

Chapter Eight — Teams And Mobs Are Both Instinctive

Behaviors

We have an extremely useful set of instincts to form teams and to accomplish things as teams.

We clearly have a very powerful and very functional set of team instincts that allow us to accomplish things in aligned ways in a wide range of settings.

Teams are everywhere. People function in teams in multiple settings. We have work teams, athletic teams, operational teams, surgical teams and we have teams that focus on achieving various specific collective objectives.

Forming teams is an instinctive behavior — and people who are on teams tend to be reinforced in their actions by basic team emotions, alignments, motivations, and behaviors.

Team behaviors tend to follow very predictable, instinct-sculpted patterns. People generally like being on teams and people on teams tend to feel aligned and connected with the teams they are in.

Loyalty is an instinctive team emotion. Team loyalty can be a powerful motivating force for people who are on teams. When people function in teams, the sense of being on a team tends to create a sense of

internal loyalty to the basic aspects, goals, functions, features, and other members of that team.

The twelfth chapter of this book explains that we often use Team instincts in a number of settings as one of six basic alignment triggers that we can use to bring people together across group lines.

Team instincts, when activated, can create a different and much more inclusive interaction reality for diverse sets of people on the team in the context of the team that is created.

People will often override and ignore other sets and types of basic interpersonal differentiators — like race, ethnicity, culture, or belief systems — when people in a setting are brought together as a team to perform the basic functions of a team.

Our team instincts — when they are activated — can cause us to overlook, ignore, override, and set aside a wide range of other interpersonal differences for team related purposes.

Teams Need Identity, Purpose, And Function

As Chapter Twelve of this book explains, simply calling a set of people a team does not activate team instincts.

In order to activate the full set of team instincts, a team needs to have a function and it needs to have an identity. It needs to have clearly defined

membership and it needs a purpose for existing that feels credible to the people who are on the team.

Athletic teams can usually meet that criteria fairly easily. So can other kinds of competitive teams — like debate teams or academic competition teams.

If a team doesn't have clear membership or a clear purpose and if it doesn't have an identity as a team, then the basic team instincts are less likely to be activated in the people involved.

If people are called a team, but the team does not meet those basic functional criteria, then that team generally does not achieve either team level emotions or team based functionality.

As noted above, simply naming a group of people as a team is not sufficient to trigger those instincts. Telling amorphous sets of people in a generic way that they are a team usually does not create any team behaviors, energies, or loyalties.

But setting up specific conditions and relevant situations that activate team instincts can generally trigger those instincts fairly quickly and fairly easily. People who understand the key components of team instinct activation can use those instincts effectively in a wide range of settings to create team behaviors.

Teams Helped In Hunting And Conflicts

Our team instincts clearly offered significant functional benefits for our early survival in a number of primal settings. There are many situations where having people function as a team can improve the likelihood of group success and even group survival. People tend to have an alignment with their basic categories of “us” — like family or clan — and tend to be supportive and collective with other members of their “us” group.

People in all settings tend to have their primary loyalty and alignment processes assigned to their family and clan. That is a positive set of alignments. But that primary and basic loyalty to family and clan has the potential to keep people from interacting in useful and trusting ways with other people from other families and other clans.

When people choose not to interact with people from other groups, that can have a negative impact on achieving success in those areas and situations where having more people in alignment can be a functional strength. There are a number of situations where the success of the family or clan can be enhanced by people working with people from other clans or families.

Team instincts help create those levels of alignment.

In some settings, the likelihood of success in hunting and the likelihood of success in war can be increased significantly if you can have more warriors or more hunters from multiple families and clans working together in an aligned way to achieve your goals.

Team Instincts Create A Functional Sense Of “Us”

Our team instincts allow that to happen. Those instincts can fairly quickly give us a new level and sense of “us” that can overcome and override some of our other more divisive us/them instincts and intergroup division factors.

Our team instincts allow us to bring together bigger groups of people than just our own family and clan. When our team instincts are activated, we create a new sense of “us” that is anchored in the team members — and we instinctively feel right in working together to help our new team “us” succeed.

Having a dozen hunters stalking a mammoth or having a dozen hunters working as a team to kill a cave bear creates a higher likelihood of success than having a solo warrior trying to kill either a relatively hairy elephant or a monster-sized and well-clawed bear.

