

Chapter Two — Us/Them Instincts Divide The World Into Us and Them

We have very strong instincts to divide the world into “Us” and “Them.”

We need to understand those instincts because when we do not understand their relevance and their impact on us individually and collectively, they create damage and make life bad for the people who they affect in negative ways.

Our minds take very different approaches at a very basic and very instinct-guided level to “us” and “them.”

When someone is an “Us,” we are protective, supportive, forgiving, and we tend to be ethical in our interactions and our behaviors. When someone is a “Them,” we are distrusting, antagonistic, and very territorial. We tend to do damaging and even evil things to “Them” with no sense of conscience, ethics, guilt, or remorse.

Those behaviors are the exact opposite of each other. Those values could not be more different. We are all subject to their influence in major ways without us being aware that we are acting and thinking in clearly instinct-guided ways.

They cause us to act and think in extremely important ways relative to other people and we just believe that our actions are “normal” reactions to those people.

The behaviors are consistent and the consequences are clear. It is generally bad to be “Them.” We fear “Them.” We suspect “Them” of evil intentions. We distrust whatever “They” say and we tend to oppose and resist whatever “They” choose to do.

We feel stress, discomfort, and anxiety when we are surrounded by “Them.”

In clear contrast to our reaction to “Them,” we tend to feel comfort and we feel safe when we are surrounded by “us.”

We tend to support our us, apply our best ethical standards to us, and we tend to believe and trust what we hear or learn from us.

Those are all instinctive reactions, instinctive thought processes, instinctive emotions, and instinctive behaviors. Those very basic us/them sets of instincts exist and they influence how we think and how we behave in any and all settings where those kinds of group distinctions are perceived by us to exist and where they are perceived by us to be relevant.

We all need to recognize the fact that our basic packages of Us/Them instincts cause us to divide the world into us and them and to create very different values, thoughts, and behaviors for each of us based on which category people are perceived to be in.

We Can Use Those Instincts To Unite Us And Divide Us

That package of instincts actually gives us some very useful tools that we can use in the cause of intergroup Peace. We need to understand them well to use them for Peace.

Those instincts also very clearly create a set of major problems that we need to address skillfully and directly in order to both survive as a country and to collectively thrive as the people of America in each of our communities and settings.

The patterns created by those instincts are very basic. They are extremely powerful. They influence our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. They are unfortunately persuasive as a key determinant of intergroup behavior in multiple settings.

Once we learn to recognize those behaviors as being instinctive, and once we know what they do to influence behaviors when they are activated,

we can see those behavior patterns, perceptions, and beliefs having direct impact on people all over the planet.

People everywhere instinctively divide the world into us and them. People everywhere very instinctively tend to treat people very differently based on which category people are perceived to be in.

Our Us/Them instincts and the thoughts and behaviors they create are very relevant for a very wide range of intergroup situations and intergroup interactions. We can activate them in almost any setting where we can identify different groups of people.

The most basic activation levels for those instincts happen with a high level of frequency relative to our tribal, clan, ethnic, family, and racial identities. Us/Them differentiations that relate to those categories of who we are, function constantly to help each of us determine who is us and who is not us in a wide range of settings.

At our most primal level, our most basic category of us is generally our family. People in all settings tend to activate us/them instincts in ways that make their family their primary us grouping.

Then, beyond family, we tend to identify as an us with groups that are the equivalent of extended family — our clans and tribes.

The next higher level of us for many people at that point are other people in their setting from their ethnic group or race. In multi-ethnic and multi-racial settings, people tend to perceive people from their own race or ethnicity to be an “us.”

Each of those categories can activate our us/them perceptions and instinctive us/them behaviors in any setting where those categories are relevant to our interactions.

We Can Create Multiple Categories Of “Us”

Our instincts give us a very flexible set of differentiation tools that allow for the creation of multiple categories of us that extend beyond family, clan, tribe, ethnicity, and race.

We have the ability to use our judgment and activate our sense of us relative to any sets of people who satisfy basic definitions of us that seem to be functionally relevant to us and who are believable to us as an “us.”

That capability that we have to create and identify additional functional categories of “us” is a very good thing because it allows us to function in positive ways relative to all people who satisfy a relevant category of “us.”

That capability allows us to identify and even create other categories of “us” and then to achieve and activate the more beneficial aspects of our “us” instincts for people in each of the other categories of “us” that we functionally create in any setting.

We actually have a fairly flexible and highly useful ability to trigger our best and worst sets of us/them instincts in both a positive and negative way relative to multiple other categories of group identity. We can and do identify a wide range of other sets of us and them — and that flexibility in creating those categories allows us to use the same packages of instincts in a wide range of settings for multiple intergroup types of differentiations.

Our instincts give us the ability to actually be very flexible in defining and delineating both us and them. That is an important reality because we tend to be very consistent in the various ways we deal with people in any situation or setting once those definitions exist for people and once our us/them instincts have been activated for any situation and setting.

Whatever categories of us and them exist in any setting or situation tends to have a direct impact on our behaviors and our thoughts in that setting. We tend to be aware in each situation and each setting of whether or not those instincts are relevant and we tend to be aware of exactly who those instincts affect and define in each setting.

