

Serve Forward

by

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A Change of Heart

*Do not believe that possibly you can escape
the reward of your action.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

I was not a successful man; however, from all outward appearances, I could be considered successful. I had four beautiful children and a loving wife. I was a physician for a large Health Maintenance Organization in Southern California. I had received several promotions and held many administrative positions. I was the president of the local chapter of the American Cancer Society.

Donna, my beautiful wife of twenty years, and I met in high school and dated for my entire senior year. She was one year behind me and saw me go off to college. We dated on and off during college and married when I found out that I had been accepted to medical school. After completing medical school, I spent seven years training to become an internal medicine and kidney specialist. When I finished my training in kidney disease, we took a job in California so we could be close to our families. Four children later, I was still working long hours taking care of patients and active in many community projects. We had a good home, two cars, and a great family support system. But I was not content. I always wanted more.

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I worked 80 hours a week, I was never home, and I was short tempered. In other words, from a business or professional perspective, I guess you could have said that I was successful. But my personal life was completely bankrupt.

My relationship with my wife was deteriorating, and we almost started to see a family counselor. My relationship with my two oldest daughters was in jeopardy, and they resented the fact that I was never home. Because it was hard for me to relate to my wife and kids, I focused on work and did not think my family needed me.

After an acute illness secondary to extreme fatigue (mental and physical), I decided to change. I did not know who I was or what I stood for. I went to church, sometimes, but slept through most of the Mass. I never listened to the sermon and could not wait for services to finish. I read little, did not pray, never even thought of keeping a diary, and had few friends. I was overweight, short tempered, and selfish.

My work, the one area in my life in which I thought I was successful, was also taking a turn in the wrong direction. Promotions stopped coming my way, and I was actually asked to resign from a leadership position because my colleagues thought I was self-centered and ambitious. They say fish find water last. I was a big fish sinking fast—unable or unwilling to see how my attitude and belief system were destroying my life and the lives of those around me.

Still not understanding my real purpose in life, I stumbled upon a book about how to become a successful leader. I read the small book in a single day. One of the chapters in the book caught me by surprise. It just said, "Read these books." There was no explanation, just a list of classics including *Sun Tzu*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *The Sun Also Rises*, the complete works of Shakespeare, and the Bible. It took me over one year to read all of these books. After completing this task, I did not know why the author had recommended them. Then one day, I figured it out. These books defined and offered examples of human nature. At that moment, my life changed, and a series of events occurred that led me to start a non-profit organization. I learned that I was not in control. Natural laws are in control.

In this book, I will share with you the lessons that I learned from these books and the teachings of wise mentors I have had over the years. I learned that it is in giving that we receive. I was not going to move forward in my life until I started to serve forward. Everyday we make choices about how we will get through the day and how we will live our lives. We can decide to serve or be served. We can decide to stay at the same place we are in life from an emotional, physical and mental perspective or move forward to help us become better individuals. Moving on with our lives in a positive direction takes time and effort. The investment in yourselves allows you to move forward in life's journey. I feel that a vital requirement for truly moving forward in your life is learning to serve

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others with an open heart and not asking for anything in return. Therefore, we serve forward. Each day we decide to make ourselves better by serving other people. When I started serving forward, I started to be served backward. When I gave, I received. Serving backward is the benefit of serving forward.

Serving does not have to be a negative action. We tend to think of servants as not wealthy and not honorable when actually they are the most wealthy and honorable people in the world. When we serve others we do something good for another human being. We make a positive not a negative contribution to the world. The laws of nature dictate that good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds are punished. The good we do for other people helps us feel better about ourselves. We can reflect on the good we have done for other people to overcome the negative feelings we may have about ourselves when we make mistakes in life. This is how we are served backwards. The good we do for others comes back to help us through hard or difficult times. From my experience, others will recognize the work you do and you will be rewarded. The key is to serve and not ask for anything in return. If we serve and ask for something in return then we are not serving. We are bargaining. Serving forward means we become better people for the unconditional service we do for others.

For years, I had been brainwashed to think that more was good. My focus was on personality development and not character development. My

image was the focus. I was personality focused, not character focused. I was trying to appear to be someone I was not. More money, more cars, more houses, and more clothes were my focus. I was world centered. But no matter how much I had, I always wanted more. I was so wrapped up in me that I'd forgotten about we. My paradigm about life or my "life map" was wrong. But how would I get the right map? Who was I, and how should I act?

To my saving grace, I was not alone. My wife believed in me and stuck by me even during tough times. She helped me see the true meaning of my life. She helped me to realize that while I was trying to make my mark in the world, my mark was staring me right in the face. Again, fish find water last. I had been so hungry for love and acceptance that I'd focused on worldly possessions thinking they would give me acceptance and happiness. But it did not bring me more love or affection. Money is not a substitute for love or affection. I realized that money was not a reliable companion. It comes and goes and has no loyalty. Everyone wants some of your money, and there is always someone who has more. What I really needed was time—time to care for my health, time to love my patients, and time to love my family.

So, I decided to re-write my life map. I decided to design a trip with a new life purpose and then to embark on a journey that would help me reach my goal. I decided to envision the person I wanted to be, and then start working towards becoming that person.

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At the beginning of my journey, I wrote a simple statement that represented the goal of my journey: ***To be a good physician who serves his patients and loves his family.*** I began to think more about the meaning of the words love and service. I realized that both words were verbs and required action. In the past, I would give to other people only if I could get something in return. Now, when I give to other people, I ask for nothing in return. I give them a gift, and it makes me feel alive. I started to do the things that came from my heart. I was no longer alone. I felt loved again and accepted. I was now less concerned about worldly pleasures and more concerned about how I could serve other people. My value to society would not be measured by how much money I had in the bank. My value in this world would be measured by how much I could do for other people. My focus was on character development, not self-promotion. My goal was to become a servant leader and to teach others to be servant leaders. The meaning of my life was not defined by the amount of my treasure but by the location of my treasures.

Once the map was drawn and the trip was planned, I packed up what tools I needed and started my journey. I knew what to do but could not always do what I wanted to do. I remember one day it was my birthday and nobody at work remembered. I felt hurt that I had not been recognized for the friendships and contributions I had made to others over the years. It was my special day, and no one cared. In retrospect, I was just being selfish. I was not serving.

I wanted to be served. So, how would I learn not to be self-centered? How could I change my feelings? The answer lies in the fact that I knew how to act but could not. I had changed my mind, but now I needed to change my heart.

Successful people have self-control. Successful people do not become successful in a single moment. They become successful one day at a time. If I was to become successful, then I would need to develop the skill of being aware of my feelings and then learn how to control them. This was not an easy process. For most of us, we become defensive to outside threats. This is a survival skill. However, I began to see that when I lose control, I lose. No one wins when we lose our temper. Between a stimulus and a response is a space. In that space, we can choose our action to any given stimulus. Some people do not take the time to think before they act. I see this behavior commonly in my children. When one child teases another, the teased child often becomes defensive and will cry or react negatively to the teaser. There is no space between the stimulus and the response. I tried to teach my children to think before they react. Similarly, I needed to learn to stop, look, and listen before reacting.

