

Chapter Two — Our Us/Them Instincts Can Make Peace Both

Very Difficult And Possible

To create intergroup Peace in America and to protect, maintain, and perpetuate intergroup Peace in America, we need to understand and make skillful and strategic use of the basic sets of instincts that we have to divide the world into Us and Them, and then to act in very different ways toward people depending on the category of us or them that we perceive people to be in.

Those instincts have great power. They influence our intergroup behavior constantly. Those instincts can both cause us to do good and they can cause us to do evil things to other people. It is extremely important for us all to recognize the fact that those instincts can cause us to feel right and to feel justified in doing both good and evil.

We need to use those instincts as a tool. We need to have those instincts cause us to help, protect, and defend other people in inclusive ways. We also need to avoid having those very powerful instincts activated in dysfunctional ways that can create intergroup division and intergroup damage.

We need to understand that set of instincts so well that we can mitigate or avoid the damages that those instincts create and so that we can benefit from the positive behaviors that can flow from those instincts when they are triggered in positive ways.

When we understand those instincts and their consequences, we can have control over their impact on our lives.

Those instincts trigger a very basic set of intergroup functions and they create very consistent patterns of behaviors.

At their most basic level, we tend to define the people around us as being either “us” or “them.” We can do that in fairly flexible ways. There can be multiple possible definitions of both us and them for each of us. But the reality is that the people in any situation or any setting tend to know who they align with in that situation and setting as an us, and who they define in that setting to be Them.

The Divisions Into Us And Them Directly Affect Beliefs And Behaviors

Those divisions into us and them have influenced human behavior throughout the entire history of mankind. It has been a universal differentiation approach that has affected behaviors wherever groups of

people have existed. Behaviors, values, structures, thought processes, and emotions have all very consistently resulted from those us/them delineations.

Our us/them instincts have shaped human history. They have very clearly shaped American history. Those instincts shape human behaviors and they are clearly creating history today.

The Art of Intergroup Peace depends entirely on dealing effectively with those packages of instincts. To make Peace possible, we each need to understand how those instincts work and we each need to know how they affect our thoughts, emotions, values, and behaviors.

We need that knowledge so that we can both trigger and defuse those instincts when necessary and appropriate, and so that we can activate them and utilize them intentionally, skillfully, and strategically as tools to bring us together in the pursuit and achievement of Peace.

The most relevant instinctive thought and behavior patterns created by those instincts are fairly simple, and those patterns are easy to detect and describe.

We Protect Us – And Distrust And Dislike Them

The core reality is that we instinctively divide the world into us and them. We tend to feel protective, supportive, and nurturing for whomever we define to be an “us.”

We tend to be suspicious, antagonistic, and territorial relative to whomever we define to be a “them.”

We tend to distrust “them.” We fear, dislike, and avoid “them.” We tend to feel uncomfortable and unhappy when we are surrounded by “them” — and we tend to be much more comfortable and safe when we are surrounded by our “us.”

We tend to treat us and them very differently. When our “them” behavior patterns, values, and emotions are fully activated, we tend to discriminate against “them.” In far too many settings, we can do negative things to them and we generally feel no guilt for those negative behaviors that are done to “Them.”

Feeling no guilt for what we do to “Them” has a massive impact on intergroup behaviors and thinking.

We Suspend Conscience In Harming “Them”

Us/Them behaviors have been extreme in too many settings.

In some settings, we enslave them. In others, we ethnically cleanse them. We often purge and displace them from our communities.

We can do very negative things to them in a wide variety of ways, and we far too often actually suspend conscience and feel no guilt for our actions when we are dealing with “them.”

Those guilt free damaging behaviors are a particularly important, highly relevant and very negative impact that results too often when those us/them instincts are fully activated in any setting.

Those patterns of us/them behavior and values have been seen throughout history. In World War II, we fire bombed the city of Dresden, killing men, women and children, and we awarded medals to the people who dropped the bombs. The Germans were a “them” to America at that moment in history — so we actually killed a great many people with fire, and did it with no sense of guilt for the deaths of “them.”

In that same war, we dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. One of the reasons the City of Hiroshima was selected as the site of that first bomb, was that the city had no prisoner of war camps with Americans in them. We were willing to incinerate and obliterate “them” — but we felt reluctant to drop that same horrific bomb on any group of “us.”

Slavery Is An Ultimate Us/Them Behavior

Slavery — wherever and whenever it occurs — is an absolute us/them behavior. So is ethnic cleansing. So are the terrorist bombs that are going off in multiple cities in multiple countries today. In each of these cases, the target is “them.” Us/Them values and Us/Them behaviors are the clear consequence of perceiving people as “us” and “them.” The terrorists do not set off their bombs where their own family, clan, or tribe happens to live.

