

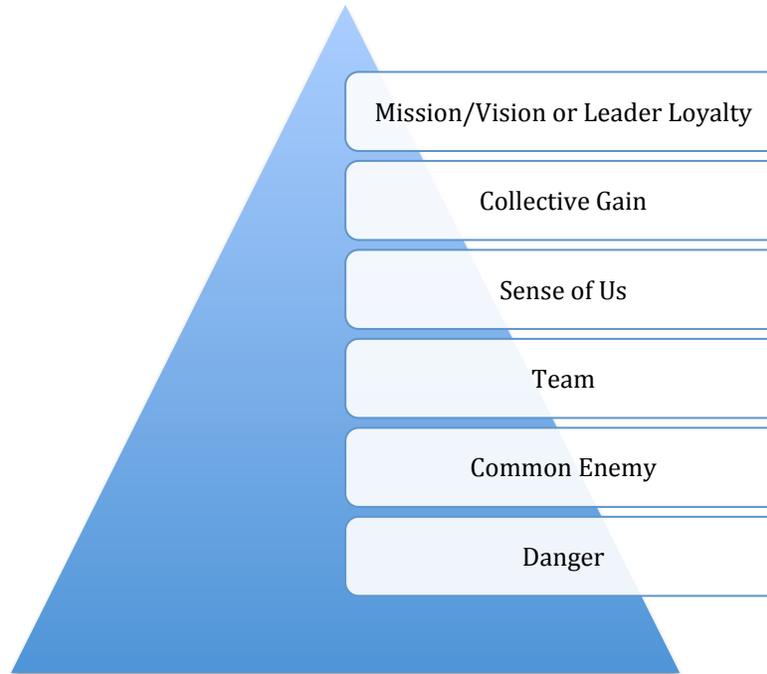
Chapter Seventeen — Using Our Basic Alignment Triggers to Create a Common Agenda for America

Chapter Twelve of this book outlined and explained a set of six alignment triggers can be used in various settings to bring people together to function in groups. That alignment trigger pyramid is shown here, again.

We need to use that set of alignment triggers now — in each of our community settings and as an overall country — to create a future and culture of intergroup Peace for our country.

It is now the right time for us to use every level and each step on this pyramid in the context of our basic instinctive behaviors and in the context of the intergroup realities we face today to help achieve intergroup Peace and intergroup alignment for America.

Intergroup Alignment Motivator Pyramid



Each step on that alignment trigger pyramid needs to be used for us as a nation. Each step also needs to be used in each of our communities to help make the American Dream real for more Americans and to create intergroup Peace for each relevant setting.

We need to look at that set of inclusion triggers and alignment factors as a nation and as local communities to help us all understand now why we need to be aligned at this point in time and to help us understand how we can all help us all create better and more effective levels of alignment for all of the groups and people who make up the rich and diverse fabric of America.

Each step and each trigger factor on that group alignment pyramid is highly relevant to this country today.

Trigger One — Danger

Danger is the first trigger factor on the pyramid. Danger is very real for us today. We are in danger of being deeply damaged as a country.

We have external enemies who want America to fail and who want America to be internally divided.

We also have internal forces that want us to be divided and who clearly want some parts of our country to fail.

We can be deeply damaged internally as a country by the multiple intergroup forces that can cause us to be in conflict with one another rather than being guided in a collaborative way and aligned in a positive way by the positive forces that can bring us together.

We can clearly be divided and damaged in our increasingly diverse local cities and communities.

Our streets, cities, and even our prisons are increasingly divided along basically tribal lines. Many of our major cities are increasingly divided by race and by ethnicity.

As this book pointed out earlier, every major city now has significant areas where the residents of the neighborhoods are overwhelmingly from specific ethnic groups.

That division into ethnic and racial neighborhoods can make some local areas safe for some people and it can make some local areas very unsafe and dangerous for other people.

There are now major gangs that dominate some of our neighborhoods. Those gangs far too often exemplify the most destructive manifestations of our us/them packages of negative instinctive intergroup behaviors.

A number of our cities are dividing, rather than uniting. We need to reverse that trend. We need to bring people together in all settings in the context of a common cause and a shared set of beliefs.

We need to have people in all of our settings functioning in the context of creating “common good” success levels and we need people in all settings building inclusive cultural belief sets for all neighborhoods and all groups.

