

MODEL OF RESPECT: *Mark Hertling*

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Retired Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling is a national security, intelligence and terrorism analyst for CNN. He served for 37 years in the Army, including three years in combat, and retired as commanding general of US Army Europe and the 7th Army. This is a CNN Opinion he wrote on September 3, 2020 entitled "Look For This In Your Next President".

If you ask people who *haven't* served in uniform what it takes to be a great military leader, many would say "strength," "toughness" or "courage." People who *have* served -- and particularly those who have had the honor of commanding -- will tell you there's a lot more to it. Leaders -- military or otherwise -- need character, intellect, vision, humility and will.

Leaders also need empathy. In fact, this particular trait is discussed in detail in the publication "Army Leadership" and as recently as last year the topic was extensively addressed in one of the Army's professional journals.

The doctrinal definition of empathy is rather simple, describing the trait as "Identifying and understanding what others think, feel and believe."

I spent 21 of my 38-year military career in command positions, and this is one trait I've repeatedly observed in the best leaders. Good people are empathetic -- and, as a great sergeant I worked with once taught me, "The secret to being a good leader is to first be a good person."

America prizes leadership, but I fear our nation is losing its ability to empathize. We see this every day on television, on social media, in interpersonal exchanges. Assignment of derogatory nicknames, the trolling of individuals on social media, the

lack of comity when debating competing ideas and a failure to show courtesy to those with different ideas about any specific subject are all examples of what we see on a daily basis, in a variety of forums.

And while I wouldn't blame President Donald Trump as the sole force making Americans less empathetic, his continuous example of poor behavior and caustic communication is certainly making matters far worse.

During my nearly four decades in uniform, I found empathy comes from compassion. It comes from understanding others and considering their point of view. It comes from exhibiting decency. Soldiers recognize this attribute in history's admirable commanders and they see it as a critical trait in those who succeed on the battlefield.

That's because to be a great commander, leaders must understand and care for their troops and their families. Leaders must listen to and address their subordinates' concerns. They must treat colleagues, advisers and members of their team with dignity and respect.

Commanders know that empathy establishes trust. They know research strongly indicates that when the "boss" shows empathy, others in the organization will do the same. An empathetic boss makes for an empathetic team, and empathetic teams are usually more successful.

Americans who entrust the military with their sons and daughters would not accept any Army leader -- of any rank -- who didn't pursue, listen to and incorporate information that benefits the troops and the mission. Americans expect a general to seek input from the soldiers on the front lines bearing the brunt of the fight. Americans would demand a general who ignored the health of his command -- or, worse yet, blamed shortcomings on others -- be court martialed.

Yet that is what we have in our current commander in chief. While many are disgusted by the President's name-calling, rude behavior, personal attacks, transactional approach and greed, as a former soldier who knows the power of teams I'm mostly concerned about what happens when the President doesn't show empathy in taking advice or dealing with others. This might partly explain some of the astronomically high turnover rate in his administration, and why at this point he cannot seem to attract qualified candidates for critical positions.

By supposedly "knowing more than the generals" (or doctors, intelligence community, judges, journalists, or any other experts), the President is not actively seeking, listening to or incorporating the information that would contribute to our nation's greater good.

By relying only on the input from his political base or from select, friendly media outlets while calling all other sources of information "fake," the President shows disdain for all other factions who must be part of the national dialogue regarding our democratic republic and our nation's strengths.

By making excuses, snubbing critical evidence and facts, and ignoring relevant intelligence -- especially intelligence indicating major threats to the safety of our fighting men and women -- the President flirts with becoming derelict in his duties under the Constitution.

Don't misunderstand: While the Constitution holds no call for the President to exhibit empathy in all engagements, by continuously blaming others for shortcomings and refusing to take responsibility, the President is violating this important leadership principle that contributes to effective governing.

Any military commander would lose the trust of his or her soldiers -- and the American people -- if they acted without empathy. Any commander would be relieved of his or her duties. I know. I have had to replace commanders who violate critical leadership principles and standards, and empathy is certainly one of those. As a nation, we need to hold any commander in chief -- any elected leader -- to these same standards.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/03/opinions/trumps-lack-of-empathy-is-leadership-failure-hertling/index.html>

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