Terrorist bombs are almost always intertribal — killing whomever the terrorists perceive to collectively be “them.” The bombs tend to be aimed at groups of people — not at individual targets. When we are thinking in us/them terms, we tend to lump “Them” together and we feel that any action taken against any one of “Them” is a legitimate thing to do to “Them.” We tend to “depersonalize” whoever we perceive to be a “Them.”

Unfortunately — sometimes tragically — we can categorically depersonalize, and stereotype entire sets of people by tribe, race, ethnic group or nationality in very negative and dehumanizing ways. We then kill “Them” with no sense of guilt or remorse.

In too many cases, the intergroup anger that is felt is so great that the people who personally become bomb deliverers with their own bodies are

willing to die in order to kill numbers of Them... and there are settings in the world where people with guns and weapons massacre groups of “Them” with no sense of guilt at any level for killing those people.

There are some exceptions to the intertribal and intergroup killings by those kinds of terrorist attacks today — where people do kill people from their own group — but those exceptions to intergroup killing are relatively rare. In those rare exceptions to intertribal killing where people kill people from their own group or tribe, the mass murderers doing those bombings or those shootings generally manage to somehow depersonalize the people they are killing. Even those non-intertribal mass murderers generally manage to achieve a mental model for themselves where they see the people they are killing through the cold and distancing lens of full us/them depersonalization, or through some level of complete collective dehumanization for the people who they decide to kill.

In the intergroup Us/Them conflict settings that we see in so many places in the world, those killings are not aimed at individual people in order to punish each of the individual people for their own personal behavior or their own personal sins.

Those killings in those settings are aimed at groups of people in a depersonalized way as collective retribution for some level of perceived collectivized group sins. That is a sad and pathetic, tragically dehumanizing way of thinking about people and treating people — and it happens all the time in far too many settings because one set of our us/them package of instincts causes us to have those behaviors and those collective perceptions, and to feel and embed those values as guides for our behavior.

People have their us/them instincts activated and behave in damaging and sometimes purely evil ways relative to who ever they perceive to be “Them.” The behaviors that result from those activated instincts create a history of intergroup damages that is used to reinforce future intergroup behaviors.

The history of those damaging intergroup behaviors in each setting becomes the history of each group in the setting — and future interactions between the groups are heavily influenced by the power of that history to trigger intergroup anger, distrust, and hatred.

It is a very self-reinforcing cycle and a self-perpetuating legacy.

Our instincts create our intergroup behaviors. Our behaviors create our intergroup history. The history strongly influences future intergroup behaviors.

It is a very damaging and very powerful cycle — particularly when we don't recognize the instinctive triggers.

Exiles, Purges, And Jim Crow Laws Resulted From Those Instincts

Our own history as a nation has been highly and heavily influenced by our us/them instincts. The history section of this book explains that intergroup situation in our country in far more detail. We can only understand our own history as a nation clearly when we clearly understand those instincts and see their impact and influence on us all.

To successfully achieve the intergroup Peace strategies that are outlined in *The Art of Peace*, we need to understand that intergroup history and we need to deal, today, very honestly and directly with the residual and relevant consequences of that history.

Slavery, Tribal Exiles, And Evil Behaviors Stem From Those Instincts

Us/them instinctive behaviors are obviously very powerful and they have a huge impact on our collective legacy as a country. As the sister books to *The Art of Peace*, both *Cusp of Chaos* and *Primal Pathways* describe how those instinctive behaviors have created centuries of discriminatory, and far too often cruel, damaging, and even evil behaviors for people in our own country at multiple levels. Slavery, tribal exiles, forced dislocations for Native Americans, Jim Crow laws, and various instances of intergroup evil, and destructive and damaging economic, physical, and political intergroup actions, all stem from that same basic pattern of us/them values and behaviors — and from that same set of “us/them” instincts.

Those patterns of behaviors and those intergroup values are clearly part of our American national history. We have done some very damaging things to one another in our past in the context of those instinctive behaviors.

It is also very clear that various levels of us/them behaviors and values continue to be part of our current reality and our current set of behaviors — even though we have made major progress toward more enlightened behaviors in a wide range of areas.

The progress we have made toward more enlightened behavior in a number of intergroup areas needs to be both celebrated and protected. That

progress we have made in several areas is very real — and it deserves our support and understanding.

We need to recognize that we are never free of our instincts. It is very true that our packages of us/them instincts continue to define our interactions at various levels today. Those basic sets of intergroup instincts will continue to trigger a sense of InterGroup distrust across our country. That intergroup distrust is reinforced by an array of InterGroup concerns and intergroup issues that exist — today — in a number of settings in this country.

We have very real sets of economic differences between groups of people in this country. We have health disparities and we have education level disparities that need to be addressed.

We have made great progress on our relative legal status for women and minorities in this country, but we still have a number of other areas where there are very real issues that need to be addressed.

We Can't Afford To Trigger Us/Them Instincts Between **Groups**

We need to be very open about the sets of issues that still exist. We need to address all of those issues in the context of creating a sense of “Us” in each of our communities and settings.