The intergroup stress levels that exist in far too many places today can cause riots in many settings to be triggered relatively quickly based on sometimes relatively incidental issues. The levels of dangerous tensions and

stress points between some of our groups are increasing in many settings, and those building stress levels create their own level of danger in those settings.

When the recent “Stand Your Ground” court case happened, people were surveyed after the trial to ask if the decision by the jury to acquit the shooter had been the right decision. In some cities, people literally took to the streets in protest about immediately after the verdict was announced.

A Washington Post survey said that 51 percent of White Americans — a slight majority — agreed with the acquittal verdict. By contrast, 86 percent of African Americans who were surveyed after that trial said the jury had clearly done the wrong thing.

The underlying belief for that specific set of surveyed people was that both the shooting and the jury verdict had both very clearly been racially impacted.

There have been a number of other surveys where the opinions on important issues have also been very divided based on the race and ethnicity of the people being surveyed.

One survey, conducted roughly a decade ago, showed that over half of the African Americans in the survey believed that HIV was a genetically

engineered disease that was deliberately created and intended to kill primarily Black people. Over half of the Black people who were surveyed at that time believed that to be true.

At that same point in time, almost no White people who were surveyed had that same belief or had even heard the theory.

We have had a series of very serious intergroup explosions in a number of communities that have had trigger events involving unarmed Black men — often Black youths — who were shot and killed by policemen who were not Black.

We have had major protests in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, in New York City, in Detroit, Michigan, and in a number of other settings.

A movement called “Black Lives Matter” has organized various levels of protests and demonstrations in multiple settings, and significant numbers of people have participated in those events.

Those protests attract participants because people believe that the issues that divide us in those communities and that those areas of concern are real and relevant.

We have very different senses and awareness levels for the various ethnic and racial groups about where this country is today on multiple issues

of race and ethnicity. We all need to understand how significant those awareness differences are so that we can create a collective and shared approach to resolve a whole range of key issues going forward.

The long and consistent history of clearly intentional and significant discriminatory behaviors toward the minority populations of this country that was described earlier in this book have created a belief system context for many Minority Americans that make those very different beliefs and perspectives about many key intergroup points a reality.

There have been a number of studies about issues like traffic arrests that have shown extremely discriminatory behavior. In one stretch of highway, 70 percent of the drivers arrested by the police were Black, while Black drivers made up less than 20 percent of the people who were driving that stretch of road.

The book *Three Key Years* shows a number of those examples of clearly discriminatory behavior. That behavior is, of course, invisible to White drivers who are not being arrested and highly visible to all of the Hispanic and Black drivers who are being arrested at disproportionate levels.

Hispanic Americans are three times more likely to be arrested and African Americans are six times more likely to be arrested. Those numbers

and proportions are widely known to minority Americans and completely invisible to White Americans.

Tuskegee Studied Syphilis Patients And Allowed People To Die

Those kinds of current examples of clearly discriminatory behavior are reinforced by historical events — like the famous and infamous Tuskegee Medical experiment — where hundreds of black syphilis patients were allowed to die with their disease untreated so that White scientists in that setting could simply watch and record the natural and unhindered progression of that disease until it created death in those patients.

That particular set of historic proof points for clearly racist behavior in the caregiving world provides a historical reinforcement to the people who currently have significant concerns that very high levels of us/them behavior might be somehow embedded in our care delivery system and in our care approaches.

The book *Ending Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Disparities in American Health Care* deals very directly with some of those issues.

It is important to understand the perceived context for each group.

That particular Tuskegee syphilis study only happened once. So White Americans who hear or need about that study might cite that fact that it was

a solo study and also might argue that the experiment itself, was an ugly and evil — but it was a completely isolated — anomaly.

In the context of the paradigm that exists on those kinds of discrimination issues for many White people, the clear fact and the historical data point that is relevant to their beliefs was that the specific syphilis study that was done in that time and in that place functionally was an anomaly — an outlier piece of data about an un-normal event that could be ignored.

Black Americans, looking at that same data point about those specific Tuskegee researchers, could argue that the care given there was not an anomaly, and that specific horrible and horrific study is just another clear piece of evidence for an overarching pattern of negative and discriminatory behavior toward Black people by the health care infrastructure of this country.

Both conclusions would be right. That syphilis research experiment was an anomaly. It was, in fact, an isolated study. There is no other comparable syphilis study. It only happened once.