It is not our natural tendency to think before we act. To stop and think takes self-awareness and self-control. If someone gives you a gift and you do not accept the gift, then to whom does the gift belong? If someone hurts your feelings, you can decide to accept their opinion of you or you can choose to reject

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it—just as you can accept or refuse a gift. This idea is hard for children and adults to accept. We care about how others feel about us. We all want to be loved. If we do not love ourselves, then our definition of love comes from outside influences. Love should be non-conditional. We should love each other and our children, not asking for anything in return. Their view of themselves should come from their inner belief system and not the conditional views of other people.

Shortly after initiating this concept at home, my youngest daughter came running into the house one evening saying that the garage door had broken. When questioned, she denied doing anything that could have broken the garage door, but we think she was hanging on the door as it was trying to go up. When my wife and I went outside to investigate the broken door, the natural response was to get upset and blame this little eight-year-old girl for the inconvenience my wife and I would have in getting the garage door fixed. My daughter was scared, but I looked at her and said, “What is more important, you or the garage door?” She said, “Daddy, I am more important than the garage door.” I said, “You are right.”

My wife and I realized that our daughter was more important than the garage door. Instead of being reactive, we stopped to think of the stimulus and our response to the stimulus. We could have gotten upset, yelled, and screamed but that would only have made all of us feel terrible. We separated

our daughter's potential from her behavior. She is a beautiful, intelligent, and responsible little girl. Her behavior, playing with the garage door, was not acceptable, but it did not change the way we felt about her. Children and people are not bad, but their behavior may be bad. This taught my daughter and me a very valuable lesson that I will never forget. I was starting to understand why serving others was my purpose, and why it was important for me to teach others how to serve. It taught me the value of serving forward.

My life and the lives of those around me were starting to change. I learned to control my emotions and took the first step toward defining my life based on values, not feelings. Using this simple formula, I started to realize that everyone has the potential to be successful because everyone can serve. Everyone can learn to control their emotions and think before they act. The behavior we model to our children will hopefully help them change their lives to be more successful and happy.

The Greeks, Jews, Christians, and Shakespeare understood the concept of a natural power that sees that proper balance is restored. Natural laws act in a compensatory manner to punish evil and reward good. If we understand that natural laws are in control, we can use them to our benefit. The basic laws of human nature govern the balance between good and evil. No one can make you good or evil except you. The key is not to change your way of thinking but to change your heart. Human nature is such that man follows

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the desires of his heart. Change your heart, and you will change your mind. The mind follows the heart. Our goal or purpose in life should be to be virtuous. Not being good carries the consequence of natural correction, which will result in punishment for the bad things you do to others. We should live life with a due sense of responsibility, not as those who do not know the meaning of life but as those who do.

It is not easy to be a servant. Good servants care more about others than themselves. They care more about their work than what others think of them. Good servants avoid being defensive and have an open mind. Good servants admit and share their weakness. Good servants understand that strength comes from conquering difficult situations. Good servants are self-aware, humble, and virtue centered. They are not world centered. A true servant knows that the closer you are to being a servant, the less you need to promote yourself.

The road to becoming a servant is a never-ending process. We are not born with the knowledge of how to serve or care for one another. Our journey in life teaches us this valuable lesson, one mistake at a time. The problem is the material world we live in. Our heroes are basketball players or actors making millions of dollars a year. The other problem is that the tools needed to become successful servants are not always handed down from generation to generation. The information we seek can be found by trying to understand the teachings of those who came before us. I am convinced that the tools you will need to be

successful and to find inner peace are in this book. However, it is not good enough to understand or read about the tools needed to be successful; you need to work with them until they become habits.

The journey to a successful and happy life requires daily sacrifice and action to develop habits that help us flourish. The successful journey involves an understanding of natural laws. Natural laws are the balancing force in an unbalanced world. The basic concept is to build character first—then to develop a personality based on your true character. Build a strong foundation and then a skyscraper. Change the heart and you will change the man. Self-centered development does not bring inner peace. Self-sacrifice is the only way to truly find yourself. We need to pay the price of finding our purpose in life before we have inner peace. Everything in life is created twice. The rich man was rich in spirit before he acquired material wealth. The woman who lost 100 pounds was thin in heart before she physically lost the weight. The way you see your life will end up shaping your life. It is in the process of trying to define your life that you will find purpose. The journey is different for everyone, but the end is hopefully the same. The people I serve define my life. As a physician I serve my patients and my colleagues. One of my goals as a physician is to help my patients with kidney disease live better and healthier lives. To accomplish this goal my recent focus has been on preventing malnutrition in a subset of my patients who have chronic kidney failure.

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Kidney failure is a disease of the water and salt filtering system of your body. We have two kidneys, and when they fail, we can no longer live without dialysis therapy or kidney transplantation. Individuals with kidney failure who are on dialysis therapy come to a dialysis center three times a week for dialysis treatment.

Dialysis is performed by taking blood from an individual with kidney failure, passing the blood through filters that clean the blood, and then, sending the blood back to the body. The whole process takes four hours. During the treatment, water and toxins are removed from the body.

I am the medical director of a dialysis unit. For most of my medical career, I was primarily focused on caring for patients in the clinic and hospital setting. After receiving special training in kidney disease, I accepted the position as medical director and now work almost full time in the dialysis unit caring for and monitoring the condition of almost one hundred patients with kidney failure. In 2003, lab results from our dialysis population showed that many of our patients were malnourished.

The problem with poor nutritional outcomes for dialysis patients is the fact that poor nutrition is associated with a high mortality rate. I knew this, and that is why the data was so concerning. At the time, I did not know how I was going to solve the problem even though my attitude changed from being self-

centered to servant centered. I knew what to do, but I did not know how to do it.

From my reading, I discovered that the solution to any problem in life is usually not evident at first. If we develop the right character and skills, problems become easier to solve. If we acquire the wrong character and skills, then problems get more difficult to solve. Some people say that we never make mistakes. Life is about learning a lesson. If we do not get the easy lesson, they get harder. You know when you have learned a life lesson because your actions will change. Some people never learn the lessons of life, and they live a hard life. Other people learn their life lessons early, and they are successful and happy because life is easy. They are calm and content. They are energetic and have many friends. They love to teach. They know that our purpose here on earth is to serve. They understand the value of living in the present, learning from the past, and preparing for the future.

I thought the issue of preventing malnutrition in kidney disease was a noble cause and one worth using to try out my new belief system. For years I thought I could single handedly solve any problem. I soon realized that I could not solve this problem alone. I needed others in my life. To serve my patients, I would need to ask others to serve with me. So how do I convince other people to serve? After careful thought, I developed an acrostic for the word SERVE and decided to use each of the letters of the word to emphasize what I now feel are the five key

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elements or fundamentals of a happy and successful life. The next section defines these key elements and discusses how they can be used to help us solve our problem of malnutrition in the kidney failure population.