We have strong instincts to never do anything that feels disloyal to our “us” or that causes us to feel like a traitor to our “us.” Those instincts keep us from interacting with people from other groups in some key ways.

Our basic packages of “traitor-avoidance” instincts can often be set aside and made moot when people feel activation of the very basic package of instincts that comes from being a team. We don’t feel disloyal to our family or to our clan if we do that work of hunting together or to the tasks involved in warfare together as a team. Team loyalties can supplement and add to family loyalties as another layer of “us” that lets us get things done that we can’t do with just one family resource.

Team Instincts Trigger A Sense Of Well Being

Our team instincts generally trigger a sense of well being when we do team things together and when we do them well. We tend to feel pleasure from choreographed behaviors and we feel pleasure and reinforcement from joint actions. Teams everywhere find pleasure in doing team things with team members.

People today sometimes take great joy simply in creating “flash mobs,” where people who often don’t even know one another show up in a public setting and do musical dance-like things together as an entirely situational team and then melt away into the community.

That moment of collective choreography seems to make the people who are in those flash mobs very happy. People who do those flash mobs that situationally activate our team instincts have figured out how to become aligned at a personal level with another personal instinct-linked team-centered pleasure point.

At a more macro level, having armies march in step and having armies in uniform can be good for the collective morale of the army and good for the morale of the people from that same “us” group who are watching the parade.

Uniforms everywhere tend to trigger a sense of team alignment. Putting people into uniforms is done in every military setting and it is done in almost every team athletic setting because people feel collective emotional reinforcement and group alignment from wearing the colors and the apparel of their team.

People Will Do Heroic Things For Their Teams

The power of our most basic team instincts needs to be seen to be believed. People will sometimes do heroic things in the best interest of their team.

People will sometimes sacrifice their own well being for team victory or for team survival — all with fully activated team instincts in place making those behaviors “feel right.”

Teams and their fans trigger major levels of instinctive alignment for us in multiple settings. We feel right when we are part of an “us.” The sense of feeling right for being parents and feeling right for being families has its parallel in feeling right by being on a team or supporting a team.

Leaders in any setting can help create internal alignment in their setting that can overpower various internal differences for people by getting people in that setting to function in teams. We tend to feel right doing team things wearing team colors or uniforms and acting in ways that give us the inclusive sense of being part of a team.

Those instincts feel very right when they are activated — and they can help us do important and positive things in an aligned way.

We need to understand how to activate those instincts in our communities to help bring people from diverse groups together in the interest of common goals.

We Need To Activate Team Instincts To Overcome Factors That Divide Us

We need to have team instincts activated in our organizations, schools, worksites, and communities in ways that help us overcome other factors that divide us.

Those instincts are very powerful in positive ways when they are activated.

As we go forward to creating communities in this country that are aligned in positive ways in each community, creating teams of various kinds in each community can help with that effort.

At one level, sharing community support for an athletic team can help create a sense of community identity and even community synergy.

Community celebrations for major athletic team victories can have its own aligning value and benefits.

At a more direct level, having people from all groups working together as teams to improve public health opportunities — to create safe walking trails and safe farmer’s markets for the distribution of healthy food — can give community members a feeling of team-like alignment.

Working in teams to help all of our children get their needed brain exercise in the first months and years of life where the brain benefits the most from that exercise can create similar levels of alignment.

We need to look for opportunities to create various kinds of teams in all community settings.

Mobs Generate The Most Destructive Team Instincts

Mobs create their own perverse team-like alignment energies.

In a much more negative context, it is also possible to trigger collective behaviors for people in very damaging ways by forming classic anger based mobs and by doing damaging mob-like things to other people.

Mobs and riots of various kinds can do serious damage to the people who are targeted by the riots and the mobs. Unfortunately, like forming hierarchies or forming teams, forming mobs is clearly an instinctive behavior.

Mob instincts are among our most dangerous instincts.

Mobs and riots are both very clearly instinctive behaviors.

Every major city police department on the planet has mob control training and mob control equipment. That is a sad and painful reality. That training is in place with police units everywhere because we humans have the unfortunate tendency to periodically form mobs and to act in dangerous and destructive ways against other people.

