

Chapter Fifteen — We Need Win/Win Outcomes For All

Groups

We need to collectively make a commitment to have all groups in America prosper and thrive. We all need to be helping one another if we want to achieve true intergroup Peace in America.

As *The Art of Intergroup Peace* points out, this is the time for us all to be collectively committed to a win/win set of intergroup outcomes and to win/win interactions for all groups of Americans. We all need to want each other to do well and to prosper as part of the American Dream.

Having all children with strong and well-exercised brains is clearly a win/win strategy and outcome for every group. Having good schools for all Americans and having good health for all Americans should be included in our shared goals for one another.

We clearly need to not have any sets of goals, aspirations, or behaviors that involve losses, set backs, or disadvantages for people from other group who are part of our American “Us.”

Too often our intergroup interactions in the past have been based on win/lose thinking — with each group trying to succeed at the expense of the other group.

Many people feel great comfort thinking in terms of win/lose outcomes — because that is the approach we usually use.

Sadly, too many people in too many settings are even comfortable intentionally and deliberately aiming for lose/lose outcomes — trying to achieve outcomes where all parties in the setting are damaged.

That is a sad set of outcomes and strategies, but the truth is that some people hate the other party in a setting so much that they would rather lose at some level themselves rather than have the other party win at any level.

That was a set of strategies I did not expect to discover or uncover when I began to study intergroup interactions. Unfortunately, once I realized that lose/lose strategies do exist, I began to see them in both intergroup situations and in a number of political settings.

In deliberate lose/lose settings, the people involved in various intergroup interactions hate the other group so much that they develop and use very intentional lose/lose strategies — with people willing to take a loss themselves and to suffer damage for themselves or for their own group if they can do more damage to the other group in the process.

Lose/Lose Strategies Can Be Damaging

Lose/lose can be an extremely damaging set of strategies. People strapping a bomb to their own body and being willing to die so that they can kill more people from the other group is a lose/lose thought process.

In other less violent settings and situations, people are willing to take economic setbacks or to suffer some kinds of functional hits in various ways if the other party in that setting who they hate deeply suffers more.

In the very worst cases, people who hate deeply are willing to take on large damage levels themselves and are willing to absorb real and significant damage to their own group just to do even a low level of damage to the group they really hate.

That seems hard to believe and strategically improbable, but the world around us shows too many settings where that level of lose/lose category of thinking is happening and affecting behaviors and thought processes. That approach is extremely dysfunctional and extremely unhealthy for all parties and it has a growing number of advocates in too many settings.

Some Politicians Use Lose/Lose Strategies

We sometimes see versions of that thinking in our political arenas, where people hold political beliefs that function like us/them value systems

— with the other party in that political context and setting perceived to be evil rather than just being either politically incorrect or politically wrong.

When politicians find themselves in that kind of demonization-centered, lose/lose, us/them instinct-sculpted thought process, it can feel right at a very visceral level to do damage in any way possible to whoever is perceived to be the other side.

The other side, in our worst-case us/them political situations, is literally demonized. Demonized, denigrated, and dehumanized — with rhetoric in those situations based on calling the political opponents in that setting evil instead of simply calling them wrong.

Ethics are too often suspended by politicians when political settings activate us/them instincts to that extreme degree. Some politicians will deliberately say things that are not true and will feel justified at a deep instinctive level in saying those untrue things because they believe their evil “Them” will be damaged by those specific untruths and they believe that any act that damages “them” is a legitimate thing to do.

The ends do seem to justify the means for politicians who have their own most primal us/them sets of instincts activated to the highest degree.

The Art of War sometimes becomes the template for political intergroup interactions in an ethics-free political context. *The Art of War* guidance from Sun Tzu says that deceit is an ethical, appropriate, and highly even desirable tool of war when survival or victory is at stake for your side in a conflict.

Unfortunately, too many people in political situations feel that same highly situational Sun Tzu ethical standard is legitimate for political survival as well as for wartime survival and those people who share that belief are too often willing to spin, distort, and deceive people without guilt in the interest of their political goals.

In some cases, the people who are saying deliberately untrue things for political advantage have so much hatred toward the other group that the ethics of their behaviors are both invisible and irrelevant to them. They are swept up in the heat of combat against “evil” and feel that defeating evil justifies any behavior.

Hating Other People In Political Settings Is A Very Primal Behavior

It took me several years to realize that the energies and thought processes for some people in political positions function as though politics is

an amoral game of some kind with fierce competitors who feel very right doing both heroic and evil things to win the game.

The approach used in that political mindset for thinking about other people is very primal. It has people who trigger us/them instincts in a political context perceiving the other side in a political process to be a worst category of “them” — perceived to be evil at the core in ways that justifying the most unethical behaviors to ensure the other sides defeat.

People who ordinarily are ethical people often tell outright lies and will feel justified in their falsehoods if they do damage to their “Them” in that situation and setting by telling the lie.

We can tell that those us/them instincts are triggered at primal instinct-linked survival levels when people in political settings clearly communicate that they hate and oppose one another at a core and primal level instead of just communicating to us that they oppose one another at a political level.

Hatred at a visceral level is obviously not the kind of political interchange or context that will give us the best political outcomes as a country for most of our relevant issues.

We need to avoid leaders who lead from visceral hatred instead of leading from the perspective of helping people in any setting come to win/win solutions and mutual successes.

We also need people in each setting and in each political alignment to understand when their leaders are proposing lose/lose or even win/lose situations that it is far better for us all when we can all for both the short term and long term achieve win/win outcomes.