In each situation that we find ourselves in, we tend to very instinctively want to know who in that setting is an “us” and who is a “Them.”

Those sets of instincts are triggered in communities, work sites, organizations and in schools of all levels. They are relevant to how we think and what we do in each setting where they are activated.

In each setting, we tend to be constantly aware of whether we are surrounded by an “us” or whether we are in proximity to “Them.” We tend to know in each setting who is an “us” — and who can be safely treated as an “us” in that setting — and we tend to know who is a “Them” and needs to trigger the caution that is created by a “Them.”

We Feel Affinity For “Us” And Distrust “Them”

The differences in our comfort levels, perceptions, and behaviors that result from that set of perceptions can be significant. We tend to fear, distrust, dislike, and either avoid or damage anyone we perceive to be “them.”

At the same time, we tend to feel an affinity for whoever we perceive to be “us.” We tend to seek out and we want to be with a relevant “us” when

a relevant “us” exists. It feels good to be “us” and it feels good to be with “us.”

We all have both the need and the desire to be part of a group of people who activates our “us” instincts. Stress levels in our life are higher when we don’t have a functioning current “us” alignment for our lives. Stress levels can be much lower and comfort levels can be higher for each of us when we do have a clear sense of being part of an “us” in our lives.

We all have a universal tendency to want to be with other people like us. We tend to like and trust “us.” We tend to feel a level of both safety and mutual support from whoever we determine to be our “us.”

Any Level Of “Us” Can Create Comfort

At a very basic imprinting level as individuals, we each tend to find comfort in being part of our families, our clans, our tribes, or in being part of relevant ethnic groups who can give each of us the instinctive comfort at a very primal level of being in an “us” group.

We most easily fit into our family, clan, or other equivalent primal group as our source of group comfort. But we also can feel comfort when we are part of any other group that can functionally trigger our sense of being an “us” for any situation or setting.

That other group that can trigger our sense of “us” in a setting can be a team or an organization. It can also be fellow believers in an ideology or a religion.

This book describes a wide range of definitions for various group alignments and definitions that can define us to ourselves as us and then trigger our “us” related instincts.

We can each find comfort in any setting being part of a group that can function in meaningful ways as an “us” for that setting.

We look for those sets of “us” in each setting. We want to be part of an “us” in each setting because we tend to have an instinct-triggered expectation that the natural and significant benefits that generally result from being an “us” will be likely to accrue to us in various positive ways if we can be included in the situation relevant category of “us” that exists for that setting.

A wide number of basic categories of “us” exist that can cause people to feel the comfort of being included in an “us” grouping. Those same categories that define some people as an “us,” however, can often cause other people in that setting to be perceived defined and treated as “Them.”

Each definition of “us” can create its own set of mutually reinforcing and positive behaviors — and each definition of “Them” can trigger its own array of negative thoughts and self-fulfilling negative behaviors.

We Can Feel Stress Surrounded By Them

We can feel stress, anxiety, unhappiness, and even a sense of fear when we are surrounded by them or when we can’t feel like we are included in a group that triggers our sense of “us.”

We tend to trigger powerful negative instinctive reactions to people who we perceive to be “Them.” “Them” is a bad thing to be. We have strong instincts to dislike them. We have strong instincts to fear, avoid, compete with, and even do damage to “Them.”

When sets of people in any setting perceive other people in that setting to be “Them,” conflict often results. People do damage to “Them.” The patterns of negative behavior that can happen relative to “Them” are far too common and far too clear. We need to take steps in each setting to minimize the perception that anyone is a “Them.”

Ethnic cleansing happens to “Them.” Racist and discriminatory laws and negative and damaging intergroup behaviors that happen relative to “Them” feel right to the people doing them.

In some settings, groups of people who are perceived to be “Them” are enslaved. In other settings, people bomb, kill, poison, and take various actions that damage people at a very personal level — feeling very right in doing evil things because the people who are being damaged are a “them.”

We very much need to understand how extreme our behaviors can be in both directions when we have those sets of instincts activated in our heads.

We think and act very differently relative to whomever we identify to be “them.” The differences in behaviors can truly be extreme. We often do bad and even evil things to “Them.” The same exact people who are ethical, kind, and caring to their “us” can be evil, cruel, and damaging with no sense of guilt relative to “Them.”

Negative Us/Them intergroup behavior patterns exist in multiple settings. Those behaviors have left deep scars on human history in every setting. We tend to be protective, nurturing, and supportive of our “us” but we tend to fear, distrust, collectively dislike and do deliberate and intentional damage to whoever we perceive to be “Them.”

The behavior differences that we see — with the same people acting in extremely different ways — would stretch and exceed our belief and

credibility level if those two sets of behaviors were not so obvious, so real, and so universal.

We Tend To Dehumanize And Demean “Them”

We tend to dehumanize “Them.” Literally. Quite a few tribal languages refer to the people of their own tribe as being “people” — or even “The People” — and those same languages often use words that describe the people from other local tribes as “animals” or as some level of subhuman semi-people.

