

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# We Need to Be Personally Accountable

ONCE I REALIZED that we can't ever get rid of our instincts, I concluded that we needed to use our intellect in accountable and strategic ways to guide our use of our instincts.

After thinking about those intergroup issues for a number of years, I have come to believe that we each would be well served by deciding to have our intellect guide our lives rather than having our lives guided by our instincts or by our cultures.

We need lives that are guided by decisions made by our intellect to live in enlightened ways and to be guided by enlightened values. We can each decide to go down the path of having our intellect set up our values and directly guide our key behaviors and then we can each choose to act in ways that give us the highest chance of going down that path for our own lives.

After looking at those issues for decades, I now believe that our intellect can and should use both our instincts and our cultures as tools to help us achieve our enlightened goals — rather than having our intellect serve both our instincts and our cultures in blind pursuit and unquestioned service of what are far too often entirely unenlightened and negative directions and goals.

I have a strong belief in accountability as an anchor for that process.

Personal accountability is key. I believe we each need to be personally accountable at an intellectual level for the key behaviors that comprise and constitute our lives.

I have now become a strong believer in us each committing individually to the intentional, fully aware, and enlightened intellectual management of our lives. That is the most responsible and most accountable way to live.

Our intellects need to be in charge. We can't just continue to be victims of our instinctive behaviors, with our lives sculpted by our instincts and with our behaviors choreographed by our cultures.

## **We Need Our Intellect to Rise Above Instincts and Culture**

We need our intellect to rise above both instincts and culture and provide direction and steering to both. We are at the point in human history when we can and should choose to use that strategy to run our lives.

I strongly believe in personal accountability. I think that being accountable is the only ethical way for us each to live. I believe we should each be accountable for what we each do — and I believe our intellect has to be the anchor of that accountability.

I believe that we each can and each should engage our intellect to have us do ethical and enlightened things in our lives. We need to use our instincts as tools in the process because we are incapable of avoiding instincts entirely in what we think, say, or do.

I do not believe that our instincts should run our lives. I do believe, however, that we should, can, and functionally must use our instincts very intentionally in processes that we steer and in ways that we create, shape, design, structure, and guide to give us individually and collectively better and more enlightened lives.

I believe in process improvement. I believe in continuous process improvement as a philosophy, a commitment, a competency, and a core functional life strategy. Continuous improvement, as a skill set and as a life-shaping strategy, can actually help us continuously improve.

## **Our Intellect Can Guide and Steer Our Instincts**

To make that strategy of leading lives that are guided by our intellect a success, I now understand that our intellect needs to work in very intentional ways with our instincts to help us achieve our enlightened goals.

I believe at a functional level that our intellect should use our instincts as tools to support enlightened behavior. I also believe that we should also very intentionally and very carefully use our cultures as key and core tools for that process — rather than having each of us be tools of our cultures.

I now think and believe that we can transcend our negative and most damaging instincts, but that we can only do that functionally by having our basic set of more positive instincts help us guide themselves and us to better instinctive behavior patterns.

We need to involve and invoke our “better angels” to act in ways that are not evil or petty or even less than enlightened. We now need to build our lives and we need to shape and guide our interactions as people and as groups of people based on our “better angel” instinctive behavior package value set.

We all have instincts to be saints and we all have instincts to be sinners. We need to understand how both sets of instincts work and we need to keep our negative instincts from steering us to bad behaviors by having those most negative instincts inactivated, unactivated, or deactivated while we build our world and construct our intergroup settings anchored firmly in our positive instincts packages.

## **My CEO Settings Have Had Multiple Levels of Resources**

I have been blessed with the opportunity in my day job to be a CEO for more than 30 years in several real world settings where I could experiment in real time and in real places with instinctive behavior patterns and triggers.

The organizations I have served as CEO have had up to 200,000 employees, billions of dollars in revenue, and layers of fascinating complexity. I have been

able to use what I have learned about a number of our instincts in very direct ways to help guide and steer those organizations.

