaders.. They push you to be the absolute best that you can be, right? They help you..

They do everything they can to help you with your journey, right? And boy, let me tell you, they hold us accountable.. Everybody remember being a kid? Not doing it? Not achieving what you could've? They hold you accountable.. It's not about being soft.. They're great servant leaders.. And you know that they care about you.. They know that they love us.. And so, servant leadership for me was embodied by my mom, and so I saw the impact that's had on me and my entire life.. I live my entire life, every day to try to make her proud.. And so, I go, "Oh, that's a pretty good example of somebody who had a big impact on somebody.. How do I have an impact on somebody else like that?" Well, that's what she did, so maybe if I act in the same way with others, I'll have an impact too..

And she had this great parable, this old Indian parable that she told my brother and I when we were little.. And it went something like, "When we are babies, we all enter this world with our fists clenched, kicking and screaming, and crying.. And when we pass, when we die, we leave this world with our hands open, at peace.. What we carry into this world, in our hands, clenched in our fists, as babies, is a unique and special gift, that is to each of us, uniquely.. And the purpose of our lives is to go and determine what that gift is, and then give of that gift to others.. And then when you are done giving, your time will come and you will move on.. The soul of that parable that I always loved so much is about giving, and it's about giving to others.. Focus on people.. And that's it.. That's my one message, I hope you remember it..

Focus on people.. Thanks, guys...