The Japanese government only recently defined their minority groups to be fully human instead of being “aboriginal and semi-human.”

Derogatory, insulting, and demeaning names for “Them” are found in just about every culture’s vocabulary.

The list of evil behaviors that can result from the activation of those instincts is a very long list. We need to collectively recognize the reality of that long list of evil behaviors, and we need to understand why that list of evil behaviors exists.

Evil happens. True evil. Evil is an entirely legitimate and accurate term to use to describe many of our “Them” linked behaviors and our “Them” linked values and thought processes.

The historical record is painfully clear. We feel no guilt doing damaging things to “Them.”

In some settings, we actually enslave “Them.” People are being enslaved today in the Middle East for being “Them.”

We ethnically purge them in a wide range of settings.

Ethnic cleansing is happening today in The Dominican Republic and Myanmar with no one pretending that the goal is not to expel people from those countries based on their ethnicity. Multiple other countries are also going through ethnic expulsions.

In extreme cases of us/them instinct activation, people strap bombs to their own bodies and people explode those bombs in settings where the explosion will kill “Them.”

People feel energized and motivated in a wide range of settings and situations where people have the opportunity to somehow damage “Them.”

People rarely explode those bombs in any setting where “Us” will be damaged or killed.

People are, however, willing to kill and people are willing to die in too many situations where there is a war with “Them” or a significant conflict between an us and a them and when people believe their own deaths

can help to damage “them” in ways that can help their “us” win the war or avoid having their “us” defeated by “them” in that war.

The killing process that happens in each of those intergroup settings is very clearly focused on hurting and killing the targeted “Them.”

We Firebombed Dresden And Tokyo

The Kamikaze pilots from Japan in World War II who flew their planes into the sides of American warships in suicide missions to kill Americans would never have obeyed orders to fly those same planes into Japanese buildings in Hiroshima or Nagasaki or Tokyo if the result of those crashes would have been to kill Japanese people.

Those pilots in that war were willing to die to kill “them” — but those pilots would not have obeyed orders to kill an “us.” Those pilots would not have imagined being asked to kill “us,” because that isn’t what our us/them behaviors and values cause us to do and that is not how our us/them instincts shape our thinking.

In that same war, the United States dropped atomic bombs on two of those Japanese cities and we killed massive numbers of non-combatant Japanese women and children in the process.

One of the reasons Hiroshima was selected as a site for the first atomic bomb to ever be dropped by any nation in a state of war was that there were no American prisoners of war currently being held captive in that particular Japanese city. Some other possible target cities for that horrible bomb had significant numbers of American prisoners of war. There were none in Hiroshima.

Our us/them instincts do allow us to do horrible things with no guilt when the people we do those things to are perceived to be “Them.”

We Americans also firebombed Tokyo in that same war. Many women and children were killed.

We also firebombed the city of Dresden in Germany at that same time.

Again, large numbers of women and children were killed by those firebombs — and we honored the aircrews who flew that mission into Germany and who took those lives because we American perceived Germans to be a “them” in that moment and we considered the deaths of those women and the deaths of those children to be “collateral damage at an acceptable level” when our thoughts and values were guided by our instinct-activated pure and primal us/them intergroup context.

The patterns of behavior that occur when those instincts are activated are painfully consistent and they are very clear.

We Feel Stress Surrounded By “Them”

We discriminate against “Them.” We don’t want to be around “Them.” We very intentionally put processes in place that are intended to harm “Them.”

We have explicitly written multiple very explicit laws in our country that have been clearly intended by the people who wrote the laws to damage “Them.” We collectively dislike and distrust “them” and we can each find ourselves in a high state of personal stress at an instinctive level when we are surrounded by whomever we perceive to be “Them.”

That stress can be very real.

That feeling of instinct-triggered stress that we can each feel when we are surrounded by “Them” can be very unpleasant.

As noted earlier — and as discussed more fully in later chapters of this book — our instincts often use stress as one of the key neurological triggers that can influence us to act in ways that are instinctively choreographed and instinctively desired. Our instincts cause us to often feel stress when everyone around us is perceived to be a “Them.”

Why do we feel stress when we are surrounded by “Them?” Personal safety is a primary reason for that stress.

Our instincts that create that level of stress when we are surrounded by a “Them” are working to minimize the potential physical risk for each of us that we might face if we are each directly and personally damaged in some way by “them.”

Our personal survival instincts are also both peripherally and functionally involved with that set of targeted us/them instincts that triggers that particular stress response.

Feeling stress when we are surrounded by “them” can be a very unpleasant feeling, but that feeling stems from a useful and very practical set of intergroup instincts.

The truth is that avoiding “Them” can be a very good guidance and excellent steerage for us to get from our instincts. Across the planet today, we can see people being killed in many settings because those unfortunate people who are being killed ended up being in close and dangerous proximity in that setting to a relevant and malevolent “Them.”