Sacrifice

Let us become the change we seek in the world.
Mohandas Gandhi

The “S” in **SERVE** stands for **Sacrifice**. Self-sacrifice is the only way to find yourself. Nothing useful occurs without sacrifice. We must realize that there are no shortcuts to success. We fail to reach our potential when we fail to pay the price. In most cases, the price must be paid. The price must be paid all the time. We must realize that the price increases if we want to improve, change, or keep improving. The price usually never decreases. This is where sacrifice comes into play. Hard work is the price we must pay for success. We can accomplish anything if we are willing to pay the price.

Growth is a natural process, and we are all at different stages. To improve, we must start from where we are. We must understand how we perform and understand where we belong and how we learn. Our basic personality was formed long before we became adults. It is futile to try and change our genetic code. What we need to do is understand our strengths and weaknesses. We need to strengthen our strengths and weaken our weaknesses. Identify things you do that inhibit your performance and then avoid doing them. Identify how you learn. Some people learn by listening, some by reading, and fewer

by both. Listeners can hear something one time and remember it. Readers take copious notes, make flash cards, and re-write information over and over until it finally sinks in. Most people intrinsically know how they learn. Once you know how you learn, use that method to strengthen your strengths.

There are many barriers to learning and solving problems. Some of these include fear of the unknown, inability to admit your limitations, and confusion about what is important. The first step is to be humble and open-minded. We should try not to be defensive or scared. We must be willing to fail. Failing, like serving, is part of life. Failing and serving are action words. If we learn from our mistakes, then we can fail forward. By failing, we learn life lessons that can help us move forward in our lives. In looking at most problems, it is easy to blame someone else—blame society, blame the patients, blame the families, but never ourselves. Often, we feel that we are not accountable for our actions when things go wrong. In reality, we should be responsible and accountable for all our actions.

When solving a problem or resolving a conflict, we must take the initiative and identify the key issues involved that require our attention and understanding. Most problems cannot be solved with the same mindset that caused the problem to arise in the first place. Admit limitations and go on with the process of solving the problem. Most big problems can be broken up into small parts, and solving each smaller part separately can solve the overall problem. In most

cases, the solution to any problem will be simple and will agree with human nature.

Using this method, I decided to sacrifice some of my valuable time and money to solve the malnutrition problem. When we are busy doing other tasks, it is hard to find additional time for a worthy cause. Feeding the poor was a worthy cause and worth the sacrifice. I decided to work on the problem one hour per day. I made time on my schedule and put the item on my weekly team meeting agenda. I started to read books about nutrition and reviewed hundreds of articles on nutrition in dialysis patients. I became a friend with the renal dietitian. Where did the time come from? As I look back, I could see that the time came from other projects.

Since I decided to focus my life on service, I needed to develop a method for managing my time. Obviously, I could not serve everyone, so I decided to break projects or problems up into five different steps: 1) define the problem, 2) measure the problem, 3) analyze the problem, 4) improve the problem, and 5) control the problem. Each part of the project required time, but most of the time was spent in the initial steps of defining and analyzing the problem. As projects progressed, less time was required for monitoring, improving, or controlling outcomes. When I saw that a project was in the maintenance phase, I knew I would have time to invest in starting a new project or trying to solve another problem. Therefore, the time needed to start a new project came from the time I

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was not spending on a project in the maintenance phase.

The long-term benefit of solving the malnutrition in our dialysis unit was that we would significantly reduce the complications of malnutrition, which would result in fewer deaths and fewer visits to the hospital.

The process of solving a problem begins with defining the problem. In our case, the problem was malnutrition. Low blood levels of a blood protein called albumin determine malnutrition in the dialysis population. The second step is to determine a way to measure the problem you are trying to solve so that if you solve the problem, you will have some objective way of showing improvement. Serum albumin levels are measured monthly on all dialysis patients. Those patients with normal levels are compared to those patients with abnormal levels. The percent of patients with normal blood levels divided by all patients is the outcome measure most dialysis units use to determine the degree of malnutrition in their facility. Most dialysis units average about 60% of patients as having normal blood protein levels. An exceptional unit would have 80% of their patients with normal blood protein levels.

The third step in our process of solving our problem is analyzing the problem. This can be the most difficult part of the process. This step can require the most sacrifice of time and energy. There are multiple causes of malnutrition. The most common cause by far is a diet that is deficient in protein. This is usually

associated with socioeconomic status. Dialysis units in affluent areas usually have fewer malnourished patients than units in non-affluent areas. Good sources of protein (chicken, fish, and meat) are expensive and take time to prepare. Individuals on low budgets or fixed incomes do not have the financial resources to get large amounts of good protein into their diet. Therefore, their dietary intake is poor and subsequently their blood protein levels decrease.

Another cause of low blood proteins is chronic inflammation. Many dialysis patients have diseases associated with chronic inflammation such as hardening of the arteries, diabetes mellitus, and high blood pressure. These conditions cause damage to the plumbing system of our bodies, resulting in blocked arteries associated with strokes and heart attacks. The inflammation causes a problem in the mobilization of the proteins absorbed in our diet into adequate protein stores in our blood. The low blood protein results in poor blood vessel healing, which in turn causes low blood protein levels. The process perpetuates itself into a cascade of events, which results in chronically low blood protein levels that is not improved by increasing protein intake in the diet.

The fourth and fifth steps in solving the malnutrition problem are coming up with a treatment plan to improve and control our nutritional outcomes. This is another very time consuming process and involves again more sacrifice and even more patience. The results of interventions used to improve blood protein levels can take weeks to see. I agreed to make the

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sacrifices necessary to try and help or serve our patients. Sacrifice takes time and effort. I identified malnutrition as a problem worth trying to solve. The next step was to try and understand the problem from the patient's perspective.

Empathy

*A high degree of empathy in a relationship
is possibly the most potent factor
in bringing about change and learning.*

Carl Rogers

The “E” in SERVE stands for **Empathy**. The root of the word empathy is PATHOS—the Greek word for feeling. Sally Smith is an excellent example of a patient that could benefit from the long-term goals of our team. She is an elderly female with chronic kidney failure who has been on dialysis for more than three years. Her husband died of cancer four years ago, and she has no children. She has a long-standing history of diabetes mellitus and had an amputation of her left leg last year. She is on a limited income, and her health care insurance does not cover nutritional supplements. Her albumin levels are very low, and her daily protein intake is extremely poor. She often misses meals and is rarely able to cook for herself. When she does cook, her meals are usually high in carbohydrates and very low in high quality proteins. It is hard not to be empathetic to this elderly female who has no one to care for her. Some people say that it is not our problem to care for her, and some clinicians may hand over the management of the patient to the social worker and the dietitian. This was the type of patient however, I was most interested in trying to serve. She needs the most help.

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Empathy means to be attuned to the emotional signals of other individuals—to try and put yourself into another person’s shoes. Empathy requires good listening skills, an understanding of cultural diversity, and an awareness of what is not obvious. True empathy requires sacrificing self-interest to try and help another individual. True empathy requires thinking of yourself less and of others more. Because the healing of others may help us heal ourselves, empathy plays an important role in our growth and development. It helps us become aware of our surroundings and increases our chances of recognizing new opportunities or solutions to problems.

