

Personal Leadership Statement

Hadley Morrow

A story about what has shaped my leadership

When I was sixteen, my mother kicked me out of the house. For as long as I could remember, she struggled with mental illness and addiction. I always felt embarrassed and ashamed of my home life and kept it a secret. I saw no reason to treat my sudden homelessness any differently. I was relieved to find it only took thinly veiled excuses to earn an invitation to stay on friend's couches. Finding a place to crash after each school day simply became a new normal for me.

My high school principal had always been someone I looked up to. He was well respected by students and known for **taking the time to check in and build trusting relationships** with us. In assemblies, classes, or when sent to his office (which was often my case), he relished sharing his world travels and experiences. Those experiences **often challenged our perspective** – like the story he told every year, right before Christmas break, about the time he spent with children suffering from burn wounds at an orphanage in Vietnam. These experiences showed his **deep compassion for others. I admired his vulnerability and willingness to share how he had been changed** by these deeply personal and often emotional experiences.

Because of these qualities, I felt I could trust him the day he called me into his office. He quietly asked me to explain the rumor that I had been kicked out and was couch surfing.

I believed he was someone who would **listen with an open mind, free of judgment**. So, I told him about what was going on at home and the fight that had led up to my mother kicking me out. He was kind and reassuring.

He surprised me by asking what I wanted to happen next. I knew I needed a stable place to go home to. But I did not think I could find it back in my own home. In that space he created for me to tell the truth, I found a power within myself. I saw things in my life I had been simply enduring because of shame. Right there in his office, I suddenly wanted to take hold and change them. My principal **honored what I wanted for myself**. Together we decided to call the family of a close friend of mine. He explained my situation, and they were more than willing to take me in.

Walking to the bus stop that day that would take me to this new home, I started to cry. I was overwhelmed by the events of the day and how suddenly my life had changed. Someone stopped me on my walk and asked what was wrong. I surprised myself when the biggest grin took over my face, and I blurted out, "I don't have to go home tonight, and I'm the happiest I've ever been!"

Ever since I've been humbled to see how **life hides some of our greatest opportunities in the darkest places**. When I think of the darkness, I am reminded of what cruel drivers of fate, shame, and loneliness can be. Had I continued to carry my burden alone, I fear the direction my life could have taken. Instead, I hold that moment with gratitude because it is also the story of how **incredible kindness from others helped me forge a better future** for myself.

In the wonderful home that this family shared with me, I started to get to know myself – who I wanted to be, not just what I had endured. I began to find my **resiliency**. My

motivation, grades, and mood all improved. It wasn't entirely smooth sailing; at times it was still a bumpy road. I tried to move back home at one point, but it wasn't right for me. I had to leave again. This time though, I wasn't afraid to ask for help and quickly gathered a trusted support network to see me through.

My Leadership Purpose and Values

My experiences gave me a deep appreciation for the power of community and connection in shaping our lives. As a leader, I hope to **inspire others to be fearless in the face of uncertainty.**

The following values drive my work to honor the lessons I learned from those, like my principal, who helped me grow beyond where I thought there was room for me:

- **Connection** – I place high value in building authentic relationships with awareness, vulnerability, and honesty.
- **Heart** – I lead with compassion, commitment, and holding loving space.
- **Openness** or **Flow** – I accept life's impermanence and have a high comfort level with the unknown. I carry a willingness to be deeply moved.

What you can expect from me

I aspire to build individual relationships with each member of my team, honoring the unique differences they bring to this work. I will always strive to establish a culture that supports differences in our styles, where we can value and lean on each other's unique experiences. Together, I hope our team can be a trusting, open, and respectful community. I want to learn what you are passionate about and what motivates you to help connect you to opportunities that bring you fulfillment and joy.

I am a big-picture thinker and not one to micromanage. I like to give you room to try out your best thinking. I may ask you to step into situations that challenge you to think in new ways and test out new skills. I expect you to be open and honest about when you need support, clarification, or help to prioritize tasks. I hold time with my team as sacred. I will always prioritize regular time to check in with you and make time available when requested.

I honor that each person on the team is a whole person with a complex life outside of work hours. My commitment to you is a workplace where your personal life and professional life can be integrated into whatever way is most comfortable for you. I want you to feel empowered to live a rich and full life. I will always strive to be understanding and flexible when it comes to juggling work and personal priorities.

I challenge my team to be adaptable in the face of change.

What I expect from my team

I expect each person to come to work ready to be part of the team. Collaborate, ask and offer support, and don't let your work happen in a silo. We all benefit when we share our successes and missteps.

Approach new challenges, ideas, or tasks with an open mind. I expect you to think critically yet compassionately. Never be afraid to share an idea or question that speaks truly to you, but always say it with love.

Never be afraid to own when you aren't sure about something. Communicate early if you need more clarity or support or are unsure of my expectations. I want to make sure I can give you what you need to be successful. I expect you to share with me (and each

other) what's working and not working (because I will ask), so we can know how to best work with and support each other.

Seek out what makes your heart happy in this work, and be yourself, always.

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