I have also had a relatively rare opportunity because of my day job as a health systems leader in our country to visit many other places around the planet and to interact with multiple levels of people in functional and direct capacities in many of the places I have visited.

Over the course of those years of study into instinctive behaviors and intergroup conflicts, I have managed to go personally to more than three-dozen countries. I have been able to make observations, interview people, and do various levels of experiments on instinct related issues in multiple settings across a number of countries.

I have, without exception, found that those experiments and those observations in all of those settings have very consistently reinforced my basic beliefs about the role of instincts and about their power over our lives in both positive and negative ways.

I have never found a single setting in any of those journeys where the basic instinct packages that were on my list of key instincts were not clearly shaping both individual and group behavior.

## **I Have Used Instinct-Based Learning in My Day Job**

That entire instinct study process over all of those years has been both fascinating and very useful. I have actually benefited from using my new and more clearly delineated knowledge of instinctive behaviors in my day job and in my personal life at several levels over the past couple of decades.

At work, I have used my expanded knowledge and study of instinctive behaviors to design hierarchies, to create cultures, and to create both team behaviors and internal and external alignments in appropriate work settings.

I have used that package of instinctive behavior knowledge to improve morale and to enhance organizational performance in the places where I have had a chance to steer those behaviors over the past two decades.

I discovered early in the process that it was actually significantly easier to lead a complex organization when I had a better sense of the instinctive interactions that were relevant to the organization and to its mission. That work and those learning processes are described in more detail in *Primal Pathways*, *Art of InterGroup Peace*, and in *Peace In Our Time*.

### **I Learned That Continuous Process Improvement as a Tool Kit Has Its Own Power to Improve**

The most useful part of that learning process may well have been to combine that study of instinctive behaviors with another work-related study and learning process that I did relative to process improvement related strategies, concepts, approaches, practices and core beliefs.

As I was studying and experimenting with instinctive behaviors in all of those settings, in what was initially a completely separate stream of thought and learning, I also began to develop a strong sense and a deep appreciation of the value that could be created in a work setting by understanding and functionally improving processes in each setting in order to create better outcomes for that setting.

A focus on process reengineering approaches and on continuous improvement theory and practice began to have a major impact on my day job as well.

Process engineering and process re-engineering entered my professional life as a thought process and working paradigm a couple of decades ago and that approach gave me a great set of tools that actually helped make the performance of our care sites better in significant ways.

I learned the tools of continuous improvement on the job and I fell completely in love with those tools.

I truly loved having a systematic, functional way of looking at both problems and opportunities in those complex care settings. Those processes gave me a way to think about problems and issues that have been very useful.

Continuous improvement approaches tend to have very basic and consistent kinds of systematic thought processes as a core component of their functionality. I became a student of Dr. W. Edwards Deming and his continuous quality improvement paradigm and skill set and I learned to use his findings and theories in my work sites.

I became very directly involved in improving organizational performance in my work settings by using continuous improvement approaches systematically to improve both organization approaches and operational processes. I became a Deming student, Deming practitioner, Deming convert, and initially — for a short while — a Deming proselytizer.

I believed in my day job, based on what I saw to be very successful functional use of those tools, that when we looked at outcomes and when we understood outcomes in the context of the actual processes that created them, then we are significantly more likely to succeed in improving those outcomes by systematically improving those relevant processes.

### **Common Causes of Common Problems Was a Key Concept**

I truly loved doing that work. A search for the common causes of common problems was a key part of that Deming-inspired thought process and the continuous improvement skill set.

Germs are a common cause for in-hospital infections, for example. So if we wanted to improve and reduce care site infection rates, then our chance of success was significantly better if we learned to deal systematically, functionally, and creatively in data supported and continuously improving ways with all aspects of situation relevant germs.

