

Section 3: Being a Team Player

So far, I've primarily talked about the technical aspects of the game. I've talked about learning how to play, practicing, making sure you have all the information you need to make critical in-the-moment decisions, but I haven't talked about how to be a good team player. Raiding is a *team game* and so that merits some discussion, I think.

- Reliability

What does "reliability" mean when it comes to a player? It can mean a lot of things, but for the purposes of this guide, I'm going to dig out my Raid Leader hat from the far reaches of my closet, dust it off, put it on and tell you what I feel makes a raider reliable.

- 1) Attendance.** Put simply, a reliable raider who has good attendance is someone who shows up. They're there, come hell or high water. If they're not (and it's okay if they're not there 100% of the time), they're diligent about *telling people* they won't be there. They won't accept the invite on the calendar and then not show. They won't blow off raiding as soon as you're done with normal or heroics. They won't stop showing up even when you're bashing your head against the most difficult boss of the tier. If you want to be a *kick-ass* raider, you want to have the time in your life to dedicate to raiding, so you can regularly and reliably make your raids. That doesn't mean that you're okay with raids going a half-hour over their scheduled end times or anything, but it means that, for the duration of the raid, you are *there* or you have given plenty of notice for your absence.
- 2) Performance.** This is one area where raid leaders can be somewhat misguided in terms of how you're doing, especially if they don't know how to read the logs properly, but as long as you're doing your assigned job *and not dying to things that should not be killing you*, you're already a step ahead of most people. But the truly kick-ass raiders do their assigned jobs *and more*. It's like I said previously: if you can eke out a bit more DPS or a bit more healing while paying close attention to your primary assignment, that doesn't go unnoticed. Similarly, if you cheat your assignments, your raid leader will likely notice and will hate you. Okay, they might not hate you, but they won't be thrilled.

I was once a healing lead for a guild, back in *Wrath of the Lich King* and there was a resto shaman who was, obviously, one of my healers. I gave him the same assignment each and every fight. It didn't matter whether

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we were in Ulduar or Trial of the Grand Crusader, whether we were on Yogg-Saron or Northrend Beasts. I always gave him the assignment to heal the melee (with occasional tank healing). Why did I do this? It's not because he was amazing at it, but it was rather because he wouldn't ever do anything else, even if he was assigned to something else. For a variety of reasons, I couldn't sit him out, so I adjusted the assignments for him. This did not endear me to him. If it had been at all possible in the situation at the time, I would have discussed things with him in depth and tried to get him to use a spell *other* than Chain Heal. However, I couldn't do that, so I just worked around it. To this day, nearly *five years later*, I still remember him as a mediocre resto shaman who never listened to instructions. Had that guild not been in a very bad position (it crumbled not long after I left), I would have looked for other options. He would never have been a healer upon whom I relied during progression.

In short, your performance is noted by your raid leader or role leaders and you can easily give yourself a very good or a very bad name, all depending on how well (or poorly) you perform.

- 3) Attitude.** This is something that everyone talks about – have a good attitude. What constitutes a good attitude? My buddy, Majik, had a really hilarious method of not being hated by others. What was it? To keep quiet, basically. (I mean, he wasn't always *quiet*, but usually kept his mouth shut in controversial/difficult situations.) Why did he do this? He did this because *inevitably*, someone else would say something that was uncalled for or otherwise damning. Thus, by keeping his mouth shut, Majik would let others dig their own graves while he remained fairly neutral. Granted, it also helped that he was genuinely a fun guy with a good sense of humour, but even if you're not as charismatic as Majik was, you can do a lot by curbing your negativity.

I'm not innocent of this. While a guild I was in during *Wrath of the Lich King* was struggling, I was blogging. A lot. Here's an example of what I was saying.

So it stuns me when we're standing there on General Vezax and there's a DK tank, 1-2 DPS warriors, 1 enhance shammy, 2 rogues and a DPS DK standing there and Searing Flames gets off. I mean, really. We even have to have our mage as a backup. Where is the difficulty in watching the cast bar and not using a global immediately before the cast so you CAN interrupt it? It's a two second cast. It's not like it's instant, it's not like it's half a second.

And another example:

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I'm speechless.

We just wasted an hour of raid time by doing Mount Hyjal because the RL had the genius idea to do Archimonde to teach us all a lesson about Yogg-Saron clouds.

I nearly /gquit.

