

## Unsolicited Fatherly Advice

I am a father. I have three biological children. I have dozens of surrogate daughters and sons. Some of these are the close friends of my two daughters — young women who have joined us for meals, sleepovers, family vacations. Some of these are actors and actresses who have played my progeny onstage or on screen or just younger actors in whom I have taken a paternal interest. (I spent six years on Broadway as Thenardier and not only all those Eponines but also all those revolting students became part of my extended family.)

I am also a union leader. (I am hardly a thug, but I find the appellation “union thug” amusing.) I served for thirty years on the governing council of the stage actors’ union Actors’ Equity Association, and for five of those years, I was its national president. In the latter capacity, I spent thousands of hours trying to figure out how to offer encouragement and inspiration. I think many of those members would have rejected as literally and figuratively paternalistic my characterizing them as my children, but I certainly had a very fatherly regard for all of them.

In the course of my life, I have created countless opportunities for learning and growth — or, as they are more commonly known, mistakes. Frequently (though sadly not always) I have learned from these mistakes. Through trial and error, I have discovered ways of doing and being, behavior and action that create better results for me. On these pages, I shall attempt to pass on what I have learned without having to endure the eye-rolling, yawns, and surreptitious glances at the nearest clock that might attend an in-person disquisition.