We also need, at this point in our history, to avoid the activation of “them” instincts in all of our intergroup settings. We need to avoid us/them language and we need to avoid us/them trigger points and interactions. Wherever we have a sense in any setting that those packages of instincts are being triggered or activated, we need to take responsible steps to defuse and deactivate them.

The consequences of activation for those sets of instincts can be major in any setting. People can get angry and do things that leave scars on other people’s levels of acceptance and trust. Even angry us/them rhetoric can cause people to trigger their own us/them instinct-guided responses — and escalation can be rapid and damaging at multiple levels.

Most of the negative things that people have been doing to each other as groups have their origins in our us/them instincts. We need to keep those sets of instincts from doing that damage wherever we can keep them from having that negative impact.

In each of our communities, schools, and work settings, we need to be constantly aware of the dangers of having those sets of instincts activated in a negative way. We need to be aware of those issues at a very conscious

level and we need to take steps to deactivate, defuse, or counter those sets of instincts in each of our settings.

We also need to be constantly aware of the opportunities we have to activate our “us” instincts in an inclusive and positive way. We can very intentionally do things to bring people in each setting to have a sense of “us.” Chapter Four explains six basic triggers we can use to create a sense of us and functioning levels of intergroup alignments in various multi-group settings. We need to use all six triggers regularly and well — getting people to see the advantages and benefits of aligned, Peace centered agendas and behaviors.

We need groups of people to perceive the common danger created by our common enemies — the people who do not want us to succeed as a nation — and we need to share a common set of beliefs that can band us together as an American “Us.”

We have been trying to become more enlightened and more inclusive as a country. We have had some successes that can help band us together across multiple groups — and those successes have been very real. Our laws that extend the vote to women and to non-White Americans have been a major step in that direction. The repeal of the evil and discriminatory Jim

Crow Laws and their replacement with laws that make functional discrimination that is based on race, ethnicity, or gender both illegal and unacceptable all point us in good directions.

Our entire history is described in more detail in other chapters of this book. We have done some horrible things to one another — but we also have a growing number of areas where real progress has been made. We need to build on that progress and have it reinforce our sense that we are a nation of values we all can untie behind. We are far from perfect, but we are moving in good directions on many issues, and we can go even further when we get to know one another as people, and when we articulate and commit to a shared set of key values to guide our lives.

We Can't Simply Sweep The Slate Clean Today

Groups do not have a high level of intergroup trust in a number of key areas today. Groups have done evil things to one another. Prejudice and discrimination has been painful, deliberate, and entirely intentional at multiple levels.

Even where behaviors today are significantly better, memories of the old behaviors are painful and fresh.

We have had too many years of American functional reality where those packages of instinctive behaviors have created significant prejudice and very direct discrimination against too many of our people.

Both intergroup deception and absolute intergroup bias have been part of that instinctive behavior package in very visible ways for massive numbers of people. This book looks at that history in more detail in Chapter Five.

We clearly need to recognize the intergroup reality and beliefs that have been created by those years of duplicity, prejudice, and discrimination and we now need to deal with its implications directly if we want intergroup Peace today. As we build the strategies for *The Art of Intergroup Peace for America*, we need to recognize that we have too many years of really unfortunate intergroup behavior in our past as a country to simply sweep the slate clean today and start over — even with good intentions and lofty goals.

We also can not simply wipe the slate clean today and start over as a single group, because we actually are a nation of multiple groupings — multiple races, ethnicities, and cultures — and there is no way for us not to have intergroup instincts activated in various ways in the face of our obvious intergroup reality.

We Are Not Molding Into At Single Group

We may have passed enlightened laws on multiple points, but we still wake up every morning in the context of a wide array of groups who each will continue to trigger basic and primal instinctive group alignments for each group's members.

The basic array of instinct triggering differentiation factors — how we look, how we sound, and who we each affiliate with at the most primal level — will not be erased. We are not melding into a new single group.

Because we are not melding, we will always be in the position where certain sets of instinctive triggers can be relevant. Even if we ignore all division factors relating to our history and to our legacy behaviors — we still have key differentiations that exist and are relevant now.

So we can't start over. But we can begin now to work with what we have and who we are to do what we now need to do.

We Are Increasingly Diverse

Our us/them instincts are going to be increasingly relevant to us, right now, at this point in our history because we are clearly becoming

increasingly diverse as a country. Our diversity is inevitable and it is growing daily.

Intergroup diversity — as we know from experience and history — can trigger those sets of us/them instincts easily.

We used to be a country that had one very large majority group with relatively few sizable minority groups. That is changing.

In many of our cities, there is no majority group in place today. In a number of American settings where a local majority group does exist, the local majority group in that city is often a former minority group that is still a minority group in the overall context of its entire state or our entire country, but is now the local majority group in specific settings.

Our urban settings are now highly multi-ethnic and multi-racial. The entire country is becoming more diverse at a very rapid pace. Our younger Americans tend to be significantly more diverse than our older Americans in almost every setting.