Caring requires interest, compassion, and concern. These may not be characteristics or habits we are born with, but they are certainly habits we can acquire over a period of time and with practice. Empathy can significantly increase your ability to solve problems and help you “think outside the box.” Having empathy is a life asset that can give you a differential advantage over other people who do not have empathy or who are self-centered.

Over the years, patients have often commented on a health care professional’s ability to understand their problem. This seems to be a universal need among individuals seeking health care. They want to be listened to, and they want to feel that the doctor cares. I have often heard patients say, “I do not care how much you know until I know how much you care.” Some individuals seem to have a sixth sense of how other people are truly feeling. I believe this gives

them an advantage over people who do not truly try to understand the emotions and feelings of others. Certainly, an individual who does not have empathy can get into a lot of trouble and create conflict by not listening to what other people are trying to say. This is often because they are only focused on their own needs and not the needs of other people.

I was not a great listener. My mind seemed to think faster than others were able to speak. To solve our problem of malnutrition, though, I would need to become a good listener. I would need to be empathetic to many patients at one time. I would need to understand the importance of population empathy. Did malnourished patients share a common issue, or did each patient have a different reason as to why their blood protein levels were low?

In this case, true empathy required me to find out what patients were really doing to prevent malnutrition. Most did not know that they were malnourished, and so we started to educate them on the importance of good nutrition. After interviewing them, as suspected, we found out that many of them did not get enough protein in their diets. Some could not afford foods that contained high quality protein, while others ate out at fast food restaurants since they did not have time to prepare meals.

Dialysis patients need about one gram per kilogram body weight of protein each day to prevent malnutrition. (To calculate kilograms from pounds, just divide pounds by 2.2. For example, if a person

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weighed 132, their weight in kilograms would be 132 divided by 2.2 or 60 kilograms.) A normal protein diet would include about 60 grams per day of protein for women and 90 grams per day of protein for men. Good quality protein is found in meat and eggs. Some of these protein sources need to be limited because they may contain large amounts of cholesterol (red meats and eggs) and potassium or phosphorus (over the counter protein powders, protein drinks, or bars). Patients were asked to limit red meat intake and focus on chicken and fish. In addition, they were informed that it was acceptable to take over the counter egg preparations that do not contain egg yolk. Egg yolks are very high in cholesterol. These egg preparations are particularly useful if you like scrambled eggs. Yellow food coloring is added to make them appear more natural. There are protein powders, protein drinks, and protein bars on the market that are low in phosphorus and potassium. This information was made available to each individual who needed protein supplementation.

To get 60 grams of protein into your diet each day, you would have to eat 9 ounces of meat, 9 eggs, 2 ¼ cups of no yolk egg mix, 12 scoops of protein powder, 4 cans of protein drink, or 4 protein bars. If someone weighed 90 kilograms (198 pounds), they would need 90 kilograms of protein per day. To get 90 kilograms a day of protein into their bodies, they would need to consume, 12-14 ounces of meat, 12-14 eggs, 3-4 cups of no yolk egg preparation, 18 scoops of protein powder, 6 cans of protein drink, or 6 protein bars. After

evaluating the numbers, we realized that it was going to be difficult to convince the patients to consume this much protein on a daily basis, especially when we considered the fact that most of the time, these patients have a poor appetite.

The other factor limiting adequate protein consumption is the cost of protein supplements. A good 14-16 ounce steak could cost you five dollars. Because eggs are high in cholesterol, they are not a realistic protein source for patients on dialysis, since they are at high risk of developing heart disease. To determine the cost per year of protein supplementation, we divided the cost of the protein supplement by the number of grams of protein in the unit of protein supplement.

For example, a protein bar costs about one dollar and contains 15 grams of protein. The cost per gram of protein for a protein bar is about 7 cents. Similarly, the cost per gram of protein for protein powder and protein drinks was 4 cents and 12 cents, respectively. This does not sound like much, but if someone needs 90 grams per day of protein, the cost per year would be \$1,314 for protein powder, \$2,295 per year for protein bars, and \$3,942 per year for protein drinks. The cost to supply a dialysis unit of 100 patients with protein supplementation for a year would be \$131,400 for protein powder, \$229,500 for protein bars, and \$394,200 for protein drinks. Taking into consideration that most health insurance does not pay for protein supplements, we could not think of providing these services at no cost to the patient.

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By being empathetic and trying hard to understand the financial burden placed on the patient to get good nutrition, we realized that one of our biggest barriers to solving our problem was going to be the cost of providing adequate protein nutrition to our patients. I realized that I could not do this alone. I was going to need more people, more ideas, more energy, and more resources. I was going to need others to sacrifice their time and money to help me solve this malnutrition problem. I was going to need to develop relationships.

Relationships

*There are no problems we cannot solve together
and very few that we can solve by ourselves.*

Lyndon Johnson

The “**R**” in **SERVE** stands for **R**elationships. Developing relationships or developing teams is an important part of trying to solve most big problems. Sometimes, developing relationships takes years, and other times, they can be developed in a few weeks, depending on the urgency of a problem. Teams work better if they are nurtured and cared for over an extended period of time. This requires weekly meetings, one-on-one discussions, and the investment of time. If the foundation is good, then a team will excel when faced with a new problem to solve. If the foundation is poor, then the team may not rise to the occasion.

We discover life through relationships. There is no dichotomy between self-interest and concern for others. Without relationships, we cannot be truly happy. One of the benefits of relationships includes moving from “me” mode to “we” mode. Another benefit of good relationships is that they keep you from being discouraged or losing focus. However, developing good relationships takes time and effort. Developing relationships also takes sacrifice.

Again, there are no shortcuts to success. I knew that if I wanted to solve the malnutrition problem, I was going to have to pay the price for effectiveness. I needed to develop relationships to continue my journey toward solving the malnutrition problem. I needed to learn the characteristics of great teams or great relationships. After studying, I concluded that great teams focus on similarities, not differences; they understand that no team or no person is perfect; they choose to encourage, not discourage; they refuse to listen to gossip; and they resolve conflict.

For a relationship to be successful, it is best if the parties focus on what they have in common. I found out that this is what is meant by “knowing where you belong.” I have been on teams where I did not feel I belonged. Either I could not contribute or the other team members were at a different level of development. Working together was difficult. I did not look forward to team meetings and cringed when we were given a new task. Other teams felt more comfortable. Learning was fun, and work came easy.

Relationships or teams should build on strengths and minimize weaknesses. For our problem, we wanted to build a team or develop relationships with individuals who were empathetic to our cause and willing to sacrifice time to help us solve our problem. Another important criterion for team development is honesty or admitting that no one on the team is perfect and no team is perfect. People and teams will make mistakes. The important issue is to learn from

the mistakes and to take the information learned to try and solve the problem. For a team to think outside the box, they need to be able to express their views openly, without inhibition. Chances are, someone will come up with an idea that will help solve the problem.

Gossip is a killer of relationships and teams. Gossip is saying something about another individual that you would not say if the person were standing right in front of you. The reason gossip is so detrimental is that it erodes the trust base of the team. If people gossip about each other, they break down the team. A team is only as strong as its weakest link. If one member of the team is gossiping about another team member, team support and trust will be compromised.