That tendency to form mobs also has to be instinctive at its core — because that behavior is too universal to be situationally invented by all of

those people in all of those settings. It also has to be instinctive because the emotions, the values, and the thought processes that are triggered by mob behaviors are so powerful in guiding our behaviors that there has to be an instinct triggering that particular package of values and emotions.

It actually can “feel right” at a very basic level to people to function as a mob when those mob instincts are triggered. It can feel right at a very clear level to do damaging things to other people in a mob setting.

People who are in mobs as members of the mob can sometimes have the mobs trigger a particular package of emotions and behaviors that the people in the mob have never felt and will never feel in any other setting.

Those very different behaviors, emotions, and behavioral values created by mob instincts can be a complete surprise to people who have never before at any other time in their lives done anything in any other setting that is as negative and destructive as the behaviors they do in the context of the mob that they are in.

People Who Have Never Been In Mobs Have A Hard Time

Appreciating The Power Of Those Instincts

People who have never had those particular instincts triggered in their own psyche or in their own lives at any point in time often have a very hard time understanding either mob behaviors or their instinctive underpinnings.

A person who has never felt the energy level and the neurochemical surge that results from being in a collective mob setting and then doing collective mob behaviors can have a very hard time understanding how those behaviors and those very negative and damaging situational values are even possible for modern and civilized people.

Explaining those instinctive mob responses to someone who has never felt them is very much like explaining hunting instincts to a non-hunter or explaining either romance, limerence, or lust to a person whose hormones and biological development have not yet triggered the context and the instinct packages that invoke and support those particular sets of instinct-triggered emotions.

What is true beyond dispute is the simple fact that mobs happen. What is also true and beyond dispute or debate is the fact that people in mobs tend to collectively do damaging and often dehumanizing things in the context of the mob and it feels right to the people in the mob to be doing those negative mob based things.

That topic is very relevant to this book on the packages of instincts that directly affect intergroup behaviors because most mob violence in the world is intergroup — with people from one group usually doing damage to individuals from another group or doing damage to groups of people from another group.

The patterns of intergroup mob behavior are very familiar and very similar from setting to setting. The mobs tend to damage people from other groups in very direct ways that only make sense in the context of the mob.

Relatively recent sets of riots in LA ended up with many Korean stores in that city being burned. The riots in Kampala ended up with Indian stores being burned. The mobs in Sri Lanka and Myanmar ended up with Muslim owned stores being burned.

The store-owner survivors from those mob settings whose stores had been burned by the mobs and who were in many cases themselves beaten and abused by the rioters will never forget the horror and the cruel and painfully pure and dangerous depersonalization processes that happened to them as individuals when those riots did their work to set up and enable the evil intergroup behaviors and to trigger the related dysfunctional intergroup value systems in the rioters who had their riot instincts activated.

Lynchings Are A Subset Of Mobs

Lynchings are a subset of riots and mobs. We have literally had hundreds of lynch mobs form in our own history as a country. There are lynchings happening in several countries today.

People who do lynchings in any setting tend to gather together in a depersonalizing group with a collective need and goal to do damage to individuals from another group. Lynchings almost always damage and kill people from a group other than the group of people who make up the members of the lynch mob.

Race has almost always the clear focus of lynch mob behavior on our country. Some of the lynchings that have happened in our country were unspeakably cruel at multiple levels — with purely intentional and deliberate evil and intergroup hate at their racist core.

Mobs and public gatherings in any setting in the world can be a clear indicator of intergroup stress, conflict, and direct intergroup anger. We have had a number of protests, demonstrations, and mobs recently in our own country — usually as the result of an intergroup killing. The *Cusp of Chaos* discusses a number of those incidents and those mobs.

We live in a time when intergroup mobs have formed and done damage in Sri Lanka, London, Paris, and a number of other settings where groups of people are feeling anger relative to other groups of people.

Some Middle Eastern countries have had mobs form that undermined and toppled governments. People in those settings had a clear collective goal and were aligned by their hatred of the people in power in their country.

Most of the mobs, however, have not been aimed at toppling governments as much as they were aimed at damaging people from other groups in those settings. People clearly feel right in those settings bonding together to do that damage to “Them.”

