

A Relationship on Life Support

Hospital hallways are always very busy, especially around the nurses' station. I get to watch all of the action, and know what is going on even behind the scenes.

I remember one particular doctor who rushed up and down the corridor to examine his patients. He was a very visible flash of energy and momentum as he worked his trade. He paid particular attention to the "important" people, though, and it was clear that they considered him a great physician.

My thoughts about him were much different, because I saw how he acted with the "nobodies". I was especially struck by how he behaved towards one particular patient. This boy was not on the doctor's regular rounds, so he was seen only rarely. In fact, the nurses monitored his condition, and only when the patient became critical did the doctor come by. He would then provide basic resuscitation services, and when the boy was breathing on his own again, the doctor would leave to work the other areas of the hospital.

I became very upset about this, and I finally confronted him about his behavior. He was very defensive, and proclaimed how much he cared for this particular patient. In fact, he revealed to me that this was actually his son! I couldn't believe it! What kind of relationship could there be when he only puts forth a minimal effort, just enough to keep it barely alive? How can he bear to watch his own son suffering without giving comfort for the pain? How can he not try to heal and make whole again?

It was so much like the story about the farmer who wanted to make his mule more efficient so that his operating costs would go down. He fed the mule a little bit less each day, so that he could be trained to get the most out of the food ration that he did receive. The farmer was elated with the progress, but one day to his great consternation the mule just up and died!

It is incredible to think that many people treat their relationships with other people this way. They only put something into it when they feel like they are about to lose it altogether. Many times it is simply too late, and the relationship dies completely. And they just can't quite figure it out!