Treating Black patients differently was also a behavior, however, that was clearly in alignment with an overarching us/them instinct-driven behavior pattern that has resulted for a very long time at multiple additional

levels of care in this country for many Americans based on their race and ethnicity.

Even today, the evidence for medical care disparities in the U.S. is overwhelming. The Institute of Medicine wrote a very powerful report on care disparities in America back in 2003 that pointed out problems for care delivery in our country that we all need to understand.

Care differences and care outcome differences clearly do exist in this country between groups of patients based on the race and the ethnicity of the patients.

Bias, Behavior, And Biology Trigger Disparities

The book, *Ending Racial, Ethnic and Cultural Health Care Disparities in America*, points out that each of those very real and significant differences in care generally have at least one of three basic causes — bias, behavior, or biology.

The *Disparities* book points out that there are biological differences that can cause different risk levels for some diseases by race and ethnicity. That book also points out that behavior differences — particularly behaviors relative to activity levels and to unhealthy eating practices — can also be situationally linked to culture, race, and ethnicity.

That particular book also looks at the role pure Bias plays in a wide range of our current care disparities.

Bias is obviously a key differentiating factor for some care in this country. Some care is clearly biased... and that bias can create its own set of both care process and care outcome disparities.

That disparities book points out that some of the major care delivery differences — differences in care delivery that happen even today between groups of patients when the caregivers for the patients have consistent access to information about modern medical science — can be attributed only to racial or ethnic bias.

Bias Can Be Conscious or Unconscious

That bias by the caregivers in various settings can be conscious or it can be unconscious. But when African American males in some studies were half as likely to get the right treatment after a heart attack — and when minority kids with autism were half as likely to get referrals to the right specialty care even when the minority children were in the same exact care setting and were being treated for that disease by the same primary care doctors — then we clearly have bias in play.

When we see the role that bias plays in care differences, then we can understand more easily why many minority Americans might very reasonably interpret the Tuskegee horror story to be a pattern-confirming and bias affirming data point, instead of having that study seen as an isolated and sad care-delivery anomaly that can be ignored and forgotten.

Those particular issues are mentioned in this book in the context of the dangers we face today as a country, because the cumulative impact of all of those facts and the cumulative impact of all of those discriminatory circumstances puts us at real risk.

All of those patterns of intergroup behaviors create a dangerous set of emotions and beliefs. They all make it more difficult for us at this point in time to create the levels of intergroup trust we need to create if we want to put this country on a long-range path to intergroup Peace.

That underlying anger that exists today for many people, and the significant level of intergroup distrust that is felt today by too many people is a real danger for us all. The danger is real.

So when we look at the alignment trigger pyramid that is shown above, we clearly collectively face danger as a country and we face danger

in many of our communities relative to those kinds of issues at this point in time.

We should understand that danger. We should point out that danger to all of us as a way of getting people to align in the interest of win/win outcomes, and to align in favor of a collective agenda of mission-focused Peace.

Trigger Two — Common Enemies Also Clearly Exist

The next step that brings people together on that alignment trigger pyramid is to have common enemies. That is also a very effective alignment factor.

That common enemy factor is also clearly relevant to us all today.

We very clearly do have common enemies to deal with who also should cause us to align in the interest of Peace. There are very real people in the world around us who hate America.

There are also very real people within America who are racist and sexist; who do not want us to build an inclusive agenda where all groups and all genders can be equally successful and can collectively thrive.

There are also people within various groups in this country who gain both personal power and individual psychological satisfaction from inciting conflict and from increasing anger and intergroup division.

Those people who deliberately and intentionally work to divide us constitute a common enemy to us all as well. Those people are embedded in our country at multiple levels — and their impact can be felt in a negative and threatening way in multiple settings.

We have people who want other groups in America to be in a state of conflict. We have other people who are aligned with other causes and other belief systems who are being called on by the leaders of their belief systems to do damage of various kinds in our country.

Terrorists exist — and terrorist attacks do happen. The Boston Marathon Bombing was a clear example of that behavior, with people living here who see America to be an evil “Them” and who, therefore, act in the damaging ways that people behave toward “Them.”

We can expect that people with those beliefs will do things to damage the people they perceive to be “Them.”

We all need to be clear in our shared understanding of the fact that those very specific enemies to Peace in our settings do exist. Their existence should help align us to function as an “us.”