So I'm not innocent at all, but it's still important to maintain a good attitude. In this day and age of social media it is *too easy* to turn to Twitter or Facebook or whatever and blast your raid or raid leader. It's *too easy* to disparage people with whom you're raiding while you're angry or frustrated. I won't tell you *not* to do it, but if you're going to do it, here are some tips:

- a) Make sure it's from a social media account that doesn't mention your guild or your character/realm or anything else that will make it easy to identify you and/or your guild. The goal is to vent, not complain about X player and Y raid leader and how Z guild sucks.
- b) Make sure people from your guild don't know about it! Don't go telling people in your guild that you're on Twitter if you're going to use your Twitter account to bash your guild. That's just in poor taste. And might just get you kicked out of your guild, too.
- c) Subtweeting (and the like) is dumb. Don't do it. Sure, people in general might not know what the deal is, but the people involved in the situation will and will not take kindly to you griping about them in public, even though no names may be used. Saying something semi-cryptic like "well *that* was the dumbest idea I've seen in a while" is not helping things. If you have honest concerns, talk to an officer. Talk to your guild master. If talking to those people about your concerns isn't an option, that is probably not the guild for you.

That said, having a good attitude is easy to convey. It means showing people when you're enthusiastic (although not to the point of being annoying), it means helping out inside and outside of your raids and volunteering to do stuff no one else wants to do (or can do). A prime example of someone with a good attitude is someone who, with no ulterior motive, offers to help a guild master or raid leader out with various tasks, who is generally positive and optimistic and isn't a downer at raids, even when you've wiped all night on farm content. That kind of no-strings-attached help is a godsend and will further reinforce to the leaders of your guild that you have a good, positive attitude.

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4) The Bench. I get it. People raid *in order to raid*. However, on the flip side, raid leaders and guild masters need to hedge their bets and most will over-recruit at least a bit in order to ensure that raids actually happen in all but the worst-case attendance scenarios. I've been in a handful of raiding guilds over the years and always had to start from the bottom (unless, you know, I was actually in charge of the guild) in terms of raid time. I had to prove myself. Without exception, I *always* proved myself and earned my raid spot. As such, I spent remarkably little time on the bench – even when I wanted a night off. Most of the time I spent on standby for various raids happened during the trial period of my time with those guilds. As I met their expectations, they brought me in for more difficult encounters and even progression. However, I did have to sit through four-hour raids on the bench for the entire time, without even a chance of getting in. Want to know how I dealt with it?

I fished. Oh yeah, and cooked.

No, seriously. My first guild, post-Apotheosis in *Wrath of the Lich King*, was on a server that wasn't my "home" server of Eldre'Thalas. My hunter, Kurn, had always been my fishing toon. I spent half of my first trial in years levelling fishing on my paladin because I needed to be able to make my own buff food. Of course, I was in Ventriло and was listening to know if I would be called to join the raid, but I spend several hours *just fishing* while my new guild took down Sartharion with three drakes up.

The key is in multitasking. If you're not allowed to swap characters or move your character away from the raid entrance, read a book, write something, watch TV, do something with your time. Just take the benching and understand that 32-35 people cannot all fit into a 25-man raid (or whatever numbers are relevant to you). A raid leader wants everyone to want to raid, but no raid leader wants someone in their raid who refuses to sit now and again. Sometimes, even if you're an extraordinary player, it's going to happen. You just have to make the best of it. Again, if you have concerns about being sat "too often" or something, talk to your raid leader, your role leader or your guild master. (Tip: it's best not to go in to these conversations guns blazing. Ask politely if there's any reason in particular that you're being sat.)

So wherever possible, if you're sat out of an encounter (or a whole raid), multitask in-game. Do something that will improve your character in some fashion, if you can. If not, research, read, write, do something to pass the time, but be ready to jump in and *prove* that you are someone who should be benched as little as possible. It helps to have great attendance, to be a solid performer and to have a good attitude, too! Make the best of the situation. Not complaining about occasionally

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sitting will make for a happier leadership team and will add to the idea that you are a reliable player, willing to do what's needed for the team. (Just be aware that *everyone* sits sometimes!)

- Helpfulness

Tying in with the above mention of having a good attitude, being a helpful guild member is nothing but good for you and your relationship with your fellow guild members, who are likely your fellow raiders.

Prime amongst the ways you can be helpful is by doing stuff outside of raids with your guild.

Let's take my brother, Fog, as an example. Fog was one of the officers of Apotheosis v2.0 (*Cataclysm*-era) and he played a protection paladin. As we were levelling up to 85 and then gearing ourselves with loot from heroic dungeons, in preparation for the entry-level raids, my brother spent hours every single day tanking dungeons for just about everyone in the guild. In a single evening, the two of us ran something like six heroic dungeons (him tanking, me healing), swapping out all of the DPS for each dungeon, to make sure people were getting smooth dungeon runs, and their much-needed Justice and Valor Points. He did this on his own every day, swapping people in and out, tanking for pretty much everyone. He did it even after he had all the gear he wanted and started taking lesser-gear tanks (and off-spec tanks) along and just threw all the tank gear at them.