That increasing diversity is changing our work forces, our schools, and our political demographics.

The number of people who are entering our work force from our minority populations will be a majority of all new workers in a relatively

few years. Minority Americans are a majority of our new and existing workers in many urban settings now.

The Majority Of Our Births Are Now From Minority Groups

Probably the most significant piece of information about our growing diversity is that a majority of all births in this country last year were from our minority populations. More than half of all births in this country last year came from our overall array of minority populations.

The future is clear. Diversity is our future. We all need to be very aware that our us/them instincts are very easily triggered by group differentiations. Our differentiations are growing.

The truth that we all need to recognize is that our diversity can either lead us to conflict, or we can turn it into a major asset that benefits us all. It is entirely possible to have our diversity be a great source of strength to us as a country.

We can be the most productive and safest country on the planet and we can choose to celebrate our diversity in the process.

Intergroup Peace needs to be our conscious commitment, strategy, and our national focus to make that happen.

We know now that major on-going diversity in so many other parts of the world leads almost inevitably in every site to constant intertribal and intergroup stress, intergroup conflict, and even civil war. There are more than 200 ethnic conflicts going on in other multi-ethnic settings in the world. It would be a huge tragedy to allow that kind of interethnic future to happen here.

It does not need to happen here.

We Need To Make Our Diversity A Great Strength

We need to recognize and celebrate our growing diversity — and we need to align our diversity into a common agenda and a shared set of behaviors and values that will benefit all of us. It is far better to make our diversity a great strength.

Making our diversity into strength will require a context of InterGroup Peace. We need to be skilled at the Art of Peace to achieve those goals. This is the time for us to make a commitment to Peace and to do the work needed to achieve Peace. Everyone will benefit if everyone has the benefits of Peace.

To achieve that Peace we need to recognize the fact and the reality that our basic us/them instincts have the obvious and very real potential to

turn our growing Diversity into increasing levels of stress, and into serious and damaging InterGroup division.

If we don't take appropriate steps to keep those instincts from defining the future of this country in an increasingly negative way, then the more negative aspects of those packages of instincts will have a high likelihood of prevailing, and they will then define both who we are and how we function as a country in very dysfunctional, divisive, and destructive ways.

We need to keep that from happening. We need to create intergroup Peace and we need to create that Peace now. We need to begin with the places that we live.

We need to work hard to create a sense of "us" for each community. We need to eliminate the factors in each community that divide us. We need to have people in each setting who believe in and trust the court system, and who believe the processes that govern each community actually function as an extension of "us" rather than being perceived as "Them."

So how can we create that sense of community us? We need to make some choices and we need to use some of the tools we have available to us.

We need to use those tools as a nation and we need to use them in each community that we are a part of.

We Need The Right Strategic Choices

This book, like *The Art of War*, is a book of lists. *The Art of Intergroup Peace* has lists of alignment triggers, lists of interaction structures, lists of culture enhancement tools, and lists of ways that we can make life better for us all. The book has lists of core beliefs that we all can share, and lists of behaviors to avoid if we want to function collectively as an “us.”

The Art of Intergroup Peace has lists of key instinct packages that create the functional terrain for our intergroup interactions. All of those lists can help us achieve intergroup Peace in America.

All Instincts Can Be Used For Good Or Evil

The lists of instincts are particularly important.

We need to be very clear about the fact that all of our instincts can be used for good — and that all of our instincts can also be used for evil. The underlying terrain reality that we face is that we all have the potential to be saints — and we all also have the potential to be sinners.

Saints or sinners. We get to choose. *The Art of Intergroup Peace* calls for us to make the right choices, and the Peace strategies help outline exactly what the right choices are.

We do need to make the right choices. We need to select the right alignment motivators, and we need to use the right organizational model for our intergroup interactions.

Knowledge is power — in a very direct way. We collectively need to understand the terrain we are facing, and we need to build our strategies in ways that address the sets of situational realities that are created by each relevant terrain.

Being situationally relevant is equally true for war and Peace.

Underlying that entire set of strategies and tactics is a core belief that we will succeed when we merge to come together as a values-based American “Us.” Instead of being divided by race, or group or ethnicity, we need to be a nation unified around our values and our beliefs.

To support that process, this book also describes, explains, offers, and endorses one dozen key beliefs and functional values that we can use to create a collective commitment to Peace.

Having a set of shared values can be extremely important to our future. If we don't have agreement on our basic and core values, the likelihood of successfully achieving Peace will be significantly lower.

We need to be a people united by our shared values and united by our shared beliefs. The last chapter of this book identifies a basic, fundamental list of those unifying values and recommends that we commit to using them.

The first part of the Peace strategy is to understand the role of instincts and to understand that we can use our instincts rather than simply being used by them. Our instinct packages influence us to a very high level.

Our instincts will be key to our success.