We need to be clear about the fact that we will need to collectively resist their attempts to damage us and to keep us from achieving intergroup Peace, or those enemies may actually divide us or damage us at multiple levels.

Common enemies do exist and their threat is immediate, constant, and real.

Trigger Three — Team Alignments Are Needed

Step three on the alignment pyramid is Team instincts.

When we function as teams, we can overlook and set aside other aspects of being divided in favor of achieving team objectives and goals.

This is very clearly a good time for us to activate several sets of our team-based instincts and behaviors. Functioning as teams in a number of areas can bring us together as well-structured and well-targeted teams to help us achieve some of the needed goals that we all should resolve together — as a team.

We need teams of people now in our various settings to do important things that we all collectively recognize need to be done.

We need to carefully tee up key sets of team goals and then we need to set up teams in our various communities and settings to do that work.

We Need Some Very Real Team Goals

Focusing on some very important and significant collective goals is a major first step in that team instinct activation process... because those goals can help us overcome and ignore our intergroup differences in the interest of achieving team success relative to those goals.

To make that process work well, we need national and local agendas that are targeted at accomplishing mutually beneficial goals. Then we need community based team behaviors activated in those settings to help us collectively and collaboratively achieve those goals.

Working together as teams to achieve those goals can be part of the curative strategy and part of the connective process, as well as giving us the benefits and positive results that we will receive when our teams actually achieve the beneficial goals we set for them.

Better Community Healthy Is A Good Team Goal

Health is an important area whose team successes are possible, and where needed results can be collectively achieved. We should be collectively committed to better health.

Our health today is not good. We are facing a growing burden from a number of significant and damaging chronic diseases.

Those diseases can, for the most part, be prevented or avoided. We can help each other achieve those goals. We can take steps to help each of us improve our own health, and we can and should take basic steps that are needed for us to achieve community health.

We can use teams in each setting to make sure that our cities, communities, schools, and work places all have areas where activity levels are safe for people and where on-going activity levels for people can be supported over time.

Activity is a good area for our collective focus.

The science of activity is improving almost daily.

We now know that activity levels are biologically extremely important to us all. We also know that activity levels are clearly economically important to us as a country.

We Need To Be A Culture Of Healthy Eating And Active

Living

Roughly 75 percent of the health care costs in this country come from people with chronic conditions. Our minority populations face a significantly high and very disproportionate financial and disease burden from those particular diseases, but all Americans suffer from the health burden and from the cost burden of those chronic conditions.

The science relative to those growing chronic health issues is increasingly clear. Behaviors are key.

Those chronic conditions that damage us so broadly are basically biologically caused for each of us by our own individual behaviors. Those chronic conditions can only be addressed effectively by a process of behavior change in key areas of our lives.

We need to help each other with the behavior changes that will facilitate better health for each of us and all of us.

Biological Victories And Functionality Miracles

Our full package of very expensive and highly debilitating chronic conditions is actually caused primarily by two damaging behaviors — (1) unhealthy eating and (2) personal inactivity.

We need to become a nation with a culture of healthy eating and we need to become a culture of active living in order to make us both happier and healthier as individuals and as groups of people.

We need to collectively understand why individual and team behavior in those areas is so valuable to us all.

The basic health benefits that we can receive by simply walking can create biological victories and functionality miracles that we all need to understand so that we can mutually support that walking agenda and that walking support strategy. We need to build and sustain collaborative community efforts that facilitate those specific behaviors.

Walking, alone, has the ability to trigger major levels of improved population health. Science has now discovered and shown that the human body needs to walk to be healthy.

Walking is key to health. Walking improves our body function, increases the flow of various needed body fluids, and improves our neurological functioning.

The health benefits of walking are good enough to be considered biological victories and medical miracles.

Walking Can Create Its Own Miracles

People who walk 30 minutes a day five or more days per week are half as likely to become diabetic. That has both medical and economic impact.

Diabetes is the fastest growing disease in America. Cutting the number of diabetics by half would be a huge victory for public health in America and would cut Medicare costs significantly. That major reduction in the burden of diabetes could be done, with walking as the main prevention tool.

Minority Americans are significantly more likely to be diabetic. Cutting the number of diabetics in our minority populations could help reduce some of the current very serious levels of disparity in American care and in care outcomes for our minority populations.

