



## Transformational Leadership & Service Podcast

### Episode 18 Transcript

#### *What Means 'Nervous?'*

Here is the question for the day: What makes you nervous?

I can almost hear your thoughts now. What does he mean by 'nervous?' Is nervousness a physical condition or a mental state? If I admit that something actually makes me nervous, does that mean I'm also admitting weakness? Come to think of it, what business is it of his whether I'm nervous or not?

Really, it's none of my business. But it should be important to you. Let me share a story.

My daughter, Sophie, is a performer. Since she has been old enough to talk – she has loved to sing. As loving, supportive parents, my wife and I have tried to encourage her interest in self-expression whenever we could.

One Sunday morning, our church announced the formation of a musical academy offering piano, guitar, violin and vocal performance instruction. Sophie – then only four years old – immediately wanted to join.

Of course we were leery. Was she old enough? Was she mature enough? Was she talented enough? Would it be a waste of time and money?

After several weeks of constant reminders by Sophie, my wife Susan finally contacted the music academy staff regarding their policy on accepting four year olds. The instructor agreed to give it a try for a few months.

Sophie began taking weekly classes. The classes continued for several months, until one day Sophie announced that the date of the spring recital was approaching.

Naturally, I began to get nervous for her. Singing behind closed doors to an instructor was one thing. Singing in front of an audience of strangers was something else entirely. Yet, as the day approached, Sophie seemed fine with it all.

Finally, the day of the recital arrived. The room was crowded with friends and family of the budding musicians. Boys and girls, three, four and even five times Sophie's age played, strummed and sang with varying degrees of proficiency.

When our four and a half year old was introduced, she marched confidently forward, took her spot and nodded the signal for the pianist to begin. Three minutes later she finished both verses of *On the Good Ship Lollypop* to enthusiastic

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audience response. Sophie acknowledged the applause with a demure smile and bow before returning to her seat. I was so proud.

That night as Susan tucked Sophie in, she bragged on her once more.

"Sophie, you do so good today."

"Thanks, Momma. But you know what? I was a little nervous."

"Well, Sophie, it's natural to be a little nervous when you're doing something new. But, we couldn't tell you were nervous. Anyway, you go to sleep. You've had a big day."

Susan turned out the lights and was on her way out of the room when Sophie called her back.

"Momma, what means 'nervous' she asked, as only an innocent four year old could.

I believe my daughter experienced what many leaders also encounter. After hearing so many people ask her if she was nervous, she felt almost obligated to be so, even though she had no true idea of what the concept meant.

Leaders should be leery of the same trap. If you possess a passion to make a difference in and through the lives of others; if you have appropriately trained and prepared yourself to perform the task at hand; if you are willing to stand and step forward when called upon, then nervous means nothing to you.