Several other industries have done process engineering with great skill and commitment, but process engineering very rarely happened in health care settings back in the early days when we began to do that work. Data and analytical thinking about processes in health care was rare or non-existent at that point in time. That is still true today in far too many care sites.

Focusing on causality and on the consequences of processes become a major part of my approach to my work life and to the organizations I served as CEO.

Using data and processes to systematically change the way we dealt with germs improved care outcomes and it very clearly saved lives. We actually reduced some infection rates in some settings to zero. Zero is a very good number for infections. Particularly for patients.

As I described earlier in this book, we also reduced the death rate for HIV to half of the national average — achieving the lowest death rate in the world and doing it with one of the largest HIV patient populations in our country.

My earlier book *Ending Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Disparities in American Health Care* outlines some of that work and explains some of those processes. Those clearly are some significant disparity problems in overall care delivery — and I explain in that book the process-based ways that we can reduce or eliminate those disparities — using real life examples and actual functional outcomes and successes.

That whole area of systematic process improvement in those work settings has guided me and influenced my intergroup thinking and my strategy building for intergroup issues in several key ways that I believe are extremely useful for the processes involved.

## **A Blend of Deming and Jung – Adepts Became Addicts**

Systematic thinking, I learned, has great functional and operational value in the real world. Addressing common causes for common problems can lead to common and effective solutions.

Continuously improving processes is so rewarding as a way of working and thinking that it becomes almost addictive in its own right once you learn how to do it and once you begin to use the tools in your work environment.

People who become continuous improvement adepts in any setting tend to fall in love with the functional process and tend to become almost addicted to

the perpetual and delightful intellectual challenge of making things continuously better.

Adepts became addicts.

I have seen it happen in a couple of settings.

I personally loved that way of thinking about situations and problems and I plead guilty to having a major energy level focused on that way of thinking.

My personal thinking about our set of intergroup issues at that point in my life became a blend of Deming and Jung. Deming believed in common causes. Jung taught the power of instincts.

Instincts, I believed, actually are the common causes for a wide range of our relevant intergroup universal behaviors. As I noted earlier in this book, I could see fairly easily that our intergroup behaviors across a wide range of settings tended to happen in patterns — and I could see that the intergroup patterns that we were involved in for all of those settings were clearly embedded in a type of process that had instincts as a key component.

So, I came to believe, that if we want to consistently and effectively improve our intergroup behaviors, then we clearly need to deal in some real, direct, intentional, and systematic process-relevant way with the reality of our instincts that relate to our intergroup interactions.

## **Paradigms Help Us Understand the Situation We Are in**

That was a useful, functional, and practical way for me to think. Thinking of instincts as a common cause for those behavior patterns and behavior processes obviously had functional validity and value because it was extremely useful in explaining prior behavior and in predicting and influencing future behavior.

That set of blended beliefs became a paradigm. My working mixture of Deming and Jung became a new and very relevant behavior-guiding paradigm for me to use relative to understanding, predicting, and improving intergroup interactions.



As a general rule, the paradigms that are most useful to us in our lives function both to interpret past data and to predict future data. The instinct-centered approach to interpreting, influencing, and predicting intergroup behavior patterns clearly met that expectation and achieved that goal for me.

I began to focus on the sets of instincts that were most relevant to that set of beliefs and to the key intergroup problems that we faced so that I could use the process improvement tools I loved to help address the consequences and the impacts of those instincts.

### **Continuous Improvement Approaches Can Be Applied to Intergroup Interactions**

I knew from experience in my day job that when we had a common problem in every hospital, we can be very well served by figuring out the common source for those common problems and then dealing effectively in a consistent and continuously improving way with the common source factor.

I knew from my day job of managing a care delivery system that it was much easier to solve problems in 15 sites with one solution set than it is to come up with 15 different responses and 15 separate site-specific solution sets to deal with those same 15 problems.