The Sudan, the Congo, Iraq, Syria, and Kenya all are reporting very real horror stories that are very current right now about people in multiple settings who are being beaten, tortured, mutilated, raped, beheaded, and

coldly killed by other people from other tribes in each setting who perceive the people they damage to be a tribal, ethnic, and religious “Them” and who want to do damage to that particular “Them” however they can do that damage.

Wars Tend to Be Between “Us” and “Them”

Those patterns of human behavior have obviously been going on back to the dawn of human interactions. The historic wars across Europe and Asia and Africa all have been wars between groups of people who have been identified as being separate groups of people by their tribal or clan affiliations.

Major parts of Europe have been obsessively tribal for a very long time. The French and the Germans are functionally two separate mega tribes — with different histories, different languages, different cultures, and different tribal identities.

The Norwegians and the Swedes are two tribes.

The national day of celebration in Norway literally celebrates the day roughly two centuries ago when Norway was “liberated” from Sweden. That event of pure and simple ethnic separation is still celebrated every single year. But only in Norway.

The English and the Welsh are two tribes. If the Welsh ever achieve full independence, the date of legal separation from England is likely to become their annual day of celebration in the same way we celebrate the Fourth of July to commemorate our becoming free of English rule.

Each of the tribes of Europe — like each of the tribes in Pakistan or each of the ethnic and tribal groups in India or the tribes and ethnic groups of Sri Lanka or the major tribes in any of the African or Asian countries — tends to have their own tribal turf, their own tribal identity, their own tribal language, their own tribal structure, and their own tribal history.

The people in each tribe in each setting typically feel that their personal primary group alignment and their basic group loyalty levels are clearly and directly linked to their own tribe.

Turf wars almost everywhere have functionally been tribal wars. The packages we have of turf instincts that are described in more detail in the next chapter of this book tend to get activated in each setting very directly by those intertribal wars.

The combination of our turf instincts and our tribal instincts can create high levels of intergroup animosity, anger, and extremely damaging intergroup behaviors. Our us/them instincts both trigger and exacerbate many of our very negative turf instinct related behaviors.

Conscience free evil, destructive, and intentionally damaging intergroup behaviors can result from those turf and tribal instincts being activated as a mutually reinforcing package. Conflicts that bring all of those sets of instincts to bear simultaneously can literally last for centuries.

Us/Them Definitions Have Some Flexibility

We need to understand clearly how those instincts work and we need to understand how they impact both what we do and how we think. Doing some very negative things feels right to people because those negative things are aligned with those particular packages of instincts and because we tend to feel right when our behaviors and our instincts align.

One of the best and most useful things to understand about our us/them instincts is the fact that we can all expand our sense of us beyond just our own clan, family, or tribe.

That specific point about us each being able to expand our own sense of “us” in relevant and useful ways to include other categories of “us” is extremely important for anyone who wants to achieve intergroup Peace in any setting to understand. Expanding our functional and relevant sense of “us” is a great tool that we can use in several ways in many settings to help achieve intergroup Peace for those settings.

It is very useful to have very flexible instinctive programming that lets us expand our sense and perception of us to include additional definitions of us.

We are fortunately not limited in our sense of who is “us” to our most primal and basic categories of us. We can add other categories of us to our sense of who we are and each of those additional categories of “us” can usually also trigger and support the best and most enlightened features of our “us” packages of instincts.

We Can Expand Our Sense of “Us” In Useful Ways

We can identify many other categories of us that can trigger the same sense of positive and mutually supportive collective identities for people in a setting.

We can identify with people as an “us” as a professional us — or as a corporate us. We can tie at an instinct-triggering level to our labor union as an us and we can relate to other people who share a religious belief with us as an us.

Shared beliefs are a good tool for creating a sense of us.

As individuals, we rarely eliminate, erase, or somehow get rid of our original and most basic primal categories of us, but we can each generally expand our most basic levels of us to include other people who are aligned

with us in various ways and in various functional categories that we can believe deserve to be recognized as an “us.”

When we create additional kinds of alignments, we can generally cause each new alignment to create a new functional category of “us.” That process and that strategy can give us many of the benefits of being “us” with those benefits spread across a different broader and more inclusive set of people compared to our original primal us groupings.

When we add an additional level of “us” to our sense of who we are, we can generally extend trust, increase our level of ethical behaviors, activate a sense of conscience, improve interpersonal understanding and extend a sense of mutual support to the additional sets and categories of people who we include in our expanded definition of us.

We Can Align Around Beliefs, Affiliations, Economic Status, And Teams

A significant number of possible “us” definitions can exist. We can create a relevant and functioning larger sense of “us” around religion, political beliefs, economic status, professional affiliations, geographic linkages, employment linkages, and a shared set of values.

We can even create a very energizing situational sense of us that can be based on shared loyalties to an athletic team or to a work-related team of one kind or another.

We clearly can create a sense of “us” for team members and we can even create a sense of collective us for team fans.

Our functional ability to situationally trigger that particular sense of team-allegiance based us for people beyond our primal us may have had its own historic origin as a way of creating aligned team-like behavior in various primal intergroup war settings or for primal group hunting situations.

In the war settings, whoever is collectively on one side in the war is considered to be a functional and situational us and whoever is on the other side in that same war is perceived to be a functional and situational “Them.”

