

## **Dear sporty Nordic Friends, Esteemed Nurses, and Leaders,**

Let us reflect on the word “leadership.”

John Paul Kotter, a Harvard professor, distinguishes between “management” and “leadership.” Management focuses on structures, budget control, reporting, and metrics. In complex organizations like hospitals, management is necessary but not enough.

Leadership, on the other hand, points the way, provides insight, and inspires change. It acknowledges individual strengths and weaknesses, both professionally and personally.

My assertion is that this form for “leadership” has been nearly erased from formal Nordic health structures, replaced by “management.” Administrative tasks often overshadow true leadership. Economic goals sometimes take priority over quality objectives. Yet, our society faces complex challenges, and true leadership is crucial.

Who is your leader – the one who inspire you to change or to action? The one with a vision, that you will follow almost anywhere. Your version of Gandhi, Mandela, Mother Theresa or Florence Nightingale. Who are the heroes – the leaders of our time.

And who are going to follow you, and why should they follow you?

That, you should have a clear description of as a leader. The formal position is not enough, what is your vision.

Let us embark on a journey through time—a voyage to ancient Greece, where myths and legends intertwine with the very essence of leadership.

### **1. The Wisdom of Socrates: The Socratic Method**

- a. His pursuit of truth was relentless, and he left behind a legacy—the Socratic method. Instead of lecturing, he engaged his students in dialogue, unraveling their assumptions and challenging their minds. Today, in law schools, nursing schools and boardrooms alike, we still employ this method—asking questions that ignite critical thinking, revealing hidden truths.

### **2. Plato’s Republic: Justice and Happiness**

- a. Plato, Socrates’s student, wrote the “Republic.” Within its pages, he explored justice, its role in our world, and its connection to happiness. Plato’s influence echoes through the corridors of power, reminding us that leadership isn’t just about authority—it’s about creating a just society where happiness thrives.

### **3. Aristotle’s Curiosity and Classification**

- a. Aristoteles pondered the meaning of life. He studied animals, classifying them into groups—a foundation for zoology. But his legacy extends beyond biology. Through his writings on the soul and ethics, he laid the groundwork for modern healthcare philosophy.

#### 4. **The Odyssey's Lessons: Respect and Reciprocity**

- a. Odysseus, shipwrecked and far from home, faced several challenges, and his men were hopeless. But Odysseus, embodied leadership. He first sought out the situations that could be dangerous, thus securing his men. He respected his people, ensuring they respected one another. Order, harmony, and happiness flowed—a lesson we still heed today.

#### 5. **Heroes and Gods: Strength, Courage, and Strategy**

- a. Greek mythology teems with heroes and gods—Zeus, Athena, Hercules. Their qualities mirror leadership attributes. Strength, courage, and strategic thinking define their deeds. From the battlefield of Troy to the halls of Olympus, they inspire us to balance force with wisdom, to manage power with empathy.

As we navigate our modern challenges, let us draw from these inspiring wellsprings. Let us lead with wisdom, seek justice, and embrace curiosity.

Our journey, as nurses is not a voyage across oceans but through the corridors of care, where modern heroes walk alongside legends as Florence Nightingale, Virginia Henderson, Dorothy Orem, Clara Barton, and our own Bertha Wellin, Henny Tscherning og Bergljot Larsson.

Their legacies continue to inspire nurses worldwide, through archetypes as:

#### 1. **The Compassionate Guardians: Nurses as Leaders**

- a. Imagine the nurse at the bedside—who stands guard over pain and defenselessness. They are leaders in the truest sense—guiding patients through the labyrinth of illness, fear, and uncertainty. They mix compassion with competence, empathy with expertise.

#### 2. **The Architects of Trust: Nurses who Build Bridges**

- a. Nurses are architects of trust. They construct bridges between patients and families, between science and empathy, between despair and resilience. And between the nursing ethics and societies economy and new public managements games.

#### 3. **The Advocates: Voices for the Voiceless**

- a. Nurses advocate for patients who cannot speak, for families lost in the labyrinth of bureaucracy, and for communities grappling with health disparities. Their leadership extends to boardrooms and politicians, where they fight for better staffing ratios, safer working conditions, and recognition of their worth. They are the guardians of ethics—the moral compass that steers healthcare toward justice.

#### 4. **The Resilient Warriors: Navigating Storms**

- a. Leadership isn't always smooth sailing. Nurses endure storms—the relentless shifts, the emotional toll, the heartaches, and the lack of finances. Yet, they stand firm, their resolve unyielding. They adapt, innovate, and find comfort in companionship. Their resilience is a beacon—a reminder that leadership isn't about avoiding storms but about dancing in the rain.

## **In Closing**

In September 1920, a thousand nurses donned their travel attire and turned their faces toward Copenhagen - from Norway, Sweden, Finland, and other places in Denmark. They were summoned to the 'First Nordic Joint Meeting for Nordic Nurses' which expressed it as follows in the invitation:

*'Although our purpose is not grand resolutions and powerful collective actions, there is an infinite sense of strength in this, that we are a united profession striving toward the same goals.'*

And here you are today – gathered in a united profession – in beautiful Faroe Islands, and the strength of our unity stands out.

Over the past years, you have experienced leadership in action. You've been called to battle, tasked with inventing solutions on the fly, ensuring sufficient resources, and guiding your teams through uncertainty and fear. You've worked overtime, faced frustration, and witnessed both resilience and companionship.

- You have set directions.
  - o Leadership begins with setting a clear direction. As leaders, you inspire action and create an environment where your team can excel.
- You have been prepared.
  - o True leadership involves being prepared for what lies ahead. Together, you can plan for the next ten or twenty years, always ready for any crisis that may arise.
- You have empowered your staff.
- You have inspired me.

Let us recognize that leadership isn't confined to corner offices or flowcharts. Leadership is about vision, empowerment, and adaptability. It thrives in the corridors of care, where compassion meets competence - and it is strengthened through collaboration.

Let us influence our governments across the Nordic region. If not us, then who? Our voices matter.

As Nordic leaders, embrace your role as guardians of the nursing profession, architects of trust, advocates, and warriors. May your footsteps echo through eternity.

Thank you for your inspiration.