Because I know that to be true, I assumed that when we figured out how to “solve” instincts, we could use that solution approach that we figured out relative to our instincts in a patterned way in multiple settings to both diagnose and solve intergroup problems in multiple settings and situations.

With that goal in mind, I began to look for process-based ways of getting people to do enlightened and mutually supportive things relative to other people in ways that would diminish intergroup conflict in a wide range of settings.

## **Our History Makes More Sense in the Context of Instincts**

Understanding those instinct packages was particularly useful in helping me build a better personal understanding of our history as a nation. I love history. I have been both a formal and informal student of history for my entire life. I love the drama, the significance, and the relevance of history as a subject matter and as a science.

My history reading changed significantly when I began seeing those basic instinctive intergroup behavior patterns with more clarity.

History changed from being a string of interesting and meaningful incidents and a collection of sequential and situational stories about unique and fascinating individuals and about individually important and incidental historical events into being a factual verification and a functional validation of our most significant patterns of instinctive behaviors.

## **History Does Repeat Itself**

History does repeat itself. It turns out that there are clear instinctive reasons why that is true.

That basic repetition of history can actually be both predicted and interpreted with very useful levels of accuracy when we see the basic patterns of instinctive behavior that guide our history more clearly and when we look at the common sets of situational realities that trigger our instinctive responses.

Defining those instinctive behavior packages has been extremely useful in helping me both figure out what we have done and in figuring out what we need to do now relative to our intergroup interactions. The role of instincts in guiding all of those historical behaviors and all of those intergroup behaviors was increasingly clear to me and the perspective was functionally both logical and useful.

Instincts in each context create behaviors. Behaviors shape our world. Our behaviors create our current situation and they create our history. The linkage is very direct and highly linear.

That insight was useful to me at many levels.

### **Most People Find Those Insights Fascinating and Useful**

I have talked about those issues with many people in many settings. I have used this information at multiple levels to function in my various work assignments. I have also taught some of those points about instinctive behaviors as part of the training process and the strategic thinking agendas for the management staff for a couple of my companies.

A number of key decisions have been made in those work settings with those key patterns of instinctive behavior in mind.

I have also presented those thoughts about the impact of our instinctive behaviors and our need to be individually accountable to quite a few people in a number of group settings.

The reactions from people in various settings to hearing this set of thoughts and this collection of facts about instinctive behaviors have been very consistent. For the most part, the reactions have been consistently affirming, encouraging, and directly reinforcing.

One hospital leader from another major health care system told me that he would remember until the day he died the exact chair he was sitting in when suddenly, clearly, he heard my explanation of those issues and personally understood at a deep level the extreme and direct impact that instincts had on our lives and on his own life and his own functions and behaviors.

A prison warden told me a year after first talking to me that her prison was much safer once she understood those basic intergroup patterns and their origin and stopped thinking about her problems in the context of incidents.

A college president told me that she had gotten her new work team aligned in very effective ways once she deliberately and gracefully triggered some key instinctive perceptions that were needed to have people in her setting realize at an instinct triggering and instinct activating level that she was, in fact, the new Alpha on that particular turf.

I have a brief training piece I often do for women who have just taken on Alpha jobs that helps women with those new Alpha jobs get their troops instinctively aligned with them and instinctively aligned behind them instead of sometimes being behaviorally aligned against them. That particular instinct-anchored hierarchical status alignment approach works well most of the time.

So, I know that those approaches work in real world settings. They have been field-tested and they have passed the test in every field. I know now from a number of experiences that other people can use that same set of information and can use those same instinct alignment tools to get similar results.

Leaders who I have trained to use those approaches tend to find them useful and tend to have success in achieving a number of their instinct-relevant goals.

## **We Tend to Underestimate the Impact of Instincts on Our Lives**

One of the basic challenges that I needed to address in those settings is the fact that most people have relatively low levels of awareness about the power and the impact of instincts in their lives. When I have explained that role of instincts to people, however, my experience has been that a very significant number of people have had very positive reactions and the learning process has been relatively quick.