In hunting settings, whoever shares in the process of collectively stalking and killing various animals for food can feel an affinity and a sense of “us” with other members of the hunting team.

We Emotionally Reward People For Team Behaviors

Athletic teams can often trigger various sets of “us/them” instincts at a very basic level that can feel somewhat like both war team and hunting team behaviors. The ability to function as a team has so much practical survival

value that our instincts tend to emotionally reward team members for team behaviors.

In many cases, our athletic team based senses of us tend to follow many of the same patterns that exist for our more primal categories of us. We can get psychological rewards from our alignment with our team members and we even extend some of those feelings to other fans of teams at levels that extend beyond just the actual team members.

People who are fans of a team often feel a group connection with other fans of the same team. We can sometimes feel the comfort and the psychological rewards of being an “us” from alignment with our fellow fans for a team.

We also can feel collectively aligned dislike with our fellow fans for the fans of other teams. In some instances, people can even feel collectively shared hatred for other teams and for their similarly aligned fans.

Fans And Team Members Wear Team Colors And Feel Like

An “Us”

When our most direct team-related us/them instincts are activated, people can sometimes do various things as loyal fans that make little or no

sense to anyone observing those behaviors who do not have the same triggered sense of fan loyalty.

People wear team colors, cheer collectively in ways that clearly trigger collective emotional reinforcements for each other, and can make various kinds of highly visible acts of team support a reality. People can overlook other differences with one another as both team members and as fans of team.

In some situations, dislike and even hatred of the other teams and other fans can actually be triggered in ways that can cause people to be damaged.

Soccer stadiums in a significant number of cities have very formidable chain link fences that exist to protect the fans of each team from the fans of the other team.

People have actually died and other people were badly damaged in multiple settings from instinctive us/them behaviors that happened before those fences were erected.

We Need To Avoid Activating “Them” Instincts

Overall, any time we perceive someone to be a Them, we tend to create and utilize a different set of values and ethical standards for our various interactions with “Them.”

When our us/them instincts are activated in their most negative ways, we can suspend conscience, feel no guilt in doing damage to them, discriminate freely against them, and look for ways to both avoid them and to do negative things to them when the opportunity to do negative things.

Because we know that those instinctive behaviors exist, we need to act in accountable, deliberate, informed, and intentional ways to keep us from activating our “Them” instincts in any setting. We need to keep those instincts from creating negative intergroup and interpersonal impact if we want to achieve and sustain intergroup Peace in any setting.

We Can All Be Saints — We Can All Be Sinners

Our us/them instincts have their very positive attributes that are triggered when we are relating to an “Us.” It can be a wonderful, positive, reinforcing thing to feel like an “us” and to be surrounded by “us.”

Those same instincts also can have a very negative side to them when we are relating to a “Them.” We can be damaged by Them and we can do damage to Them.

We need to avoid situations where “Them” is a relevant factor and we need to avoid perceiving other people to be “Them” in our various settings if we want people in those settings to be at Peace with themselves.

When those instincts are activated in a good way, we all have the core programming to be saints. When those same sets of instincts are activated in a bad way, we all have the programming to be sinners.

We clearly need to work on activating and sustaining our saint instincts and we need to work on de-activating our instincts to do sinful, disgusting, shameful, evil, damaging, and destructive intergroup things to the people we perceive to be “Them.”

Choosing to activate our saint instinct packages clearly needs to be a tactic that we intentionally use to anchor a major portion of our intergroup strategy as we work collectively to create intergroup Peace for America.

We Feel Comfort Surrounded By “Us”

We all need to have a clear understanding of what those sets of instincts do and a clear understanding of how they affect our behaviors and our beliefs in any setting.

Our instincts can both inflame us and they can give us a sense of Peace, comfort, and well-being. Having a sense of well-being can be a very good thing. We can each often increase our personal sense of well being by deliberately doing things that are aligned with the various sets of instincts whose built in reward system is to trigger a sense of well being.

Romance can be instinctively triggered and can give us a sense of well-being. Nurturing the people we love can be aligned with our instincts to nurture the people we love — and that can give us a sense of comfort and well-being.

Simply being with “us” — as both individuals and groups — can be one of those aligned behaviors that can generate positive feelings and trigger a sense of well-being.

Our us/them instincts actually can give us comfort and solace when we are surrounded by our “us.” We tend to feel a sense of safety and security when the people around us are “us.” It can be very pleasant to be in “us” settings.

But, as noted earlier, we tend to feel insecure, anxious, and stressful when we are in the midst of “Them.”

It is often stressful and unpleasant when everyone around us in any setting is a “Them” of some kind. We all tend to be on constant alert about being surrounded by any “Them” — and we can feel stress to the point of panic if we find ourselves totally surrounded by “Them.”

That insecurity and that sense of situational stress that we feel when we are surrounded by “Them” can be justified in many cases by very longstanding patterns of negative intergroup behaviors that too often actually

happen to people in intergroup settings. That sense of situational stress can be justified by knowing the history of intergroup damages that have been done to people in far too many settings for far too many years by various categories of “Them.”

