

5 Points for Emerging Leaders

You have the education, the skills and the experience. But does it make you a leader?

We asked a senior nurse leader to share with us her five key pieces of advice for emerging leaders.



Mary Jo Haddad

Mary Jo Haddad is the President & CEO of the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

Mary Jo received her Bachelor of Science in nursing from the University of Windsor, and subsequently completed a Master of Health Science Administration at the University of Toronto. After eight years at the Children's Hospital of Michigan, she first came to Sick Kids in 1984, and since then has held positions of significant leadership and responsibility. In 1999, she was recruited by Halton Health Care Services as Chief Nursing Officer and Vice-President, Professional Practice. She returned to Sick Kids in 2000.

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Mary Jo has served on the Provincial Nursing Task Force and the Provincial Specialized Paediatric Services Task Force. She is an active community supporter, and has served a two-year term on the Cabinet for United Way of Greater Toronto, as the leader of the healthcare division.

She holds a faculty appointment at the University of Toronto, Department of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation.

When young nursing colleagues ask me what my “secret recipe” is for becoming a successful, respected leader, I reflect on all the successful leaders who have inspired me over the course of my career.

My success has been built on a foundation that is anchored in strong personal values and a passion for the work that I do. My inspiration stems from the personal satisfaction I feel when I’m nurturing the success of others, and from the knowledge that every contribution I make - directly or indirectly - will make a difference in the life of a child.

Early on in my career, I had a mentor who challenged me to assume increasing leadership opportunities in my day to day work in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Each opportunity strengthened my self-confidence as a nurse, as a critical thinker and as a true partner in providing care to critically ill newborns and their families.

I’ve been very fortunate to work with people who were open to being challenged, willing to share their experiences and who encouraged me to develop my leadership skills.

I’ve also been part of an organization that encourages excellence and fosters innovation. Through the many leadership positions I’ve had at Sick Kids, I’ve been motivated by the children and families we serve; challenged by the diversity of issues I faced each day, and strengthened by an exemplary team of committed colleagues who shared the same vision.

So what is my “secret recipe” for success?

1. Find passion in the work you do
2. Stay true to yourself and committed to your values
3. Be willing to be mentored and to mentor others
4. Maintain a life-long commitment to learning
5. Remain open to the opportunities that come your way

The following quote guides my priorities and continues to inspire me each day: “A hundred years from now, it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in or the kind of car I drive....but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”



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