Gossip usually concerns issues we have no control over. A successful and effective team's focus should be on those issues within their circle of influence. Eighty percent of the team's effort should be on those things they can change. Gossip serves no useful purpose.

Finally, a team must understand how to deal with conflict. Conflicts will arise, and it takes a strong team to understand and follow the simple, easy steps to conflict resolution. The first step in resolving conflict is to try to understand the other person's perspective. Again, we have to sacrifice our own views and stop and listen with empathy to the other person's position. This takes time, sacrifice, and patience. Once you truly understand the other person's perspective, then

you need to identify the key issues. Focus on the issue, not the people. Do not let your views about another person affect your thinking process. Once the issues are identified, try to identify the key result that would be acceptable to all parties. Once there is agreement, put your minds together to come up with a new solution to the conflict that satisfies all parties involved in the conflict.

Another important part of developing teams and relationships is investing in the team's emotional bank account. The emotional bank account refers to the deposits or withdrawals we make with other individuals to build their trust in us. Examples of deposits to an emotional bank account include being kind, forgiving, avoiding gossip, apologizing sincerely when you make a mistake, and not attacking another individual when you are trying to give constructive criticism.

Simple measures of kindness do not go unnoticed. People remember when you say, "Thank you" or "Excuse me." They remember those individuals that help make the coffee or bring in cookies for a break-time snack. Learning to forgive and forget is an important lesson. Holding anger and resentment serves no positive, long-term benefit. When someone offends you, let it go. Do not hold grudges. The damage you do yourself is ten times greater than the damage that will ever be done to the other person. Forgive, like love, is a verb and needs to be acted on. If you hurt someone else, apologize. Do not wait for them to come to you—go to them. Apologize in a

quiet place. Take time to apologize. Do not just run by the person and say, "I'm sorry." Go to lunch or out to coffee. Spend time with the other person, and when you do apologize, do it sincerely and with meaning.

We are born with an innate ability to defend ourselves against attack. A survival skill, no doubt, that helps us to prevent injury during conflict. When attacked verbally or physically, we defend ourselves. We cannot change our nature, but we can understand this natural response and learn how to use it to our advantage when developing relationships. When approaching another individual, try not to attack them with words that suggest you are the ultimate judge. Approach them from the standpoint that you are very concerned about their behavior or action. For example, "I am very concerned that you were late to work." If we comment on behavior from an "I" rather than a "you" perspective, then we are not attacking another individual, just voicing our opinion. You are sharing your feelings with another individual and asking them to agree or disagree with your assessment.

Perfect relationships involve only win-win situations. If someone in the team loses, then the whole team loses. Lose-win or win-lose interactions ultimately result in lose-lose situations. A team's focus should be on win-win or no deal.

The concept of the value of an emotional bank account was discovered at home with my family. My wife and I wanted to find a way to help our children understand the difference between selfish behavior

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and non-selfish behavior. We went to the department store and bought four clear glass jars and one clear, large glass vase. We filled the glass vase with over 200 dark blue, coin-shaped, glass marbles. When we returned home, we labeled each glass jar with a different child's name. We explained to our children that each time they demonstrated a non-selfish behavior, they would get a marble placed into their glass jar. If they demonstrated a selfish behavior, they could lose a marble. Anytime a child collected 21 marbles they could turn them in for a fifty-dollar bill! It took time for the concept to sink in, but after they started accumulating marbles, they could not do enough good things for each other.

They started making deposits into each other's emotional bank account and into the family's emotional bank account. We noticed over time, probably after about one year, that the kids started to be kinder to each other. Even my wife and I started to be kinder to each other. We realized that there was no longer a need to yell and scream at the kids when someone was misbehaving. Removing a precious marble from the glass jar was enough of a reprimand to let the child know that a particular behavior was unacceptable.

Random acts of kindness were rewarded, and we always made a big event out of someone getting twenty-one marbles. The child would be honored at a family dinner, and in the beginning, we even gave the child who had acquired twenty-one marbles a certificate of achievement. Our household went from a noisy, selfish group of individuals to a loving, kinder

family over a two-year period. The effect was so dramatic that I decided to introduce the concept to my work environment.

For the dialysis unit, the rules for the emotional bank account were changed. Random acts of kindness were rewarded with marbles, but we did not take marbles away. If any team member in the unit received five marbles, then every team member would get a free lunch. Some of the marbles given to team members were for being extra nice to a patient, helping another team member with their work without being asked, completing a project on time, or coming up with an idea that helped the whole team improve our monthly health outcomes.

Over time, the dialysis unit team began to understand the benefit of this reward system. They treasured their marbles and joked about them; however, there was no delay to turn in marbles for a free lunch. I was investing in the emotional bank account of my team, just as I was investing in the emotional bank account of my family.

The emotional bank account plays a very important role in building relationships. Like financial bank accounts, the value of an emotional bank account depends on deposits and withdrawals from the account. The concept encourages teamwork and recognition for random acts of kindness or exceptional contributions. No one is excluded, and everyone can participate. Anyone in the dialysis unit, not just me, can recognize a positive behavior

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and award a marble. Surprisingly, the team has not abused this privilege and has been very responsible for recognizing excellence. We are a no-gossip team and work hard to resolve conflict, both with team members and with patients in the dialysis unit. When patients get upset about certain issues, we resolve conflict using the same tools we use to resolve conflict with team members. We send a very consistent and simple message; love your neighbor as yourself.

Virtues

*Try not to become a man of success
but rather try to become a man of value.*

Albert Einstein

The “V” in SERVE stands for Virtues. The classical Greek philosophers considered the four chief virtues to be wisdom, temperance, justice, and courage. Early Christian Church theologians adopted these virtues and considered them to be equally important to all people. Virtues are commendable or good qualities. Virtues are character strengths that allow mankind to flourish. Virtues suggest a particular moral excellence and a capacity to act to make situations right. Virtues help us seek balance between excess and deficiencies of human nature. Not all virtues are values.

A value is a principle or quality that is intrinsically valuable or desirable. Values, however, should be based on virtues. Virtues can be taught and learned and are therefore habits. If your values are aligned with your virtues, then you will focus on strengths that will allow you to be successful. The four chief virtues help us answer two important life questions. First: What type of person should I be? Second: How should I act? The journey for each individual who wants to live a successful life will be different, but the

outcome should be the same. To be successful in life, we should strive to be virtuous.

Wisdom

*The function of wisdom
is to discriminate between good and evil.*

Cicero

Wisdom is knowledge, insight, and good judgment. Wise men have been sought after for centuries because they are prudent, careful, and thoughtful. Wisdom is not being clever. Clever people may allow ends to justify means. Wise people decide which ends are worth striving for. Wise people focus on the means justifying the ends.

Knowledge alone is not wisdom. Knowledge comes and goes, but wisdom never dies. The ability to form judgments requires discipline and temperance. We cannot be wise until we can read our own heart. We must know self before we can know another. To solve a problem, we must have knowledge of the problem and insight into solutions to the problem. Finally, after acquiring knowledge and insight, we will have to make a decision or judgment on the best course to solve the problem. Without wisdom, we are defeated before we start the battle.