Demonstrations And Protests Also Express Group Anger

To achieve Peace in our country over time, we will need to use demonstrations of various kinds when they are needed to express intergroup anger — but we should work hard to forestall transformation of our various protests and demonstrations into either riots or mobs.

Demonstrations and public protests can have a useful role in letting groups of people communicate unhappiness and displeasure over various circumstances or events.

Marching together in protests can both create a sense of solidarity for the group that is marching, and it can trigger a sense of awareness for other people about the issues that are the focus of the protests. Protests and demonstrations have real value — but we need to avoid having

demonstrations degenerate into the behaviors that function in riots and create intentional damage.

Mobs hurt people. People do not forgive damage done to them in riots. We need to prevent riots. We also need to soften and mitigate the mob behavior and the mob emotions when mobs do form. We also need to prevent ancillary damage that is not related to the protest topic.

Some people take advantage of the opportunity created by demonstrations to loot, steal, and do damage that has nothing to do with the issues that triggered the demonstrations.

In some settings in our country, we have had a number of people go to sites where demonstrations are taking place to respond to negative intergroup interaction — like the shooting of an unarmed Black youth by a White policeman — and those people have used the context of the protest to do damage and to loot stores and homes under the guise and cover of the protest.

The people arrested for looting in a couple of settings were clearly people from other communities who came to those protest sites to loot rather than to protest or demonstrate.

Because we have a strong instinctive desire to protect and defend our “us” in any setting, the Peaceful demonstrators in those settings sometimes

find themselves forced or tempted at an instinctive level to defend the looters — even though the actual point of the protest had not been theft or damage at any level.

We need communities to honor, respect, and work with demonstrators and protesters when situations call for demonstrations and protests.

We also need to keep those kinds of collective group gatherings from turning into mobs — and we need to all work to protect pure looters who link themselves to those events from damaging communities.

Demonstrations Can Create Their Own Solidarity

When there are intergroup issues in any setting that are triggered by an intergroup event that is inflammatory enough to tee up protests and demonstrations, we need to recognize that those issues exist and we need to deal with them as effectively and directly as we can.

People feel a sense of group alignment and group solidarity in the contexts of both protests and demonstrations.

We need to use demonstrations to make the points that need to be made clearly — and we also need to set up the demonstrations and protests to be as inclusive as we can make them to generate the broadest possible level of intergroup solidarity for the issues that exist.

We have strong instincts to feel positive in any settings that generate a sense of group solidarity and group support. Walking down a street arm in arm with kindred spirits generates its own set of group energy and reinforcement.

We need to understand the power of those instinctive emotions and we need to channel them toward intergroup Peace.

Athletic Team Fans Can Trigger Mobs

We clearly need to avoid mobs.

In some settings, fans of athletic teams actually form mobs and do damaging things to other people.

Several U.S. cities have experienced mob violence after major athletic victories — settings where the sheer collective psychological momentum that can be created by having large numbers of people in street crowds with a common celebration agenda can too easily turn into destructive and violent behaviors for the group.

Soccer fields in a great many cities around the world have chain link fencing inside their stadiums to keep the fans of each team from doing collective violence to one another in mob-like settings at games.

There are some people who seem to be addicted to that level of mob behavior who fly from city to city to participate in soccer mobs of various kinds.

Those are not our most attractive instincts, and we need to use our intellect and our enlightened sense of values and commitment to each other to keep them from being relevant in our country.

Mobs burned 10,000 cars in Paris. We will be well served if we do not have any cars burning here.

Team Instincts Can Bring Us Together

We definitely do need to build on our team instincts at multiple levels.

We need to use our team instincts to help us all succeed and do well together. We need to create teams to do key work that we need to do. We need to create community teams to educate our children. We need community teams to improve our population health.

We need teams and we need coalitions to make life better in multiple ways in communities across the country. We need demonstrations that unite us and create community alignment around key issues.

We also need to trigger our creativity in ways that help us all get collectively and continuously better at everything we do.

Our country has prospered in large part because we have encouraged, enabled, and rewarded creativity in areas where other countries have had restrictions, rigidity, and resistance to innovation and change.

We need to continue to have our creative instincts help us continuously improve.