That Sense of Stress Can Keep Needed Interpersonal Relationships From Building

The feelings of stress that can be instinctively generated by being in the presence of “Them” can create individual avoidance barriers that keep us away from anyone we perceive to be Them.

That instinct-triggered avoidance of “Them” can actually save lives in some settings because it can cause us to stay away from damage done by a truly dangerous Them.

That same sense of intergroup stress can also, however, create some challenging barriers and real obstacles to needed intergroup and interpersonal interactions today in settings where there is no functional threat and where we need people to interact with each other in Peaceful ways.

Those feelings of stress that cause us to avoid “them” can create barriers to needed levels of interpersonal understanding, as well as creating barriers to intergroup trust.

We need to interact with one another across group boundaries as individual people in order to overcome and override some of our more stereotyped perceptions and interpersonal responses to each other and in order to create the kind of person-to-person relationships that can earn and support both interpersonal and intergroup trust.

That interaction between people at a personal and individual level can be difficult to set up and sustain when those particular interactions trigger stress and when we don't know why the sense of stress exists.

We do a number of things in our society to end various kinds of segregation. We very intentionally create integrated workplaces, integrated communities, and integrated schools.

Ending segregation is a good thing to do — but the steps we need to take to end segregation can have the unintended consequence of creating dysfunctional levels of personal intergroup stress for whoever actually does the functional integration in any setting.

Being The First Person Of Any Kind In A Setting Can Trigger Stress

Being the first person of any kind in a newly integrated setting can be stressful and even painful. Those instincts we each have to feel personal

stress can be triggered by integrating a workplace or by integrating a school setting.

The first integrated students in any school setting tend to very naturally and inevitably trigger very directly instinctive feelings of stress for the integrating student. In our work settings, anyone who is from a minority group for any particular setting will often feel very similar and equally unpleasant levels of instinctive intergroup stress as part of the integration process.

When we understand that the stress we tend to feel in those situations is instinct-triggered, that understanding can help reduce the stress.

It is possible to functionally and intellectually learn not to feel and not to trigger that full level of situational intergroup stress when we are surrounded by what is, in reality, a non-threatening “Them.”

We can each learn not to feel that full level of risk-related stress in those non-threatening situations — but that requires a learning process about intergroup stress relief that usually needs to be individually learned by each of us for each of us and then that set of insights needs to be applied individually by each of us for each relevant setting. That is not easy to do.

If we intend to integrate workplaces and schools and other similar settings, we need to set up that learning process about reducing those stress

levels for each of us. We need that learning focus and set of insights for people going into for those situations because being stress free isn't how our instincts trigger us to feel in any setting when we have "them" around us.

We Tend To Be On Perpetual Alert For "Them" Behaviors

We can each learn not to let those intergroup stress instincts be a barrier to interactions in any given situation or setting.

But even when we do learn and choose not to feel that particular "us/them" generated stress in those specific situations, we still tend to be on some level of perpetual subconscious and very instinctive alert once an instinctive sense of "Them" has been created for us in any setting.

Even though we can reduce the stress in those situations and even make the stress, itself, situationally disappear, we can't eliminate the state of mental readiness that is instinctively created for each of us by the perception of being surrounded by "Them."

When we are in any setting with people we personally perceive at some level to be "Them," at a basic level, we are always on alert. A very powerful perception of intergroup risk can be activated in microseconds by any behaviors or any words that make us feel that an active risk might exist in that setting.

Basic levels of intergroup stress can be reactivated in each of us if there is anything — any behavior or any spoken words in our interaction with the other person or with the other group of people in a setting — that can trigger a sense that the instinctive intergroup caution programs that exist in our brain deserve to be reactivated and that a real threat of some kind might actually exist in that time and in that place.

An insult — spoken or implied — or a threat of some kind — spoken or implied — can activate our us/them alarm system and instinctive reaction package in those situations very quickly.

The sad truth is that our us/them instincts are so evil and so dangerous in their worst manifestations, that it actually makes sense for us to be on intergroup alert. It is good for our overall self-preservation to have those particular packages of alarm systems in place in our heads, even though they are not needed in most of those workplace and school settings in our country today.

There are villages in the world today where people are massacring other groups of people just for being some level of “Them.” There are also, sadly, streets in American cities today where gang turf and gang violence can take the lives or do real damage to anyone who is perceived to be a “Them.”

We have clearly not progressed as a population to the point where we can ignore the basic instinctive reactions we have to be wary of whoever we perceive to be “Them.”

We are not at actual risk of our lives in this country very often, but the risk is sometimes real and those sets of instincts actually can save our lives at least some of the time. Being relevant even some of the time is clearly a sufficient reason for us to keep those instincts in our behavior packages.

Even if the sense of intergroup risk is a false alarm 99-of-100 times, if it is real the other time and if being real in that one-hundredth instance means that a “Them” in that setting kills or badly damages us — then the highly cautious and usually unneeded instinct has real value. We only get to die once.