Many very intelligent people go through the same quick adoption of that basic theory into their own personal thought processes that I had personally had gone through years ago when my Jungian shrink offered that thought about that alignment as a gift to me.

It usually takes only very brief descriptions of turf instincts, tribal instincts, maternal instincts, or us/them instincts to get people in many settings saying —

“Yes — that makes sense. Yes. Things do work that way. Yes — I do think like that. Yes, I can use that information about instinctive behavior patterns to make decisions and to help me lead the place I lead.”

Accountability can be served directly by understanding how those sets of instincts affect our lives. We can become personally accountable — aiming at creating better interpersonal and intergroup interactions in each setting — when we understand how our thoughts are being steered by our instincts and how we can steer our instincts into creating better and more positive interactions.

### **Enlightened Collective Behavior Can End Both Racism and Misogyny**

It took me years to understand in workable terms a number of the very direct and effective ways that we can use our full packages of instincts for the common good.

Enlightened collective behavior that can end racism, end misogyny, and end intergroup conflict has been and continues to be my goal. We can and should make the collective decision to act in more enlightened ways in each of those key areas of interactions. I have seen the strategies outlined in *The Art of InterGroup Peace* book in action and those strategies have been a success in a number of settings.

Our instincts, I came to understand, were clearly part of the problem for our most problematic intergroup interactions. So they clearly needed to be key to the solution.

My goal has been and continues to be for that knowledge about our instincts to be power... the power for each of us and the power for all of us to act in personally accountable ways to overcome our most negative instincts and to build a future built on our most positive and beneficial instincts.

It really does not make any difference if our instinct tool kit and all of the related behavioral science was a gift granted to us by God or if our instinct tool kit evolved through a complex process of evolution with no Divine involvement.

In either case, that package of instincts that we all obviously have clearly is our gift and therefore, it also should be our tool.

It is also our responsibility. We owe it to ourselves to use that gift well.

The strategy that is embedded in these books now is for us all to figure out how to use our instincts as a tool instead of being used as a tool by our instincts.

### **My Day Job Has Let Me Test Those Approaches**

My day job as the senior executive for a couple of complex and resource rich organizations truly has given me a great set of opportunities to both observe behaviors and influence behaviors. I have been able to create functional theories and to refine and expand those theories in the context of actually doing real work with real resources in real and meaningful settings.

Those opportunities have been almost unique. I have been blessed with opportunities.

As the head of multi-billion dollar organizations with hundreds of thousands of employees and with millions of patients and customers, I have been able to do real world experiments on multiple issues and approaches that a more purely academic and theoretical person could not possibly do.

### **A Highly Diverse Organization Achieved the Top Performance Levels**

As I have pointed out and discussed several times earlier in this book, the company I was the chair of when I began writing the most current draft of this book is a \$50 billion health care company. On the day I retired from that job, we had more than 10 million patients; roughly 600 owned care sites, and nearly 200,000 employees and staff members for that organization.

That particular place of employment was a highly diverse organization. Few organizations are more diverse. We had 59 percent of our 200,000 employees coming from one minority group or another.

One of my personal learnings in being the CEO of that particular history diverse and complex setting for more than a decade is that it is possible to

create real and functional synergies and high levels of success in the context of an inclusive diversity if the extremely diverse organization also functions as an operational meritocracy. Meritocracy allows for the best performance from each and every group.

We were very diverse and we were very inclusive at every level. That exceptional diversity has created some exceptional performance results.

### **Medicare, JD Powers, and *Consumer Reports* Gave KP Top Ratings**

That organization currently has the top quality scores in the country from Medicare as both a health plan and a hospital system. We also had the top service award ratings from J.D. Powers and Associates.

The year I retired, *Consumer Reports* gave us their top rating in each major market and those top ratings in each market continue today.