People who walk that same 30 minutes a day that reduces diabetes by half are also 40 percent less likely to have a stroke or a heart attack.

Those same people who walk are almost 40 percent less likely to have prostate cancer, colon cancer, or breast cancer. Cancer rates are much lower for walkers and cancer cure rates are higher for walkers.

People who walk 30 minutes a day five days a week also have faster improvement rates from depression treatment — with walking doubling the effectiveness of some anti-depressant drugs.

People whose DNA puts them at high risk of Alzheimer's generally have a major plaque build up that happens in their brains each year. The buildup is highest when the people who are at high risk are inactive.

That plaque build up cuts in half for people who have mild activity levels and the build up generally disappears entirely for those high risk people when they walk that same 30 minutes a day that cuts the risk of diabetes in half.

Biological science has shown us very clearly that the human body needs to walk to be healthy.

That particular piece of biological science and that health information is included in a book about instinctive behaviors and intergroup conflict because we will have less intergroup conflict if we work together to improve our collective health.

Walking Is Very Local — So We Need Local Solutions

Walking is the best opportunity we have to do team based things in every setting and in every community to increase our ability to safely and consistently walk.

Walking is very local. We need local support for walking and we need all groups of Americans in all communities to support an agenda that creates a culture of people in each setting who walk.

We need teams of people to support walking in each community — teams that extend to the leadership of all groups in each setting — to figure out safe and convenient ways for people in each community and setting to walk.

We need to set a collective goal of all groups of people in this country being healthier — and we know that walking can help hugely to achieve those goals for our communities.

Our Food Intake Is Killing Us

We also need teams of people in each setting who are working on issues of healthy eating for each setting. Our food intake is also killing us. Obesity is becoming its own epidemic. We need to avoid intake of the unhealthy fats and sugars and we need more fish, fruit, and vegetables in our diet in order to control our weight and be healthy.

People from all groups in each community should create team efforts to set up better local food supplies and to encourage healthy eating by the members of all groups.

Again, cooperative and collaborative team-linked efforts are possible and desirable.

Food distribution sites and activity levels are both very local issues. Local issues lend themselves to local solutions and collective and collaborative local solutions can help people from all groups work together for a common cause in ways that can increase intergroup understanding and expand intergroup trust.

Children's Brains Need Significant Support From Birth To

Age Three

Probably the most important and the highest value outcome with the greatest overall positive result for people that is possible to achieve with collective and collaborative effort for this country — an activity and a life improvement strategy that can significantly help people from every ethnic and racial group in this country — is the issue of neuron development and connectivity for our very youngest children.

We need better neuron development and connectivity for all of our children in their first months and years of life. We should make helping every child in those months and years a collective priority for America.

In the first three years of life, when the most important levels of brain development occur for each child, the children whose brains are exercised develop stronger brains than the children whose brains are not exercised.

Brain exercise builds strong brains. That is a biological reality that is true for every child.

The children whose brains are exercised in those first months and years are better readers, less likely to drop out of school, and even significantly less likely to go to jail.

Neuron development for very young children might not seem like a logical topic to be included in a book about instinctive intergroup behaviors in America and achieving Intergroup Peace in America until we look at the science relevant to that issue and recognize how crucially important that topic is to the future success of many millions of Americans who are now facing lifetimes of failure because those specific development issues were not addressed for them at the crucial early development stage of their lives.

The books *Three Key Years* and *Three Essential Years* both describe that biological process and point how important it is for us to exercise each child's brain in those first months and years of life.

It is a pure and undisputed biological fact that our children from birth to roughly age three go through a very intense and a very high opportunity time when each of their brains is creating its own internal neuron connections. Billions of brain connections happen for each child in those early years.

If our children receive the right levels of stimulation and brain exercise from their family and from their surroundings in that very brief and very early time frame — if their baby brains are directly exercised in the right ways in that high opportunity time frame — the many billions of very functionally important neuron connections happen for those children.

Having those rich and robust layers of neuron connections can give each child much better brain functioning and it can even cause the exercised brains to physically grow.

Read, Talk, Sing, And Interact

Brain exercise can be easy to do.

Reading to your child, talking to your child, and singing to your child can all exercise a baby's brain.

Read, talk, sing.