Having the warning bells going off incorrectly 99 times to save us once can be a good tradeoff and a valuable process even though it makes some interpersonal interactions uncomfortable and unpleasant in the non-threatening times and settings.

We Prefer To Live With Us

Those instincts we have to feel stress when we are surrounded by “Them” not only affect how we feel in our workplaces, our schools, and our

organizational settings — they also influence our choices about where we live.

People who have choices about where they live and work tend to move physically into situations and settings where the people around them are perceived to be “us.”

As a result of our higher comfort levels that tend to be instinctively generated when we are with other people like us, we tend to live with “us” to a significant degree. Our major cities in this country all have very large areas where the people in each city have chosen to live in highly concentrated population percentages in neighborhoods with their own most relevant racial, ethnic, cultural, gender-aligned, or religious category of “us.”

Every major city has its areas like Watts or Spanish Harlem or China Town where people live with other people from their racial or ethnic group.

We also have neighborhoods in a number of cities where we have higher concentrations of people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Those voluntarily segregated and ethnically concentrated areas of our cities increasingly are generating a sense of being group turf for the specific group who lives in each of those settings in disproportionately high

numbers. Those issues and some of their consequences are discussed in the next chapter in the context of our turf instincts.

In any case, we tend to feel stress when we are surrounded by “Them” and we tend to feel stress when we are on “Their Turf” — also at a very instinctive level. Those issues each can create their own obvious barriers to intergroup Peace in some settings — and each of those issues can create areas where people feel comfort in being surrounded by a relevant category of “us.”

Traitor Instincts Can Impede And Cripple Interpersonal Interactions

In addition to those barriers, we tend to have a huge barrier to interpersonal and intergroup interactions that can be created in various ways by our very powerful instincts to hate traitors and to never be a traitor.

People in every culture and group tend to hate traitors. One of the more powerful instincts we all have is the instinct to detest, abhor and — when possible — punish traitors.

We also each have a very strong instinctive pull to never ever personally be a traitor. Those patterns to detest traitors and to never want to be a traitor are also universal.

People in many settings punish and even execute traitors. Minimally, traitors tend to be shunned by the people in any group that has been betrayed.

Benedict Arnold and Minister Quisling are both infamous and well-known names because each of those people was a high level and very visible traitor to their countries. Calling someone a Quisling is a term of derision and contempt in many settings. Calling someone a Benedict Arnold is generally also an intentionally insulting thing to do.

Benedict Arnold moved directly to England after his unsuccessful attempt at treachery in this country. He was a traitor to our country in the Revolutionary War. Because he had been a traitor in this country, he fled to England.

He was actually not accepted by many of the people he later interacted with in Britain. He was not accepted there even though he had actually been a traitor to America to serve the British cause because people everywhere tend not to respect traitors who are traitors for any reason.

That traitor instinct package is worth mentioning, describing, and understanding in a book on the packages of instincts that are relevant to achieving intergroup Peace and in a chapter on intergroup relations and our us/them instincts because when we are each reluctant to do anything that

resembles traitorous behavior, it can be very hard for us as individuals to do what needs to be done to create the friendships and to build the direct interpersonal linkages that we need to build across group lines to create intergroup Peace in America.

It Can Be Hard To Create Relationships While Being Called A **Traitor**

It can also be very hard to reach across group lines to befriend someone from another group if the people in your own group accuse you of being a traitor for creating those contacts and for making those attempts to be friends with those “other” people.

To achieve a state of trust and to attain a level and scope of direct intergroup and interpersonal relationships that can keep people from simply stereotyping, depersonalizing, and perceptually dehumanizing people from other groups, we need to create ways for people from all groups to personally get to know people from other groups as people.

We are all people. We need to make direct and personal contacts as people with people.

We need to build 1-to-1 — people to people — relationships. We need to create friendships on a person-to-person level across group lines.

We need people to get to know each other and to like each other as people — not as stereotypes.

That process of getting to know people as people is obviously less likely to happen when a number of people from our own group call us traitors when we establish those kinds of relationships and when we create those kinds of contacts with people from other groups.

It is even less likely to happen when we, ourselves, feel at a very personal level that we are somehow explicitly and directly betraying our own group by creating that kind of relationship and that level of friendship with someone from another group.

We too often can police ourselves out of the opportunity to move past depersonalization into personalization when we fear that doing the personalization process directly with a person from another group will somehow make us a traitor to our “us.”

So we sometimes avoid taking direct actions relative to other people that could cause the sets of feelings and perceptions to be activated that we need to create relative to both interpersonal understanding and interpersonal trust.

School Cafeterias Sometimes Segregate Themselves

The patterns of intergroup behavior and the highly problematic interpersonal interactions that result from those traitor instincts in many settings are very familiar to us all.

Children in many schools sit in the cafeteria in settings that have been voluntarily, spontaneously, and functionally very clearly, directly, and completely segregated by the children themselves by race, religion, culture, or ethnicity.

White kids who try to sit with Black kids — or Black kids who choose to sit at table with White kids — can find their own groups being hostile to them for crossing that line and can find their old group members angry with them for making those kinds of contacts with the other group.

