

# Friday Night [under the] Lights...

2019



*Happy Friday...*

One of the things I cherish the most about writing Friday Night under the Lights is the ability to discuss topics and events that happen in our EMS world that are either interesting in and of themselves or they remind us (or maybe just me) of things that are important in our lives. There's obviously no shortage of "new and different" when it comes to what we experience in our profession. There's a plethora of relevant, interesting and challenging events in our World. As you probably have guessed, just about everything in FNuL is based on something that's just happened or is relevant to the week...

*We see a lot.* And much of what we see, others experience only rarely, if ever, in their lives. We see the best and worst of life every single day. While it's occasionally unbelievably hard, it's also a gift that few people will ever get. And frankly, it's our job. We chose it and people expect us to do it and do it well.

And, like you I bet, I've learned that when we can make some of those hard things *better* for other people, we feel better about ourselves. It's in our DNA. It drives us in this unique, crazy, powerful way...

So, I have to tell you, writing tonight has been a tough one. I actually started writing this several days ago (not a normal process for someone who measures deadlines on a second hand instead of a calendar). I don't normally do that. As a matter of fact, I almost never do that.

*But this week I did.*

I started writing on Tuesday morning because something unexpected happened and it tilted me off my routine. I started writing because I felt like there was something that I should or could say. Some message that could come out of what was happening.

And, to be honest, I didn't want to screw this up. I want it to be *read* by you as it *feels* to me. Above all, I want to be respectful. I'm writing it because we are a family. And we have the privilege of dealing with the hard stuff together. Even though we take care of sick and injured people every single minute of every day, sometimes life forces us to take a deeper look. We are used to taking care of *them*. It feels so much different when it's *us*.

Early Tuesday morning, I learned that one of our colleagues, someone who is known and literally loved by so many people, had a sudden, major and significant medical event. I've worked with him, laughed with him, walked through airports and into meetings with him. We text, we discuss business stuff, we work on collective projects. He's in that tremendous category of professional *friend*.

He's a "go to" person for so many things, not only in AMR but in EMS as a profession. He loves to be around people and people love to be around him. He's dedicated his entire professional life to helping others and taking care of communities and systems. He has a distinct voice that I hear when I'm reading his emails. He's one of those people that loves to look for the good, actually the great, in everything.

And suddenly, unexpectedly, he had a significant life-changing event. One of those like I talked about above... I'm telling you. Even though we live in the world of thousands of these every week, it was one of those moments that just open up your entire emotional storage box and dump it out. It was just devastating to get the news... It hurt.

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And then, 2 hours later, I got a text that one of our colleague's grandson had passed away.

*I can't even imagine.* I just can't imagine. Several of us were texting back and forth and called each other trying to understand and figure out if there was anything at all we could do. It seemed so unbelievable. We all felt so helpless...

*And we didn't want to intrude. But we wanted to let you know how much we hurt for you. And we wanted you to know that we were all there for you, and for your family. We wanted you to know that the arms of this phenomenal GMR family wrap around you tightly and hold you strong.*

*You help so many people through their life's unexpected events. You care about people deeply and have a magical way of providing comfort & strength when everyone else needs it. And the tide turned, and it felt so friggin' unfair. Just about every text that morning was for and about you. It may be something we do every single day, but that morning we all felt like first timers.*

*We hurt for you and struggled (and still do) to figure out how to make it better.*

*I am so, so sorry.*

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One of our colleagues texted me three days ago about his step-father. He had recently been transferred into a Long-Term Care facility and had been deteriorating to the point that he probably needed some sort of evaluation / intervention. Like many of you reading this, your family and friends rely on you to help them through a complex, confusing and sometimes time-sensitive situation.

*And, as you got more information and facts from your step-sister, you found yourself in the position of making a critical decision about someone who was sick, deteriorating and you weren't with them.*

*And he's family.*

*You used your experience and resources and made some difficult calls in the wee evening hours and learned that your step dad had a gangrenous toe and was septic.*

*There's no doubt that what you did changed the outcome for your step dad. It's easy to use the science. It's a whole different thing when it's someone we love. It's easier to take care of strangers than the ones we love.*

*I'm really glad you did what you did. Your step dad is lucky to have you in his life.*

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A week ago, yesterday, we suddenly and unexpectedly lost one of our own. Pat Peltier, our Clinical Education Specialist in San Diego, passed away on January 10<sup>th</sup>. Her funeral was yesterday.

Pat had a long history in EMS and touched thousands of lives and helped build and maintain so many innovative programs in EMS.

The day before she passed away, she was attending a focused Quality Improvement Seminar in Austin.

*We were devastated when we heard she passed away. Many of her colleagues saw her or were with her the days before in Austin – It felt surreal.*

*How does something like that happen? It's not supposed to happen to us.*

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So...

Life in our EMS family has been hard this week. *Really hard.*

And when so many rough things happen in a short time, it grabs us all by the shoulders, looks us straight in the eyes and reminds us that what we do can really hurt. A lot. Cry your eyes out hurt.

I truly believe in what I said at the very beginning of tonight's FNuL. It is a gift that each of you have chosen to be a part of some of the toughest times in other's lives. Occasionally, the last part of their lives.

The very fact that you have means you use your skills, your brains, your compassion, your humor, your experience, your guidance, your resources – everything you have in your cognitive and emotional toolbox, to make things better.

And that's what happened this week – and hopefully will happen for the rest of our lives.

I started tonight telling you that my FNuLs were driven by things that happened or things that reminded us of what was important...

So, I'll close by telling you what I was reminded of this week.

- I was reminded how nice it is to have SO MANY people always looking out for each other – Look at how many texts went out when our EMS family was hurt... It's like having a medical army always ready to jump in when they're needed.
- I was reminded about the importance of being really good at what we do (our crews / our colleagues / our friends - transporting us). It's easy to say, "what would you do if this was your mother?" Much harder to treat everyone as if they are...
- I was reminded that we still hurt (and sometimes we hurt bad) when bad things happen. We aren't robots and our patients are real human beings, loved by other human beings and often part of a lifetime of memories, not just abnormal anatomy and physiology. I'll take someone who cares about me any day over someone who's just taking care of me.
- I was reminded that our organization cares at the very top. You should see the texts when hard things happen in "the family". There are days that I wish I could forward every single text or email from the leadership of our organization. As a matter of fact, so many times, the initial call comes from them. Hit me with a Brown Nose Penalty if you want – This place truly cares about the people that are part of the Family.
- I'm reminded, hopefully, that if one day this is me... The people I love and care about have you to help them...
- I'm reminded that I committed many moons ago to always starting my FNuL with "Happy Friday", because even when times are tough, there is always, *always* stuff to be happy about. Just like tonight.

Finally, my thoughts, my heart, and my prayers go out to those of you who are struggling. I wish there was something magical we could do or say – I always struggle...

Your family's here for you – *as you have always been for those that needed you...*

*And, there's one more thing...*



That's it from my world. *Happy Friday.*

*Thanks for what you do – and thanks for being there when we need us...*

*Ed*

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