Temperance

*A man is rich
in proportion to the number of things
he can do without.*

Henry David Thoreau

Temperance can be defined as moderation in action, thought, or feeling. Temperance involves self-mastery. Without control, we are doomed. If you lose your temper, you lose. Losing your temper serves no useful purpose. It makes others feel bad and sends a signal to the world that you are not in control and may not be trusted.

Self-awareness means being attuned to your guiding values and making decisions based on your values rather than your feelings. People who are self-aware know their strengths, know their weaknesses, and admit when they make a mistake. Because they are comfortable with themselves as they are, they are self-assured and not rattled by setbacks and mistakes. They realize that life is an adventure, and they have the self-confidence and character to muddle through dark times. They understand that wisdom means eliminating all thoughts that weaken you.

Once you are self-aware, you can work on self-control. Self-control involves controlling your response to any stimulus. It takes a strong will to remain calm when attacked. Individuals with self-control find ways to manage disturbing emotions. They realize that the fight or flight response is a survival skill, but when dealing with people, it may not be the appropriate response. An individual with self-control can juggle many demands without losing focus. They are flexible in adapting to new challenges and open to change based on new data. They are responsible for their actions and substitute solutions for excuses.

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They realize that no one can hurt them without their consent.

Justice

*Always do the right thing.
This will surprise some people
and astonish the rest.*

Mark Twain

Justice is the quality of being just and fair. Justice is the principle of moral rightness and conformity to truth, fact, or sound reason. Just people are principle centered and impartial. They do what is right. They do not have favorites or make choices that will benefit one group over another for personal gain. This means they live by a code of ethics that includes a positive outlook on life. They try to see the best in others. They are loyal to the absent, and they do not gossip. They are service oriented and have empathy and compassion for other individuals. Just people believe in others and understand that behavior and potential are two different things. They cooperate with others and look for creative solutions to problems. They share and do not hoard success.

Courage

*Fortitude is
the guard and support
of the other virtues.*

John Locke

Courage or fortitude is strength of mind that allows one to endure pain or adversity with courage. Without fortitude, we cannot support our other virtues.

Courage is needed to obtain knowledge, control our emotions, and do the right thing. Without fortitude, the other virtues could have no meaning and will not be able to stand up to pressure situations. With courage, we can overcome the forces and temptations of evil to do the right thing. Fortitude gives us the courage to resolve difficult situations.

The Four Cardinal Virtues

The four chief or cardinal virtues—justice, wisdom, courage, and temperance—come not just from Plato or Greek philosophy, but also from scripture. They are part of human nature. They are called “cardinal” virtues from the Latin word for “hinge,” since all other virtues hinge on these four virtues. Why is it important for an individual or a team to understand and practice the four cardinal virtues? Leaders need to use their knowledge of human nature to solve problems. The human body has a structure (mind, body, and spirit) that has not changed over time. The issues we deal with today are the same issues people dealt with 4,000 years ago. Plato and Jesus taught us how to be nice to one another. Virtues are healthy for the soul, just as eating right and exercising are healthy for the body.

Change a man’s heart and you will change his actions. A man who follows the laws of the body and not the laws of the heart is not a virtuous man. This man who follows the laws of the flesh (lust, envy, gluttony, sloth, greed, pride, and anger) can never be truly happy and successful. For example, money is not

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evil. The love of money is evil. We should not serve money. Money should be a servant to us. We have a will or soul to help us make the right decisions on what to do with our money. If we are money-centered rather than virtue-centered, we will be unhappy and lonely.

Virtues, like natural laws, are timeless. They are just as relevant today as they were to the Greeks and early Christians. Virtues are universal and are basic guidelines to help us live a service-centered life, while wisdom is required to help us understand life and its true meaning.

Wisdom is an objective habit that can be acquired. You may be born intelligent but you acquire wisdom. Temperance is certainly acquired over time. For every stimulus, there is a response. But between a stimulus and a response, there is a space where you can choose to be reactive or pro-active. Our goal in life should be to have mastery over our emotions and to control our feelings. Therefore, our response to any stimulus should be based on virtues, not on feelings. Wisdom helps us understand that there is a time and place for a response to any stimulus. Temperance helps control our emotions. Justice helps us understand the correct response after witnessing a wrongful act. Courage gives us the strength to uphold the other virtues and reminds us to do the right thing under any circumstance.

There are no shortcuts to maturity or the mastery of these virtues. To become virtuous, we must work

at becoming virtuous. Just knowing the virtues is not enough. We have to practice them daily until they become ingrained habits. These four cardinal virtues are the “hinges” upon which all other virtues turn. They are the foundation that allows us to build strong character, strong families, and strong teams.

Instead of asking ourselves, “How should I act?” a better question is, “What is the right action?” or “What kind of person should I be?” The answer to the question, “How should one live?” is, “One should live virtuously!” It is crucial to understand the importance of character and virtue. Character and virtue is about doing. Having a good character or a good temperament will involve being moved to act in accordance with your character. Realizing that you have self-control will allow you to have self-control in difficult situations.

Virtues are usually stable and reliable. Virtues are character traits that are established over a long period of time. Eventually, a virtue can become a habit. Ways to assimilate virtues into your life include studying them, researching them, reflecting on them, and remembering them when faced with a difficult decision. The quest to be truly virtuous is a never-ending journey.

Empowerment

*I have found the paradox that if I love until it hurts,
then there is no hurt, but only more love.*

Mother Teresa

The “E” in SERVE stands for Empowerment. I knew I could not solve this problem by myself, and I would need the help of many more people. I was comfortable with the fact that we knew the problem and had some ideas on how to solve it. But to provide a large number of patients with protein supplementation was going to take more resources than my team or I had to offer.

After the problem of malnutrition had been defined, measured, and analyzed, I realized that the problem was too big for us to solve alone. I developed relationships with team members and asked for their help. As a team, we identified our core values and set the stage for the bigger task of trying to improve our outcome and decrease the number of kidney failure patients in our dialysis unit that were malnourished.

I tried to be open-minded and listened to the ideas of the other team members during our weekly team meetings. We learned that the team valued positive energy and wanted to avoid ineffective habits and reactive tendencies. Our team wanted to be proactive, wise, just, and courageous. The team was willing to do its homework and figure out how to get things

done. We were willing to dig until the information and strategy made sense.

Empowerment means inspiring other people to be more than they think they can be. Empowerment means giving others the power to be successful. The ability to empower another individual is an important leadership skill. It represents the fact that you have acquired skills that help you solve problems and allow you to pass the knowledge on to other people to help them solve problems. It allows your circle of influence to increase and allows you to help more people than you could with your own limited resources.

Before you can empower other individuals, you need to remember that everyone learns differently. Most of us are slow learners, and we need to realize that we have a lot to learn. From experience (usually negative), we may feel that growth and learning can be a painful process. However, if we are open minded and willing to learn, we can learn new habits that may help us become more successful individuals.

It is best to keep the message simple and present the information in a way that most people can understand. As mentioned before, some people learn by listening and others learn by reading. When presenting information to a group, be prepared to meet the needs of both learning types.