The steps that are needed to directly exercise baby brains are clear. The lifelong negative impact that happens for the children who don't get that kind of read/talk/sing exercise in those first three years of their life is also very clear.

The key fact for all of us to understand is this — if that brief and very early opportunity to build those rich neuron connections is missed, it never comes again for each child.

The impact differences between brain exercises for those very young children and not exercising the brain of those children are so large for our children that they are hard to believe.

When those neuron connections do happen, the children whose brains are stimulated have many more internal connections. Those children have much larger vocabularies when they enter kindergarten. Those children have significantly better reading skills in their early school grades.

The children who have lower reading skills in the third grade are 40 percent more likely to become pregnant during their school years. Those children are 60 percent more likely to drop out of school.

A majority of the children who drop out of school in this country come from that lower reading skill group.

They are also 70 percent more likely to end up going to jail. Prison is a very high percentage pathway for the children who have low development levels at that early age.

People Who Read Poorly Are Much More Likely To Go To

Jail

We have more people in jail than any country in the world. We have two and three times as many people in jail as any European country. Nearly 70 percent of the people we send to jail from all groups of people either read poorly or can't read at all.

One consequence of that reality is that the people in our prisons who have major reading deficiencies have a very hard time finding good jobs when they are released from jail.

More than 80 percent of the children in our juvenile justice system read poorly or do not read at all.

High school dropouts of all races and ethnic groups have a much higher level of being incarcerated.

We Need To Help Children In The First Three Years

The time to stop channeling children into that particular pathway to prison is the years zero to three.

The biological science is irrefutable. The most extensive neuron connectivity happens for all babies in those first three years.

We need to help all babies from all racial and ethnic groups receive the support they need in those first months and years to have better lives and to avoid those negative consequences.

That doesn't mean that we should give up on children after that age or that we should not focus on improving both our kindergartens and our schools. We need all of those educational settings to be strong and effective.

We did need to improve our available pre-kindergarten services — so that the children whose brains do get that early exercise can get maximum benefit from their pre-kindergarten years.

It Is Much Harder To Catch Up Later

After age five — even with special education efforts and with serious and focused educational interventions — less than 10 percent of those low scoring children ever catch up even to average performance levels.

Heroic work that is done by our grade schools and by our high schools for those children can only have a partial impact on the percentage of those low scoring children at that early age who end up dropping out of school or who end up going to jail.

We could cut the number of children going to jail by half or more if we could put in place the basic support systems that are needed to help all of our children — from every group — get the right support in those early years.

Our society, overall, would clearly benefit from having fewer people going to jail.

We have highly disproportionate numbers of our minority Americans in our jails. We need to break that cycle — and we need to reduce the risk of children going to jail by doing what needs to be done for all children in those early years when brain exercise creates strong brains.

We need to be sure that each and every child — from every race, ethnic group, and economic level — gets the right level of brain exercise in those first months and years of life.

Every child we save is a child we save. We need to do team-based things to be sure that we save every child.

Families will need to be a key part of the brain exercise reality for our children. Most parents do not know that brain development science now.

We need every single parent to know that science and that reality.

We clearly need all of the mothers and fathers in this country to each know that neuron connectivity opportunity in those early years is a biological and functional fact and to know that brain connectivity needs to be supported and enhanced for each child by exercising each child's brain in order to give each child the best choice of success in life.

If mothers, fathers, and family members all know that set of facts to be true, then adults of all economic levels and all job statuses can either directly provide that stimulation to each child or they can look to find support that can help their children with that set of processes.

The key is to make the interaction happen for each child and to make it happen in those early months and years when that interaction changes the entire trajectory of each child's life.

We Need Our Communities To Help Us Achieve Those Goals

A key level of resources that is needed to support this work for each child has to be the community. Team efforts can be very relevant to that community support process.

We need various kinds of community resources and we need community-based teams of people to help with this work.

Volunteers can make a major difference. Trained staff in each of the daycare settings could be a major supportive resource for those very youngest children.

Religious organizations can also each figure out ways of helping both their own children and helping the other children in each community with those essential and life changing neuron stimulation processes.

Educational institutions can also help in many ways — by educating parents and the community as well as by providing focused resources where possible directly to each of the children.

This is clearly a very important area where local people can function in both larger or smaller teams to work across group lines to make America the country where all children get the neuron connectivity and brain exercise support that is needed by each child to be “above average.”