Creating Peace and achieving intergroup alignment for our country, for our communities, for our schools, and even for our work sites can be done more easily if we use our basic sets of instinctive behaviors as tools rather than having our instincts functionally triggering our problems and creating most of our challenges.

The Art of Intergroup Peace strategy is anchored on the reality that our basic intergroup behaviors are heavily influenced by several packages of instincts that we all share.

Those sets of instincts all interconnect and interact with the instincts we have to divide the world into us and them.

We have instincts, for example, to identify with and protect turf. We activate our turf instincts as individuals and we activate them as groups.

We also have instincts to create hierarchies. We have hierarches everywhere — and they all tend to have Alpha leaders with Alpha instincts at the top of each hierarchy and people with equally clear Beta instincts embedded inside each hierarchy.

We have instincts to build cultures. We build cultures in every setting and we use them to give us the rule sets and the expected behaviors we use for each setting.

We have very strong instincts to detest traitors — and we have equally strong instincts never to personally be a traitor. Those traitor-related instincts can strongly influence our interpersonal behavior relative to interactions with other people and with other groups of people.

We Act Most Of The Time In Alignment With Our Instincts

We need the personal humility and the personal wisdom to recognize that we tend to act, most of the time, in the direct context of behavior

patterns that have been sculpted and influenced for each of us and for all of us by our basic packages of instincts.

Sun Tzu wrote about the physical and geographic terrain that was relevant to the Art of War. *The Art of Intergroup Peace* involves psychological and behavioral pattern terrain that is even more relevant to Peace.

Our instincts-structured behavior tendencies create a kind of situational terrain that gives us some very clear and predictable behavior patterns to work with relative to intergroup interactions.

We need to build Peace in the context of those patterns.

We also need to use that knowledge to create internal alignment and functional Peace in our workplaces, organizations, and communities.

We have the same behavioral tendencies in all of those settings, and this same set of insights and instincts can be highly useful at a very immediate level in any group that we form.

The sister book, *Primal Pathways*, is a book that is almost entirely about instinctive behavior. *Primal Pathways* deals in some detail with 12 basic packages of instinctive behaviors that are most relevant to intergroup interactions and to the Peace process.

This section of *The Art of Intergroup Peace* deals more directly with roughly half of those relevant behavior packages. The sets of main instinct-linked behavior patterns that are described below in the next four chapters of this book are important for us to understand in order to succeed at The Art of Intergroup Peace. If we understand those sets of instincts and use or manage them well, we are significantly more likely to succeed in creating intergroup Peace.

Instincts Tend To Make Behaviors “Feel Right”

Those instincts are important to The Art of Intergroup Peace because each of those instincts make particular sets of behaviors and particular ways of thinking feel right to people. Instincts have the very significant and useful power of making behaviors feel right.

“Feeling Right” is often a very good sign that an instinctive behavior has been triggered in our minds. That is an important point to understand that is highly relevant to *The Art of Intergroup Peace*, as well as to *Primal Pathways* and *Cusp of Chaos*. Any time any behavior feels entirely and extremely “right,” there is a high likelihood that the behavior that feels so right has instinctive roots, and there is a very high likelihood that the

specific behavior that feels so right is also getting direct instinctive reinforcement at some level.

Many examples are obvious. Protecting our home “feels right.” That feeling is basically instinctive. Protecting our homes is very instinctive behavior. Protecting our family turf “feels right” as well.

The fierce level of energy and the intense emotions that can be triggered when we need to protect our children clearly has very deep-seated instinctual roots.

It clearly feels very right to do things to protect both our children and our turf.

Four Useful Tests of Instinctive Behavior

We obviously share those particular packages of instincts to protect both our offspring and our nest with a myriad of other species. Those specific behaviors also seem to feel very right to the other species who we can see are exhibiting those same sets of basic and fundamental instinctive behaviors.

Feeling right is one of the four basic tests and guidelines we can use to figure out whether that particular behavior is either instinctive or highly influenced by our instincts.

We can use those four basic criteria in looking at any set of consistent behaviors to see if the behaviors we see are each being created independently in their own intellectual and situational context, or to see if it is highly likely that those particular consistent behaviors have an instinct at their core.

(1) Universal Behaviors Tend To Be Instinctive

Universality is a very useful screening factor for determining whether or not a behavior has instinctive roots. Look for “universal,” examples of the behavior as a useful sign that behavior is instinctive.

If the behavior you are thinking about is everywhere, there is a high likelihood that it is everywhere because our instincts trigger it everywhere.

One of the best ways of identifying the fact that any specific behavior is instinctive is that we see the same behavior pattern in all cultures and in all human settings. Universal behaviors tend to be instinctive.

Instincts are functionally the only mechanism that exists that can actually create behaviors that are basically identical everywhere. The book, *Primal Pathways*, explains that process in more detail, and explains the sets of tools that are used by our instincts to have their universal impact on our lives in all of our relevant settings.