Great vision precedes great achievement. If you do not know where you are going, you will not go anywhere. You need to understand what you need to do to achieve your goals. If you or your team has

the wrong map, you will not reach your destination. This is why it is important to begin each project with a clear understanding of desired results and remember that all things in life are created twice. We must first develop a mental blueprint of our journey before we begin our journey. In other words, be the programmer, write the program, and then run the program. First, know where you are going, then get the right map to get where you want to go.

Empowerment can mean teaching others to read a map; giving them a map, and then letting them go on their journey. As a leader and servant, we must see the future, then live the future. We must help our teams write out a plan and remember their core values as they try to deal with difficult problems. Empowerment involves creating a vision for others and helping them see the vision as you do. Not much happens in life without a dream. Behind every great achievement, there must be a dreamer of great dreams. For something great to happen, there must be a dream; however, much more than a dreamer is required to bring a dream or vision to reality. That is why it is always important to have a good map and a well thought out vision. Lots of people have dreams, but not everyone knows how to make their dreams come true. Not everyone has the right map.

The first step in getting others to believe in your vision is to understand that our lives are not an accident. We are all here for a purpose. One life always touches another. We share a common life map and travel down the life journey together. We

are not in control of our destiny. Natural laws control our destiny. If we understand human nature and understand the natural laws that surround our circle of influence, then we can ultimately control our destiny. If we fail to understand natural laws, then we will not accomplish our goals. Natural laws caused kidney disease and malnutrition. To solve our problem of malnutrition, we will have to understand the natural laws responsible for malnutrition. Once we understand these principles, the solution to the problem will be simple and will agree with human nature.

Our vision is that no patient being cared for in our dialysis unit suffers from malnutrition. Since we would need resources to accomplish this goal, the team contacted many non-profit organizations. No one was willing to help us provide nutritional supplements to our patients. We did find out that if we formed our own non-profit organization, we would be eligible for grants and institutional gifts that might help us solve our problem.

After developing relationships with lawyers, accountants, dietitians, social workers, businessmen, and family members, our dream came true, and we were able to start a non-profit organization whose goal was to feed the malnourished individuals with kidney failure. Our organization is called the Foundation to Improve Renal Nutrition. The following pages will go into more detail concerning the mission of the Public-benefit Corporation, which is helping us to serve forward.

Overview of The Foundation to Improve Renal Nutrition

I. Mission:

- **Who Are We?**
 - Charitable Public Benefit Foundation
 - Tax Exempt 501(c)(3) Corporation
 - Tax ID Number 57-1196921
- **Why do we exist?**
 - The mission of the Foundation to Improve Renal Nutrition is to help patients with kidney disease live longer and healthier lives through proper nutrition.
- **What's new?**
 - **Kidney disease facts**
 - ✓ 1:10 (20,000,000) Americans have kidney disease
 - ✓ 1:5 Americans with kidney disease will die in the next 5 years
 - ✓ 1:2 Americans with severe kidney disease will die in the next 5 years
 - ✓ 1:1000 Americans have kidney failure and require renal replacement therapy
 - ✓ 1:5 Americans with kidney failure on dialysis will die each year
 - ✓ 1:2 malnourished Americans with kidney failure on dialysis will die each year

- **What is the problem?**
 - Malnutrition is a major factor contributing to the high mortality rate in dialysis patients.
 - Protein malnutrition markers, such as serum albumin, are predictors of survival in dialysis patients. Mortality rates increase with decreasing serum albumin levels.
 - Meat is a good source of protein, but large amounts of meat can raise the patient's cholesterol and phosphorus levels and increases their risk of developing heart disease.
 - Some protein supplements are excellent sources of protein but contain large amounts of sodium, phosphorus, and potassium that may be harmful to patients with kidney disease.
 - Renal dietitians know the benefits of protein supplements in improving the nutritional status of malnourished individuals with kidney disease. Unfortunately, many malnourished individuals with kidney disease who are prescribed nutritional supplements cannot afford them.

II. Goals:

- **How do we plan to solve our problem?**
 - Protein supplements may be beneficial for malnourished individuals with kidney disease.
 - Most protein supplements (protein powders, protein drinks, and protein bars) that are made specifically for individuals with kidney disease are not a covered benefit by health insurance. Patients need to pay "out of pocket" for these supplements. Nearly one-third of our patients cannot afford

protein supplements because they are on a limited income.

- We are forming a **Charitable Public Benefit Foundation** non-profit organization to raise funds to help purchase kidney safe protein supplements for those patients with kidney disease that cannot afford them. By buying protein supplements in bulk, we may be able to receive a significant discount on the cost per case rate. The money saved can be used for legal and accounting costs necessary to support a non-profit organization.
- Other non-profit organizations focus on education and research support. Very few non-profit organizations actually help patients get nutritional supplements to treat malnutrition.
- **What will we accomplish?**
- As a **Charitable Public Benefit Foundation**, we hope to accomplish the following goals:
 - Develop a team of volunteers willing to serve and help all patients with kidney disease.
 - Provide education to health care professionals and individuals with kidney disease on the importance of nutrition in controlling the complications associated with kidney disease.
 - Raise funds to purchase nutritional supplements that are safe for patients with kidney disease and to support the operating costs of running a non-profit organization.
 - Purchase and gift nutritional supplements (i.e. protein bars, protein powders, and protein

drinks) to individuals with kidney disease that cannot afford them.

III. Objectives:

- **How will we reach our goals?**
 - We will reach our goals by forming a non-profit organization, identifying donors, accepting donations, and pooling resources to purchase protein supplements.
 - If patients do not tolerate one type of protein supplement, we will switch them to another protein supplement.
 - Our measurable outcomes will include:
 - The number of patients with kidney disease who are helped by our program annually.
 - The percent of patients with kidney disease who need protein supplements and receive a monthly supply of protein supplements.

IV. Programs

- **What services do we provide?**
 - The main services we provide include educating the community on the importance of nutrition in the management of kidney disease and gifting the purchased protein supplements to patients with kidney disease.

V. Governance:

- **What type of non-profit organization are we planning to form?**
 - **Charitable Public Benefit Foundation** non-profit organization.
- **Original Board of Directors**
 - Philip J. Tusso, MD, FACP (President)
 - Donna Tusso (Treasurer)
 - Mary Mosser (Secretary)
 - Suzie and Chuck Wood
 - Espie Abueg
 - Katherine Dirden
 - Michal Sharabi
 - Kathleen Maupin

VI. Staff:

- **Who provides services?**
 - Volunteers will provide services needed to purchase protein supplements and distribute protein supplement to patients with kidney disease.

VII. Location:

- **Where are services provided?**
 - Protein supplements will be distributed on a monthly basis to patients at their local dialysis center or clinic.