Changing Life Trajectories Can Be A Labor Of Love

We also need to look in each community to find other things we can do as local teams to make life better for all of us. We need to make team behaviors relevant for our alignment strategy in each setting and as a country.

We need team behaviors at multiple levels to help us create an American culture of us. Those collective activities aimed at ending chronic diseases and at improving neuron connectivity and improving learning abilities for children could be a great focus for collective team efforts and team energies.

Trigger Four — A Collective Sense of Us

We also need to very consciously create a collective sense of us. The fourth tier on the alignment pyramid calls for creating a sense of us as a tool for bringing various sets of people into a sense of alignment.

The strategy of creating a collective sense of “us” is very basic and fundamental.

If we create an American sense of “us,” and if we create a local sense of us in each community and setting, then the natural instinctive benefits that typically flow from us to us when those instincts are triggered will spread widely to all of the people who are included in the context of that deliberately expanded us.

It is good to be “us.”

We like us. We trust us. We hold our ethical standards intact and we do things in ethical ways when we deal with us. People may lie to whoever is perceived in any setting to be them, but we feel instinctively bound in each setting to tell the truth to us.

We want us to win. We want them to lose. We each want our own “us” — our team — to triumph when triumph is a possible outcome.

We need to build on that desire for each of us to win by creating win/win outcomes where all parties win on key issues important to each group. We very much need to have a sense that there is an American “us” and we need to all want that American “us” to win.

So, we need to build an American us that we all want to collectively win.

On 9/11, We Had A Clear Sense Of Us

As noted earlier several time in this book, we each have the ability to personally relate to multiple definitions of us. We can be an ethnic us, a family us, a cultural us, a professional us, a religious us, a community us, and a national us.

When the terrorists flew their hijacked airliners into the World Trade Center on 9/11, we Americans suddenly had a very clear national sense of ourselves as a collective us. That sense was real and it was very powerful.

We no longer have that clear sense of us — and we should now take steps to recapture major portions of that collective identity.

That “us” on 9/11 was based on our belief systems — not on our race or our ethnicity or our gender. It was an “us” that was based on what we believed in as a nation at our very best levels of our shared idealism.

We need now to explicitly articulate those shared beliefs. We need to recapture that clear sense of us so we can give America the best chance of succeeding and surviving as a nation today and tomorrow.

We can do that if we focus our new definition of us on being the collective believers in a particular vision. We can be a people with a shared belief system that embodies our best and most enlightened values and aspirations.

The last chapter of this book deals with those issues and those specific values more directly.

At this point, in relation to the alignment trigger pyramid strategy, it is sufficient to say that a key part of our strategy as a nation and as a people needs to be to create a powerful, persuasive and cohesive collective sense of us.

Trigger Five — Mutual Gain

The fifth level on the alignment pyramid that was outlined in Chapter Twelve explains that people will come together in aligned ways if they believe coming together will help those people to achieve a collective and mutual gain.

Gain brings people together. People will come together and people will be aligned if there is a clear sense that the coming together process and coming together efforts will result in collective gain and in real mutual and material benefit.

Collective gain can be a very good motivator that can be used in several ways to help us be internally aligned in various settings and to come together as a country.

Workplaces invoke that particular collective gain alignment motivator with some regularity. Many of the very best leaders of businesses invoke a sense of us, build a corporate culture that reinforces the business goals of the organization, set up team agendas for performance areas where teams are useful and relevant, and then those leaders often create the expectation and the reality that if the business does well, the people in that business who are core to the business will also do well as well.

Bonus programs are obviously tied to that specific mutual gain alignment factor. So are stock sharing programs and stock options. Job security is also a type of collective gain.

Collective gain and individual gain both work well as motivators for many people.

For the country — looking at collective gain as a collective motivator — we need to collectively understand that if we do well as a very diverse country in continuing to be an economic leader for the world, then we will

all collectively benefit as a country from our overall National economic strength and success.

We are better off as individuals and we are better off as a country in many ways because of our collective strength and because of our national economic successes.

It is not good for a country or a region to have a weak economy.

Nations with weak economies generally end up with many people who do not do well personally relative to their own individual economic status. Unemployment can create major problems for people.

Weak economies tend to abandon their less fortunate individual members. We need to work for a strong economy to avoid the negative consequences that would result from of a weak economy.