That was one of the most important things I learned in the process of writing these books and working on these issues. We need to abandon win/lose thinking for our intergroup interactions and we need to make win/win strategies real.

We Live In A World Of Plenty

Win/win outcomes can happen. We live in a world of plenty. We live in a world of ample resources where all groups can do better when all groups do better. A thriving economy helps all people. A rising tide lifts all ships.

We need to create a rising tide for America.

One of the things I learned as CEO of one of the largest and most diverse care systems in the world, is that when our extremely diverse staff was aligned around patient care and aligned around collaborative continuous

improvement approaches — with more than 100,000 of our workers organized into unit based teams — we were able to provide world leading care.

That very diverse care team was 59 percent minority. There actually was no majority group in that organization.

The senior executives for my management team in that setting were also extremely diverse. We had three group presidents. One was an African American male, one was a Chinese American male, and one was a White woman.

The health care organization that was led by those very diverse leaders had the highest quality scores and the highest service scores in America for Medicare, both as a health plan and as a hospital system.

The organization that has been served by that very diverse staff and by that very diverse leadership team has also led both JD Powers and Consumer Reports in achieving the highest rating levels for their areas. Number one results happened.

Nearly three-dozen health care quality scores for health plans and for Medicare plans had Kaiser Permanente as the number one score for the entire country.

I know for an absolute fact that diversity can create synergy and creativity. I know for a fact that meritocracy and inclusion can be a powerful and effective combination. I know for a fact that when the entire care team is focused on — and committed to — win/win work settings and win/win work efforts — that combination can create exceptional results.

When people from all groups in the entire chain of command of an organization can look up the organizational ladder and can see leaders in that hierarchy who look just like them, that is a clear signal to every employee and to every team member that there is a real meritocracy in place and that hard work and great care can result in advancement, recognition, and both individual and collective success.

Diversity Can Be A Great Strength

I loved working with that care system and that leadership team. The creativity and the customer responsiveness that happens when highly competent and very diverse leaders with great personal values work as a team is proof that American can go forward to turn our diversity into synergy and into a win for all groups.

The high levels of care quality that can result from a highly diverse staff working as a team to meet the needs of highly diverse patients should

counter the belief of those people who believe that ethnic and racial work force diversity leads inevitably to dysfunctional consequences and to dysfunctional and damaging internal division.

Having a shared, values-based culture was key to that success.

Having hospitals that did not have one single pressure ulcer in an entire year requires a culture of people who are focused as caregivers and as caring people on each and every patient. The book *KP Inside* explains the functional reality of that belief system, process, and culture.

Having those perfect scores for a quality of care function for any care setting takes a culture and a commitment to work as a team in the interest of every patient who trusted us with their care.

It also takes the kind of process-based continuous improvement approaches that I have learned to love and believe we need to use to help us resolve and avoid negative intergroup interactions for our country.

We Need To Make The American Dream Real For All Of Us

The last chapter of this book points out how we can do that kind of alignment for our entire country. My own sense is that we could all screw this up very badly at this point — but that we should not let that happen. We should all do what we need to do now to have everyone win.

We need at this point in our history to make the American Dream real for all of us. Win/win. For Everyone.

We also need to recognize that we all still have our instinctive reactions that trigger a sense of “them” relative to anyone who looks different or who sounds different than our “us.”

Those instinctive reactions will continue to point us all in a direction — but when we know what those primal intergroup delineation points are and when we know how the way we look and how the way we sound influences the way we think — we can choose to override those instincts and we can choose instead to create a more inclusive level of “us” based on our beliefs and values.

We need to enjoy, celebrate, and utilize our diversity as a nation and we need to learn to overlook those divisive sight and sound differentiation factors in favor of all embracing the lovely blended world that we get to be part of when we are very diverse and when we are very good at being diverse.

My old work site epitomized that diversity.

When I walked into those work settings full of very diverse people in that highly focused caregiving organization, I did it with a sense of joy and

pride because I knew we were building our very high level of very real diversity into a major asset and I knew that we were aligned with each other in that setting as the people of Kaiser Permanente based on the core values we all shared.

The American Gymnastics Team Often Epitomizes Us

One of my very favorite times in my life happens every four years when the summer Olympics are held. My favorite event in the Olympics is the gymnastics team competition. I love that competition because the American team is always so gloriously American.

The Chinese team always looks very Chinese. The Russian team always looks very Russian. The Japanese team doesn't create any doubt about the origin of each team member.

But the American team is a rainbow of American diversity. The glorious diversity of our women's teams, in particular, generally takes my breath away.

Everyone else from the other countries shows up at the Olympics as tribes. We show up as people. Wonderfully diverse, lovely, extremely talented people.

We need to hold on to that magnificent diversity and we need to make it a template and a model for everything else we do.

When I went into our highly diverse Kaiser Permanente work settings and care sites, it felt like being with that magnificently diverse and talented Olympic gymnastic team.

That approach works. Diversity can create real strength. We need to make functional and successful diversity our commitment and our strategy and we need to not let ourselves be divided in any way.

We need a commitment to win/win outcomes for all groups to anchor that process. We all want to win. We need people from every group to want people from every other group to win as well.

When every group wins — and that is possible because we live in a world of plenty — they are all stronger and success reaches even higher levels for us as a country.

We also need to understand the things that do divide us today. We need to recognize our history and we need to understand the fact that we do have levels of intergroup division and intergroup anger in multiple settings today.

We can't start with a clean slate — but we can do a restart that is based on who we are today and based on shared beliefs and expected behaviors that can guide us in our interactions today.

It took me a couple of decades to figure all of that out. It has been a fascinating journey of learning.