



# Learning as Leadership: Humanizing Business

Lara & Claire Nuer, Learning As Leadership  
San Francisco & Paris

## ☀ Call to Action

**Go beyond ego to create a context for humanity working together.**

**Learning as Leadership:**

[www.learnaslead.com](http://www.learnaslead.com)

**Nuer Foundation:**

[www.nuerfoundation.org](http://www.nuerfoundation.org)

## ☀ Values

- Sharing
- Cooperation
- Humanism
- Resilience
- Compassion

## ☀ Lessons Learned

**Find strength within yourself and face every challenge you encounter with hope and compassion.** Even the worst tragedies can bring about positive change.

**The power of hope is infinite.** Even at the darkest moments, hope will get you through; you just have to let it.

**Human-centered organizations become more successful organizations.**

**Lara Nuer was 14 years old when her mother, Claire, was diagnosed with cancer and told that she had just three months to live.**

Although Lara had been harboring a great deal of teenage resentment of her mother before this, when she realized she might lose her mother, she immediately became determined to do what she could to save her life. Claire too was determined not to die; she became a whirlwind of powerful, positive, healing energy that served not only to beat her own disease into remission but to serve as a model and an inspiration for many others. Eventually Claire founded an organization aimed at humanizing business and helping people “bring their best selves” to their families, their coworkers, and their world. She lived 17 years after her diagnosis; after she died Lara and her brother took over the reins of the company she had started. Today the leadership training they offer is chosen by many Fortune 500 companies as an effective way to make businesses more humane—and the people who work in them healthier, happier people as well.

## ☀ Language Arts

**What is humanism?** What does it mean to say that a business has a “humanist approach”? Create a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation in which you explain this concept, why it is important, and how it can be applied in business.

**When Lara’s family started their journey toward emotional healing, they began by exploring the idea of always “showing up as your best self.”** How can this principle be applied to motivating people to work toward a more sustainable future? Create a video between 5 and 10 minutes long, in which you discuss concrete ways people can be the best version of themselves, and can help to enact change in their families, communities, societ-

ies, and ultimately, the world.

**Can tragedy help us find purpose? Can loss help us find strength and goodness within ourselves?** How can we use difficult circumstances as a motivator to better ourselves and the world? Using Claire’s example, write a personal essay in which you explore these issues. If you need more information (or inspiration) about Claire, watch this [video](#)<sup>1</sup>. This essay is about your opinion and your experiences (if you choose to share them), so you won’t need to do any research unless you want to. You may use personal experience (your own, or that of a family member or a friend) as your examples, or any person/events you know about from history. Make sure you write what you truly and honestly believe.

## STEM Activities

**This [Forbes article](#)<sup>2</sup> highlights three strategies for building a strong company culture.** Imagine that you work for a large company: describe 3-5 personality traits that you believe are the most important to company culture, and explain how you think these traits could help move the company toward greater sustainability.

**Imagine working as a sustainability advisor at a nonprofit organization, and at a medium-to-large business.** What tactics and strategies would you use to improve the leadership and the organization’s sustainability goals in each of them? How would these strategies help in each environment?

**When Lara was 14 years old, her mom was diagnosed with cancer and was told that she had just 3 months to live.**

Regular checkups and early detection can greatly improve someone’s chance of surviving cancer, but there are many people who skip the tests because they worry about pain or discomfort. Using this [guide](#)<sup>3</sup>, learn about how cancer is detected, and design a way to detect tumors that would be less painful but still reliable. (Note: This [activity](#)<sup>4</sup> is designed for students in an AP or advanced physics course; it will teach the concepts of stress, strain, and Hooke’s law, which students will apply to solve the design challenge.)

**Lara’s mom was told she had only 3 months to live, but she went on to live for 17 more years!** Studies have been done to explore the effect of mood on cancer patients, and see if there is a psychological component to how tumors grow. Find one such study and evaluate the quality of the experiment. How would you design a study to evaluate the connection between mood and cancer growth/survival? Include a research question, test subjects, control group, and methods of data collection. Present your design to the class.