We All Do Well When We All Do Well

Our own collective economic success can easily be imperiled if we allow our growing diversity to weaken us.

Our collective economic success can be imperiled if we fill our prisons and empty our schools and if we end up with intergroup conflicts in multiple settings that weaken each of those settings.

Our economic situation can be strengthened, however, if we build on our past strengths to create even higher levels of creativity, innovation, and achievement for a growing number of Americans as the results of our next generation of American improvement processes.

Economic gain is a very legitimate collective goal and alignment trigger. We need to be sure that our economic gain benefits all of us who are part of the collective American Us.

We need leaders who understand the value and the necessity of shared benefit when we do well as a nation.

We need growing success for groups of people to be part of the American reality. We need to be a nation where people who work hard can do well.

We also need to be a nation where the people who need our collective help can receive that support with a sense of security that our safety net will be there when people need that net. Having a “net” in place is clearly an “us” behavior that is a collective gain on its own merit. Eliminating the net in any setting tells people in that setting that they are considered by the people who made the decision to eliminate the net to be a “Them,” and not part of the collective “us.”

We obviously do need to get our overall health care agenda as a country straightened out so people who do need care in this country can get that care.

Various paths can lead to that outcome. We need to make sure that we succeed on at least one of those paths in order to keep us all on board with our collective agenda of win/win outcomes for everyone on key issues.

Healthcare Will Not Reform Itself and Don't Let Health Care Bankrupt America both have some very direct points to make about those specific healthcare access and health care affordability opportunities, problems, strategies, and issues.

Overall, it is a good thing to create a clear sense of shared benefit on key issues by people as we move toward building a shared sense of “Us.”

Trigger Six — Shared Vision and Common Mission

The final and highest step on the alignment trigger pyramid that is outlined in Chapter Twelve of this book is mission/vision or loyalty to a leader.

We are not a country that builds its sense of alignment out of loyalty to a leader. Some countries follow that model. We take some pride in

respecting our leaders, but not making leader loyalty a key driver for our behaviors.

In fact, we have term limits for our most senior leader. It makes a very powerful statement about our commitment to being mission based and not leader based that we only allowed our presidents to have two terms in office.

Our most recent presidents have not been entirely happy with that limitation, but it clearly tells the world that the top loyalty factor for us as a people is not to a supreme leader of any kind.

We tend to think of ourselves as a people united by our beliefs and not by allegiance to any person. That is, in fact, the alignment trigger we use today.

We believe that our highest level of alignment should be based on a combination of loyalty to our country and commitment to our country's ideals.

We practice enlightened patriotism — and that approach has been a very powerful alignment strategy since our country began.

That approach allows us to very easily accommodate our wonderful diversity as a nation.

The diversity that exists in our country at very basic levels can be turned into collective synergy and into shared alignment for diverse sets of people in very productive and creative ways when the diverse sets of people all come together based on having shared values, shared beliefs, a sense of shared and aligned belief-based missions, and a common set of belief-based collective objectives.

Believing in a common collective mission can create high levels of positive interpersonal interaction. That shared belief can also generate basic collective loyalty both to the mission and to the other people who believe in that same mission.

The final chapter of this book focuses on what we need to do to create a level of mission alignment for America that builds on our diversity and on our shared sense of who we are, and then aligns us all with a common and explicit set of shared values and a shared and clear sense of who we want to be as Americans.

That shared mission and those very explicit shared values — combined with a clear sense of our risks and an understanding of our shared danger, our common enemies, our team alignments, our overarching, values-based sense of us, and a sense that we can all collectively do well and

prosper as an American Us — can all work together as a package to help us be a success as a people and as a nation.

We Need to Activate All Six Alignment Triggers

The six alignment triggers that were outlined in Chapter Twelve and that were just used as strategic alignment motivation tools in this chapter can each work on their own as stand-alone motivators. They can work even more effectively when they are used simultaneously and when they are aligned with each other in the right sets of supportive ways.

At this stage of the game — at this point in our history — we need to set up our own mission and our own vision so clearly that our sense of shared values motivates and guides us all — and we then need to do the things we need to do to make that vision real.

The next chapter describes a set of beliefs we can all use to collectively aspire to and achieve those goals.

Those goals are not an automatic and easy set of things to do.

But all of the positive things that are described in the final chapter can be done and each of the goals that are described in the chapter can also be done and we will all be better off when we do them.