VIII. Development

- **What is the history of the non-profit organization?**

- Many individuals with chronic renal failure on dialysis are malnourished. Protein supplement prescriptions vary between patients and physicians. When dietary modifications fail, health care providers will often advise malnourished kidney disease patients to try a protein supplement. About one-third of our population is unable to pay for protein supplements such as protein powders, protein drinks, and protein bars.
- Several health care providers pooled funds, and we were able to purchase protein supplements for our patients. We found that organizations and other individuals were eager to donate to our program but were hesitant when they found out that we were not a non-profit organization and did not have 501(c)(3) status. Therefore, we decided to form a non-profit organization that is eligible for outside funding and individual donations.
- **What are the advantages and disadvantages of a non-profit corporation?**
- **Advantages:**
 - Exemption from payment of federal corporate income taxes
 - Unlimited life. If an owner dies or wishes to sell their interest, the corporation will continue to exist and do business
 - Lower postal rates on some bulk mailings
 - Eligible to receive both public and private grants
 - Individual donors can claim a federal income tax deduction of up to 50% of income for donations made to 501(c)(3) groups

- Qualify for same limited liability protection as for-profit companies. This means that directors, officers, and members are typically not personally responsible for the debts and liabilities of the corporation
- **Disadvantages:**
 - Articles of incorporation must be filed with the state
 - Bylaws prepared, and meeting minutes must be kept with your corporation's records
 - Applications for tax-exempt status must be filed for both the federal and state taxes
 - Profits cannot be used to generate profits for the owners
 - The purpose of the foundation must conform to IRS regulations
- **What is the role of the donor in the organization?**
 - What are the benefits of being a donor?
 - Tax deduction
 - Emotional reward
 - ✓ In memory of someone (legacy)
 - ✓ Spiritual reason (tithing)
 - Belief in cause or sense of belonging
 - Giving back to the community
 - ✓ Fulfill volunteer requirement
 - ✓ Make a difference
 - What are donor's rights?
 - To be informed of the organization's mission and board of directors
 - To have access to the organization's financial statements

- To be assured that gifts will be used for their intended purpose
- To receive appropriate acknowledgement for gifts
- To be assured confidentiality of donation
- To be served in a professional manner
- To have the right to ask questions
- To be informed if the person seeking donations is not a volunteer
- **What is the benefit of being a volunteer in the organization?**
 - Broadens perspective
 - Connects you with action oriented people
 - Builds new skills
 - Improves your community
 - Helps you feel good about yourself

IX. Finances:

- **What percent of funds will go to individuals with kidney disease?**
 - By year two, each dollar raised by our non-profit organization will be divided as follows:
 - 80% will be used for the purchase of protein supplements
 - 10% will be used for legal fees
 - 5% will be used for accounting fees
 - 5% will be used for administrative costs
- **How many people will we help?**
 - The estimated number of patients to be served in 2005–2006 is 100.
- **Is our organization financially responsible?**
 - Yes. As a non-profit corporation, we are being

formed for purposes other than generating a profit, and no part of the organization's income will be distributed to its directors or officers.

X. Future:

- **What are our checks and balances?**
 - The Board of Directors, donors, and volunteer staff will serve as our checks and balances.
 - Board of Directors meetings will review the financial status of the foundation.
 - Donors and volunteers will have an opportunity to review the financial statements of the foundation.
 - Report of income and expenditures will be available upon written request.
- **How are we preparing for the future?**
 - We are preparing for the future by forming a **Charitable Public Benefit Foundation** that will help educate and treat patients with kidney disease who are malnourished. Our goal is to eliminate malnutrition in patients with kidney disease by giving them the information necessary to make good nutritional decisions and gifting them protein supplements that do not contain ingredients that may be harmful to them.
 - We hope to develop educational handouts that will be given to kidney patients and their families. We hope to develop a donor and volunteer list that will be used to provide the necessary resources to allow patients with kidney disease and their families obtain information and supplements needed to treat malnutrition. Monthly Board of Directors meetings will be held to establish short-term and

long-term plans for the non-profit organization.

- **What is our future?**
- The Foundation to Improve Renal Nutrition faces many challenges over the next year. We hope individuals will be empathetic to our cause and give openly to help us accomplish our goals. Without this support, the non-profit organization will not survive. Working together, we can achieve our ultimate goal, which is to *help patients with kidney disease live longer and healthier lives.*

Conclusion

*Whoever wants to become great among you
must be your servant.*

Mark 10:43

Serving others is not an easy task because it never ends. Once you make a decision to serve, every other decision you will ever make will be based on service. I decided to serve my patients who are suffering from malnutrition, and as a result, I started to serve my team, who eventually helped me start a non-profit organization that someday may help us to serve thousands of individuals with kidney disease. Even though the purpose of our team was to solve our problem of malnutrition, the journey to solving this problem, hopefully, will help others serve more people—perhaps teaching more people how to serve even more people. As a result, we all begin a journey of serving forward into the future, touching not only the lives of those around us, but also the lives of generations to come.

To be a servant, we must think like servants. Servants understand that serving others is an opportunity, not an obligation. Servants focus on their work and their purpose and not on what others think. Servants are available to serve and are sensitive to the needs of others. Servants are humble and not boastful.

To serve means to be wise, fair, strong, and sincere. Clarifying the concept of service helps people understand the long-term benefits of a service-driven life. As servants, we should do good works, such as feed the poor or visit the sick. Sometimes in society, service has a negative connotation. But the paradigm shift for me meant that the more I served the more I was served. People liked being served, so they served back, and now we serve forward. Once you start serving others sincerely and unconditionally, they will see the rewards of a service-driven life.

I personally have been grateful for the opportunity to serve individuals with kidney disease. These individuals have a need that we can see and do something about. I have been personally blessed with many treasures in my life and realize now that the crucial thing in my life is not the amount of my treasures but the location of my treasures. To serve individuals with kidney disease is not a sacrifice but a privilege because it has helped me to become a better person.

Greatness in life consists not of doing great deeds with great means but of doing great deeds with little means. Serving does not require great resources. All it requires is the willingness and desire to serve. We can all be great because we can all learn how to serve. Some people will try to take advantage of you, so beware of serving evil people. If they do take advantage of you, then forgive them and forget them. Natural laws will reward the good that you have done for others and punish the selfish acts of misguided

people. Model your virtues to others and hopefully they will remember your kindness and use that memory to serve forward.

In summary, we learned that virtues play an important role in defining what we value as important. Wisdom helps us focus on results, make tough decisions, and become accountable for our actions. Courage helps us communicate effectively, develop others, avoid gossip, and resolve conflict. Temperance allows us to control our feelings and have empathy for others. Justice allows us to do the right thing. Sacrifice is needed to help us accomplish our life journey. In the end, we learned that our purpose in life is to serve. We serve others and in return, we find other opportunities to serve. The more love we give away, the more love we have to give away.

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*The only real happy people are those who have
learned how to serve.*
- Albert Schweitzer

About the Author

Philip Tuso, MD, is a board-certified nephrologist who has received numerous awards and held many administrative positions before being appointed Physician Director of the Fresenius Medical Care Dialysis Unit in Lancaster, California. Over the past year, Dr. Tuso has focused on efforts to develop a population care management program to help improve measurable outcomes for individuals with chronic kidney disease. He is the founder and president of a non-profit organization called the Foundation to Improve Renal Nutrition, whose mission is to increase public awareness of kidney disease and raise funds to supply nutritional supplements to malnourished individuals with kidney failure.