## Sustainability Innovations

**[Learning as Leadership \(LAL\)](#)<sup>5</sup> highlights Lara’s skills as a cultural change leader who helps companies transform their business environments.** LAL focuses on the transformation from an “ego system” to an “ecosystem” that brings out the best in all of a company’s team members.

**In addition to leadership training, cultural and diversity training has become an important way to grow success within a company.** In this [article by CCI Consulting](#)<sup>6</sup>, the strategic advantage of proper diversity and inclusion training is highlighted through case studies that show the positive effects on businesses.

**The Nuer Foundation was founded on Claire’s hard work and dreams for a better future.** [Claire’s Teachings](#)<sup>7</sup> are highlighted in “her story” and through “her voice.” How are the sentiments she expressed even more important today?

**Do sustainability and leadership go hand in hand?** How can we emphasize the importance of both in the success of a company? [Russell Reynolds Associates](#)<sup>8</sup> highlights sustainable leadership and what it can mean to the success of companies.

## Sustainability Career Pathways

**Corporate Leadership Trainer and Coach.** Many businesses are working hard to transform from being Earth-harming to Earth-healing, but they don't know how to go about it. Providing humanistic leadership training and coaching to corporate managers, like Claire and Lara have done, could have profound effects in transforming business culture and thus society. Is this the path for you? As a starting point for this career track, learn more about this model at [Learning as Leadership](#)<sup>9</sup>, or explore the many transformative business schools that offer sustainable business experience, like [Presidio Graduate School](#).<sup>10</sup>

**Environmental Health Advocate or Practitioner.** Many cancers are caused by exposure to toxins in the air, water, soil, or in one's diet (that is, exposure to elements in the environment). Preventing exposure to toxins can play a key role in reducing health burdens. You can become an advocate for [environmental health](#)<sup>11</sup>; or by becoming a doctor, nurse, or medical professional, you can draw attention to the links between environmental and human well-being. [Here is an introduction to the field of environmental health](#)<sup>12</sup>.

**Environmental Historian.** Sometimes the best way to prevent future tragedies is to better understand the past. From the Holocaust to the Dust Bowl, the destruction of the Aral Sea, [the collapse of the Atlantic northwest cod fishery](#)<sup>13</sup>, the end of ancient civilizations; many of the challenges we are facing today are not really new. We can learn much by studying the mistakes made by people throughout history, and choosing to go in a different direction. Want to become an environmental historian? [The American Society for Environmental History](#)<sup>14</sup> is a good place to start. So is this [overview on becoming an Environmental Historian](#)<sup>15</sup>.

- 1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PunXR6kp-OM>
- 2 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nazbeheshti/2018/09/17/3-strategies-to-build-a-strong-company-culture/?sh=34ab87232732>
- 3 [https://www.teachengineering.org/curricularunits/view/van\\_cancer\\_curricularunit](https://www.teachengineering.org/curricularunits/view/van_cancer_curricularunit)
- 4 [https://www.teachengineering.org/curricularunits/view/van\\_cancer\\_curricularunit](https://www.teachengineering.org/curricularunits/view/van_cancer_curricularunit)
- 5 <http://learnaslead.com/>
- 6 <https://www.cciconsulting.com/services/engage-grow/culture-diversity-inclusion/>
- 7 <https://www.nuerfoundation.org/claaires-teachings>
- 8 <https://www.russellreynolds.com/en/insights/articles/sustainability-as-a-leadership-imperative>
- 9 <http://learnaslead.com/>
- 10 <http://presidio.edu/>
- 11 <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/environmental-health>
- 12 <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environmental-health>
- 13 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse\\_of\\_the\\_Atlantic\\_northwest\\_cod\\_fishery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse_of_the_Atlantic_northwest_cod_fishery)
- 14 <https://asch.org/>
- 15 <https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/historian>