(2) History Is A Reflection Of Instinctive Behaviors

History is also useful. The second best way of recognizing that a specific behavior is instinctive is that we can see that same basic behavior in obvious long-standing patterns of human history.

When history books tell us we have done the same pattern of behavior for a very long time, then we can safely look for instinctive origins for the behavior.

Behaviors we have always done and that have created major patterns and clear patterns in our historical record tend to be instinctive at their core.

History repeats itself, in very large part, because the patterns we follow for many behaviors have universal instincts at their core that have not changed over time.

Our history books tend to be the situational and fact-based reporting of how our instincts have been manifested for groups of people in each time and in each setting.

Historians tend to tell us about the incidents and events that have occurred, and historians tend to name the people who have been important to what was done in each setting. Historians tend to not focus on, acknowledge, or even discuss the underlying patterns of instinctive triggers and behaviors

that have been the primary architecture for major portions of our historical record.

History is easier to understand when the impact of those instinctive behaviors is more clear. Economic theory linked directly to behavioral theory can be very useful for describing and explaining much of our history.

The missing link that sometimes overpowers the impact of economics-grounded explanations of history is the actual highly consistent influence of those sets of instincts on our lives.

(3) The Behavior Triggers Instinctive Emotions

Emotions tend to be very useful tools for our instincts and they give us a clue that a behavior might have instinctive roots.

Several basic emotions tend to be used in both detectable and discernable ways by our instincts to steer our behaviors.

A good way of identifying that a behavior is instinctive at some level is that the behavior triggers, activates, and stimulates similar sets of emotions in people in all settings.

Emotions are one of the most effective tools of instincts. Our instincts use emotions very consistently to guide us to and from relevant behaviors.

“Feeling right” was mentioned above. Any behavior that feels very right when we do it probably has an instinct at its core. It often feels very right to us when a behavior and an instinct are aligned.

Our instincts use our cultures to achieve their goals. That sense of “feeling right” that happens when our behavior is aligned with an instinct can be triggered when our behavior is aligned with a culture that is, itself, clearly aligned with an instinct.

At the same time, as the other side of that same “feeling right” package, our instincts can make some specific behaviors feel wrong — or at least make them feel stressful or trigger anxiety. We can feel wrong being a traitor to our group. We can feel wrong not protecting our child when protection of the child is needed.

We can feel wrong not supporting our group or our team in times when support is needed by our group or team.

Stress is a frequently used tool of instincts. We can often feel a sense of stress when we are acting in ways that are not aligned with our instincts.

Sometimes the easiest way to reduce stress is to figure out what instinct we are currently triggering in a negative way. When we figure that out, we can often either change our behavior to be aligned with our instinct,

or we can simply reduce the stress level in our own mind by recognizing that the stress we are feeling is actually instinctive in its functional origin.

Knowledge can be power relative to some feelings of anxiety or stress. The book *Primal Pathways* explains those processes in more detail. Feeling right, feeling wrong, and feeling stress are all used consistently as emotional tools by our instincts to guide our lives.

Anger, Fear, Guilt, Shame, Greed, Love, And Lust All Have

Links To Instincts

Several other emotions are also used by our instincts to steer our behaviors. Anger, fear, shame, guilt, greed, lust, and love all have very basic links to basic instincts. Those emotions are all used to guide us either toward the behaviors that our instincts want us to include in our lives, or away from the behaviors that our instincts want us to avoid.

That does not mean all emotions have instinctive roots or linkages. There are a number of non-instinctive and functionally situational triggers that activate our emotions.

Anger is sometimes instinctive — and it is sometimes situational. Anger can be created both by our instincts and by the facts and the circumstances of the particular situation we are in.

Fear can also be triggered in both instinctive and situational ways.

“Feeling right,” however, very often means that there is an instinct in play relative to the specific behavior that makes that behavior feel right.

Understanding instincts to be a source of stress can be a very useful thing to understand. The *Primal Pathways* book explains those issues in more detail.

Instincts often use both stress and anger as tools to channel our behaviors. We feel stress and anger when our children are threatened. We feel stress and anger when our turf is invaded. We feel some level of stress when we don't have a hierarchy in place in any setting.

We can also feel stress when we do have a hierarchy in place, but when the top position in our relevant hierarchy is currently vacant.

The feeling of stress in any setting or situation can tell us that we perceive that an instinctive need is not being met in our lives in that particular setting. Satisfying the needs that are created by the instinct can often eliminate the sense of stress.

People who want to live stress-free lives can sometimes eliminate or significantly reduce some elements of stress by figuring out which package

of instincts are triggering relevant stress in their lives, and then dealing with those triggers directly.

Recognizing when those instincts are relevant to our intergroup interactions — to reaching out and making connections to people from other groups, for example, can help each of us make better choices about those behaviors.

