



ON MAGNANIMITY, LEADERSHIP, AND THE BIGGER PICTURE

Reading through some of the articles in this issue, specifically the series on how to handle a disgruntled patient from another ophthalmologist, prompted me to reflect on what each of the articles and the principles outlined within them had in common.

The first that struck me was the principle of magnanimity, and the second was leadership. The authors have excellently outlined their methods and rationales for handling unhappy patients. To me, this stems not only from their high levels of emotional intelligence but also from their magnanimous selves.

The word *magnanimity* originates from the Latin, *magna*, meaning big, and *animus*, meaning soul or spirit. The topic of magnanimity was discussed by Aristotle, Cicero, and, later, Thomas Aquinas. Their dissertations on magnanimity and megalopsychia are a little beyond the scope of this editorial, and myself for that matter; however, I shall attempt to provide my perspective and understanding.

Magnanimous individuals embody a variety of characteristics, including generosity, kindness, forgiveness, empathy, honesty, integrity, inclusivity, and a willingness to address uncomfortable situations. Mediocrity, taking the line of least resistance, and staying in their comfort zone are just not a part of who they are. Magnanimous individuals, in my observation, see the bigger picture and place their actions and roles in the context of a larger community or society. It occurs to me that what I have just stated sounds like a desirable job description for politicians!

Consider the mentors we have all had over the years and our admiration of them as leaders. What do so many

of them have in common? I am willing to wager that they were all invariably magnanimous and met many of the criteria described earlier. It is no surprise, then, that these individuals demonstrated considerable leadership in their areas of influence and are deservedly admired. As empathetic individuals, they understand that others have goals, too, and actions taken can influence those goals.

The description provided of magnanimous individuals may perhaps be interpreted as saying they are soft, altruistic individuals. In reality, those who come to the fore as leaders are strong and are sometimes viewed as ruthless. History is replete with individuals who demonstrated magnanimity and strength. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr come to mind; both pursued just causes while balancing strength of character (perhaps a bit of stubbornness) with magnanimity and altruism.

So, here's to the contributors to this issue! For demonstrating great nobility, magnanimity, and leadership, please take a bow. ■

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