In some schools, Black children put negative peer pressure on any Black children who enroll in what other Black students call “white” classes. Likewise, White children who join activities where the other participants are black or brown or yellow can end up being both criticized by their White friends and peers for taking those steps and sharing those activities.

The patterns and the responses are both familiar and clear.

The Children Who Reach Out Can Be Called Traitors

In many cases, the children who reach out to people from another group can also end up not being accepted by the new group because they

seem to be a traitor to their old group and because the new group doesn't welcome them at any level.

Terms of derision for the people who make various kinds of attempts at intergroup sharing and relationships are common. Calling someone an "Uncle Tom" can be a very deliberate and intentional insult — as can using the term "Oreo" to describe someone. Oreo is meant to be an insulting term indicating that a person is Black on the outside and white on the inside.

Likewise, when Native Americans call someone an "Apple" — red on the outside and white on the inside — it usually isn't intended as a compliment.

Calling someone names or shunning people in their original groups because they have interacted with people from other groups doesn't happen in every school setting or even in every community, but it happens often and when it does happen, it can create real barriers to intergroup learning and personal understanding for the students because it ends intergroup contact and intergroup dialogue, and stops and prevents badly needed trust-building interpersonal interactions.

We Need People To See People As People

To help groups of people see each other as people, it is important to have intergroup contacts happening between people. That needs to be part of our strategy for intergroup Peace.

We need to create real and valid friendships across various group lines. Intergroup friendships need to happen between individuals so that intergroup trust is more likely to occur between groups.

Our traitor instincts can create real barriers to those interpersonal and intergroup relationships at multiple levels.

Understanding Those Instincts Can Reduce The Barriers

Those barriers can be overcome for many people when the people involved understand that those specific sets of traitor-related instincts exist and when the people who are reaching out individually chose to ignore the feelings of wrongdoing that our traitor packages of instincts can trigger.

Those feelings about being a traitor of some kind can often be ignored or softened by each of us with some level of comfort when those factors are felt and when their purely instinctive origin is clearly understood.

It is possible to functionally ignore or overpower that particular feeling of wrong doing when we know that the feeling of wrong doing is purely generated by our instincts and when we can know intellectually that

we are actually doing nothing wrong for our "us" by reaching out to create those relationships with people from the other group.

Those instinctive barriers can be significantly offset and they can be defused both collectively and individually when we each recognize the extremely important fact that Peace benefits all groups — including our own group.

The sense of being a traitor can be de-energized when we realize that the likelihood of achieving Peace and the likelihood of achieving all of the benefits that result from Peace for our own group increases for our own group when we interact on a personal level with people from other races, other ethnicities, and other cultures in a positive, open, and trust-enhancing way.

Instead of being a traitor to our group because we have built those relationships, the truth is that we are actually making our own group both better and stronger — and we are clearly making our own group safer — because we have created and are maintaining those intergroup contacts and those interpersonal relationships.

We Need To Create Win/Win Outcomes For An Inclusive “Us”

We need to look at the issues create by our us/them instincts and we need to put strategies in place that can both create a culture of Peace for

America and a sense that we can all be united by our beliefs in ways that let us function as an American “Us.”

We need to be an American “Us” anchored by our values and our beliefs — and we need to create a strategy for Peace that involves us all as a values-based and mutually supportive American “Us.”

We will be stronger as a country when we include all of us in the American Dream. We will be stronger as a country when each of the groups that make up the complex and diverse fabric of America can benefit from us being who we are and doing what we can all do to invoke our diversity as a strength and not an impediment.

The key is to stop activating our internal sense of “Them” in ways that divide us and to very intentionally and effectively activate our internal and inclusive sense of “us” in ways that will unite us.

Our us/them instincts need to be an asset to us. Our us/them instincts will always be with us. We can’t erase them or make them disappear.

Our Us/Them Instincts Will Unite Us Or Divide Us

Those sets of us/them instincts will either divide us or unite us — and being united is better at every level.

Being united is a strength and an asset. Our diversity gives us streams of creativity and channels of energy that can make us both stronger and safer as a nation at Peace with itself that is succeeding at multiple levels.

That can be done.

To achieve those sets of goals, we need to have a set of shared beliefs. The final chapter of this book outlines those shared beliefs.

To achieve those goals, we also need to use our cultures, our paradigms, and our belief systems as tools for safety, synergy, and Peace.

The same sets of instincts that cause certain behaviors to “feel right” can cause us to “feel right” when we are acting in accord with our instincts and when our actions are aligned with our belief systems.

To create that alignment, we need to understand both the instincts that build cultures and the instincts that organize our thoughts into the tools that we use to understand what we do and why we do it.

Those are the next sets of instincts that we outlined in the next chapters of this book.

Our most important immediate goal we have in almost every setting is to stop creating a sense of “Them” for various components of who we are. We can’t afford to have the thought processes and energies created by

perceptions of “Them” drive our thinking and our behaviors in any of our settings.

We need to be us — to us and for us — and to harvest the bounty for us all that being us can create.

We also need to be an “us” to survive as a people — and we need to very intentionally activate our survival instincts as a key tool for that process.