(4) Instinctive Behaviors Can Be Shared By Other Living

Beings

A fourth way of recognizing that a behavior pattern has a high likelihood of being instinctive is when we see parallel behaviors in other species — and when we know that the specific behavior we observe is clearly and significantly instinctive for the other species.

Having paralleled behaviors in other species is a very good piece of evidence for a behavior in us being instinctive. It's difficult to imagine a mechanism or scenario whereby other species could do something specific in a consistent way, entirely instinctively, and then have us somehow manage to do the same thing with an equivalently high level of consistency, but somehow have those same behaviors, in each setting, be based on our individual situation specific intellectual decision making processes that

happen to exist for each of us, in each and every setting, where that behavior is happening.

It is unlikely that we could create those highly consistent behaviors in all of our settings for people through either intellectual invention done situationally by people in each setting, or through pure and entirely circumstantial coincidence that somehow creates parallel consequences and behavior patterns for people everywhere for that behavior.

Maternal behaviors clearly fit that pattern of behaviors, emotions, and approaches that exist everywhere in ways that could not be invented independently by each mother in each setting and in each set of circumstances. Both we and other living creatures tend to exhibit maternal instincts.

Maternal Instincts Are Clearly Shared And Clearly Not Unique To Us

Maternal instincts and the instincts to defend one's offspring are clearly not limited to humans. Mother bear and mother deer and mother sparrows all instinctively protect their young. It clearly feels instinctively right for all of those mothers to offer their offspring that support and protection.

Maternal instincts and maternal behavior tendencies clearly tend to be universal among all groups of humans. We fairly obviously also do share some patterns of those behaviors, and a number of instinctive emotions with mother bears, mother deer, and mother sparrows.

Again, if you apply the four guidelines listed above to determine whether or not a behavior is instinctive, maternal behaviors clearly satisfy the yes category for all four criteria. Those maternal behaviors are obviously universal. They are historic. They trigger very consistent emotions.

And we can see other living beings whose mothers have clearly similar instinctive maternal behaviors.

Turf Instincts Also Exist For Other Species

Turf instincts also clearly fit the pattern of being obvious motivators for the behaviors of other species. Our turf instincts are described in more detail in the next chapter of this book. They are one of the basic sets of intergroup instincts we need to understand to create intergroup Peace. We humans are not alone in having turf instincts.

A number of species also have clearly defined turf instincts and those instincts create very predictable patterns of behavior in each species.

Wolf packs and herds of wild horses tend to have instinctively supported turf alignments. Wolf packs, horse herds, and chimpanzee clans all tend to protect and defend their groups' turf.

A number of species clearly share variations of those turf instincts. Protecting our turf feels very right most of the time and — as noted earlier — it clearly feels right to wolf packs and chimpanzee clans to defend their turf as well. Turf instincts fit all four of those diagnostic definitions.

Our turf instincts are particularly relevant to the issues of creating and sustaining intergroup Peace.

Wars Are Fought Over Turf

At the intersection of our us/them instincts, our turf instincts, and our family protection instincts, we clearly have a tendency to have a sense of group turf and we have a strong tendency to collectively defend that group turf.

Wars are fought over turf. We instinctively feel great anger as a group against anyone who invades, trespasses, encroaches, or somehow takes possession of our turf.

Many levels of groups have a sense of turf. Tribes have turf. Clans have turf. Nations have turf.

The street gangs that function in our cities and the convict gangs that exist in our prisons also each have their own turf. Gang turf has a very powerful impact on gang behaviors and gang emotions.

Our turf instincts create their greatest challenges when they interact with the most important set of instincts we need to understand as we look at the core issues of InterGroup Peace — our us/them packages of instincts.

Our Us/Them Instincts Can Unite Us Or Divide Us

Our us/them instincts could not be more important to us relative to the Art of Intergroup Peace and to our interactions with other groups of people. Those particular instincts affect people's thinking and behaviors in the context of groups – like communities, work places, schools, and various organizations — and they have a massive impact on interaction between groups.

If we only learn to understand one set of our instincts as a result of thinking about intergroup Peace, our us/them instincts are clearly the set of instincts we most need to understand.

It is painfully clear that we instinctively tend to divide the world into “us” and “them” — and then we treat people and deal with people very differently if the people are an “us” or a “them.”

Intergroup interactions are usually defined, reinforced, structured, and actualized in the working context of those particular instincts. *The Art of Intergroup Peace* is anchored in the need to deal effectively with those instincts — both to protect ourselves from their negative consequences, and to benefit from their more positive components and consequences.

We need people to understand the basic context that those instincts create because they are relevant in every intergroup setting. Any time we have people in a setting who come from different groups, there is an extremely high likelihood that those packages of instincts will be triggered.

We React Differently To Us And Them

The patterns for those particular instincts are clear. We react very differently to us and them.

We distrust them. We tend to discriminate against them. We tend to depersonalize, dehumanize, and stereotype who ever we define to be them.