My brother was one of the most active, helpful people in Apotheosis in early *Cataclysm* and that's part of why I made him an officer to start with. But he wasn't the only one. We had a lot of people who were extremely helpful in terms of running dungeons to help gear people up, including healers and DPS as well.

Other ways you can be helpful include running old content for achievements (or mounts or pets), farming for the guild bank, organizing PVP-type events (remember, we're talking about within the context of a raiding guild), recruiting or even just offering your services to the guild at large.

Running content, in particular, with your fellow guildies really helps to engender a feeling of trust. As much as we'd yell at each other, Majik and I played *WoW* together for more than six years. To this day, I can still accurately guess which mob he would likely polymorph, when he's liable to death grip something on his death knight tank and all kinds of other things. Doing stuff with your guildies helps you to feel more like a team when you engage raid content and, just as importantly, it helps you to better learn how they play, which translates to a better chance of success in a raid environment.

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Being helpful to the guild will aid you in being viewed more positively (assuming the help is wanted and is useful), but when you're being helpful *and* running content (or PVPing), that's when you and your guildies will learn valuable insight about how the other plays. It's like killing two birds with one stone: you look like a great person for volunteering for stuff and you gain knowledge about your fellow guildies (who gain knowledge about you). It's win-win.

- Criticism vs. Constructive Criticism

The short version is don't be a jerk when you're talking about issues within your raid.

The long version is as follows.

Everyone playing this game makes mistakes. It's just a fact of life. Mistakes are made, interrupts are missed, people stand in fire, people forget to use a healthstone, people die and the whole raid wipes. If there were no possibility of failure, if there were no mistakes, there wouldn't be a sense of accomplishment when you kill something, right? Some of the sweetest victories come after innumerable wipes. Apotheosis killed heroic Magmaw and heroic Atramedes in 12 attempts each, back in *Cataclysm*. That was embarrassingly easy and neither victory was able to be really savoured, at least not by me. But when we killed heroic Warmaster Blackhorn after 130 wipes (most of them within the first two minutes of the pull), *that* was satisfying.

The point here is that there will always be mistakes and people screwing up and the goal you should have is to roll with the punches. As a raider, your job is to do what you're told. But what if you think something isn't working? That's when you want to talk to an officer or the raid leader or even the guild master.

Here's the catch: you don't just want to bash the insane idea you're trying, you want to do so *constructively*. A lot of people will criticize and then not offer alternatives or any helpful advice. That's not conducive to a team atmosphere! Plus, make sure you have proof of whatever you think happened before you go saying anything to anyone.

Bad criticism (not constructive): That last wipe was Majik's fault. He played terribly.

Better criticism (somewhat constructive): That last wipe was Majik's fault. He played terribly. He should probably have been Fire instead of Arcane.

Good criticism (very constructive): Looking at the logs, our AOE was lacking on Hagara's ice tombs. Majik seemed to be casting a lot of arcane explosion, which

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didn't really do a lot of damage. Personally, I think it would be a better idea if he went fire for the heavy AOE it brings with Blast Wave, Dragon's Breath, Living Bomb and maybe a sweet Combustion.

Being very constructive becomes even more important when you're talking publicly about what went wrong on various attempts. I've always liked having a raid review forum so people can talk openly about wipes, particularly during progression, but too often, people don't know how to talk about things without yelling at each other and pointing fingers.

It's important to speak *factually*, which is to say things like this:

Tikari dies to Fading Light:

[23:17:50.956] Unknown killed Tikari with Fading Light
[23:17:51.241] Tikari dies

I die because Sara didn't hit me with Pain Suppression:

[23:18:14.250] Madrana gains Divine Protection from Madrana
[23:18:22.596] Ultraxion Hour of Twilight Madrana 139635 (O: 31365)
[23:18:22.941] Madrana dies

Sturm dies because he didn't even have 100k health:

[23:18:21.255] Sturmx gains Shield Wall from Sturmx
[23:18:22.552] Ultraxion Hour of Twilight Sturmx 88154 (O: 25846)
[23:18:22.961] Sturmx dies

In those examples, I state facts: Tikari died to Fading Light. That's a fact. I died because I didn't get Pain Suppression (which had been previously planned out), which is also a fact. Sturm died due to not being fully topped off, another fact.

I don't say "Man, Tikari was dumb to die to Fading Light" or "FFS, Sara, why didn't you cast PS on me?" or "why in the hell did Sturm not have even 100k health right before he soaked???" Granted, I may have *thought* those things, but I wouldn't say or write them! (No, I'm pretty sure the only one of those things I actually thought was why didn't Sturm have 100k health.)

My point here is that these are all facts, proved by the combat log. When you remove the emotion from the issue, clearer heads tend to prevail. You still get people who get defensive, but if you just state it as fact and then *offer solutions*, people tend to claim responsibility and are much more willing to take the advice given, which is the constructive part of constructive criticism!