When we identify someone to be a “them,” we are suspicious, distrustful, and we tend to believe that they will deliberately act against our self-interest. We do battle with them and we feel right in defeating them. When those instincts are fully activated, we feel no guilt in doing negative things to them.

We ethnically cleanse them, drive them from their lands, and in worst-case situations, we enslave them — feeling no guilt for horrendous, cruel, and even evil behaviors done collectively and individually to them.

We see those behaviors across the planet. People attack them, bomb them, and rape and abuse them in many intergroup settings. Mass and group killings are happening today in us/them settings.

Us/them conflicts in Iraq, Syria, Nigeria, and the Congo have resulted in mutilations and horrible deaths at the hands of people who categorized the people they were damaging as them.

Chapter Five of this book discusses those categories of conflicts. People do huge damage to people whenever those instincts are fully activated in conflict settings.

We Keep Our Word To “Us”

We do good things for “us.” That is the best side of the us/them instinct package. That part of the package is key to our future. We protect, support, nurture, aid, and help whoever we define to be us.

In our various communities, we trust us, ally with us, and we choose, when we can, to work with and live in proximity to us.

When we identify someone to be an “us,” we apply a higher ethical standard that is anchored on being “us.” We tend to keep our word to “us.” We support our laws that protect each of “us.”

We respect the roles and the rights of “us” in the context of the communities of “us” that we create.

So our us/them instincts have a very powerful impact on our lives. If we are going to create Peace in America — and as we become increasingly diverse at multiple levels as a nation and a society — we need to make sure that our growing diversity creates a strength and an asset to us in each setting that lets us function as an “us” and doesn’t splinter us into us/them lines by group to an even greater degree, when we are divided today.

That particular strategy needs to be used very intentionally in every setting.

We need to do that work of building a sense of us in each work setting, school, community, and organization — creating a sense of us, in each of those settings, that triggers our us-based values and our us-based behaviors. We also need to create a national sense of “us” that can help bind us together as a country in all of those settings.

We are becoming more diverse as a country at a rapid rate. The majority of births in this country this year were to our “minority” populations. We will either need to be very good at turning our growing internal diversity into a sense of “us” or we will find ourselves facing some very ugly and damaging instinctive behaviors.

Even Neanderthals Did Not Do Well As “Them”

The history sections of this book explain the negative consequences of creating that sense of “them” about other groups of people that have happened in various settings in this country since we were founded. Our own history as a nation is full of people who have done very bad and often evil things to other groups of people when us/them instincts were activated in a negative way.

Even our anthropological history shows the impacts of what we do to people we define not to be us. We know that our recorded history as people on the planet is a long and consistent list of intertribal wars.

Even before recorded history, Neanderthal people lived on this planet for nearly half a million years. Neanderthals seemed to have been internally Peaceful, because they were here for a very long period of time and they didn’t kill each other off over that long period of time.

And then they disappeared entirely in a relatively few years.

Anthropologists tell us from the archeological records that the Neanderthals disappeared relatively quickly when our own ancestors — with our us/them instincts fully developed and activated — entered into Neanderthal lands.

Anyone who wonders why the Neanderthals disappeared entirely shortly after coming in contact with our human ancestors only has to look at human intergroup behavior for people today in Sri Lanka, or in Pakistan, or in Rwanda.

Sri Lanka has mobs of people killing and expelling other groups of people based on their tribal alignments. Germany killed millions of Jews. The Hutu and the Tutsi had mass killings.

The ISIS group in the Middle East this year is massacring entire villages full of “them,” showing no sense of guilt or shared humanity at any level as they execute people, behead “Them” and bury “Them” in mass graves.

We clearly do not do good things to other sets of people when groups of people in any setting, define themselves to each other to be a “Them.” We damage “them.” We ethnically purge “them.” We kill “them” today in too many settings.

Neanderthals clearly were a type of “Them.” Human nature is not kind to “Them.” Imagine ISIS coming in contact with the Neanderthals.

Ironically, from our purely human perspective — if the Neanderthals had those same kinds of deep-seated InterGroup instincts to damage whoever they perceived to be “Them,” our own primal ancestors who originally migrated into long-standing Neanderthal turf probably would not have survived, and this would be a very different planet.

We Need To Create A Broad Sense Of Us For Us

Our us/them instincts are very powerful. As a key component of The Art of Intergroup Peace, we need to make sure we don’t continue to play out our most negative and damaging us/them instincts in this country today.

We need to take very deliberate steps at this point in our history to reach out and create a sense of us to all of us in this country. At a core level, we need to stop thinking of other people in this country as “Them.” We need to end both conflict and intergroup stress relative to people we now perceive to be “Them.”

We need to do that work — both intentionally and deliberately — with the clear goal of having America benefit from being an “us” for ourselves. There are several key pieces to that strategy. We need to begin by

deciding together to achieve those goals. Then we need behaviors at the interpersonal level and intergroup level that will help us achieve those goals.