Those wins — and a number of other wins and successes as one of the safest hospital systems in the country — stood as quantifiable and functional proof that the most diverse major health plan and care system in America can also be the highest performing health plan and care system in America.

Our diversity created a real strength. By turning our highly diverse set of people into a collective and aligned “us,” we managed to win top awards as a best place to work and we managed to win top awards as a best place to receive care.

When I say in these books that diversity can be an asset and a performance strength, I speak from the perspective of having experienced exactly that situation and having achieved exactly that outcome and those results.

I am not being theoretical or hypothetical or ideological when I extol the value of diversity in a meritocracy. I am reporting actual functional and operational success and top performance levels in a very large scale setting in the real world.

Those strategies and those related theories work.

Those results and the successes for that organization show that diversity can be a major asset when diversity is aligned and when diversity is directed toward a common good.

## **The Instinctive Packages Have Been Relevant in Other Work Settings**

Over the past three decades, in addition to being the CEO of six different organizations in America. I have also built and managed health plans in both Jamaica and Uganda. I have helped start health plans in Santiago, Chile; Madrid, Spain; and Lagos, Nigeria.

The learning experiences I had in each of those countries involved using the packages of instinctive behaviors that are described in my books to create local success.

Each site in each country gave me a wonderful chance to experiment, to observe, and to learn.

The health plans we started in Uganda were village co-ops — set up a very local level so the local villagers in each setting could have real control over their local health care.

I personally spent time in Uganda in those villages helping to set up those micro health plans using a very intentional approach that created both local governance and local ownership. One of my earlier books — *Healthcare Co-ops In Uganda* — tells the story of those projects. Some people, including my wife, think that is my best book.

I loved going to those places and doing that work. There is a level of learning that happens about people in an area that I received when I worked directly with the local people in each area that I don't believe can be known or seen by tourists or experienced by any level of academic or journalistic observers.

Being involved with local people who are doing very local things in a very local way has a learning level embedded in it that is a real blessing to experience in a direct way.

We did good work in each of those settings.



The World Bank added the Uganda project “a ray of hope” for local health care delivery in developing countries. What we did there is still being used as a model in other settings.

It was a wonderful learning opportunity for me. I actually also had an incredible chance to look at, steer, study, and influence instinctive behaviors in those villages as part of that process.

The health plan I helped set up in Jamaica also gave me several areas of personal, on-the-ground sets of learning experiences that I could not have possibly received from reading, from research, or from simply visiting those areas in that country as an observer.

My personal experiences as the only white face in a number of settings in Jamaica also gave me a great chance to personally understand the experience of being a minority at a direct and personal level that was incredibly useful to me in understanding those issues and those feelings relative to the instinctive reactions that people have to being personally in minority situations everywhere in the world.

I did not have those sets of experiences in Minnesota. I had to be on the ground doing work in Jamaica to experience that particular learning.

## **Chairing a Board Can also Be a Learning Experience**

I have also been blessed with a number of other learning opportunities that were linked to my job over the past couple of decades as I have been writing these books. In addition to being the CEO of six companies, I have served on nearly three-dozen health care related or public policy related boards of directors, commissions, and task forces.

Each of those group settings gave me a chance to interact with key people from a wide range of organizations and interests and to see the functional impact of those instinct packages on their thinking and their behavior.

I spent nearly a decade as the chair of the International Federation of Health Plans. That job gave me the chance to talk in detail on a regular basis in other national settings with health plan leaders from 40 other countries.

Part of our function as an international federation was to have CEO's from health plans in multiple countries get together regularly to explain our countries, our challenges, our problems, and our solutions to one another. I loved that role and that learning opportunity as well.

I have also chaired a dozen other more local health care trade associations and coalitions. The organizations I have chaired in our country include The American Association of Health Insurance Plans, The Partnership for Quality Care, and Safest In America.

The AAHIP National Association of Health Plans has roughly 1,000 member plans that cover, in total roughly 70 percent of all Americans. I have chaired that particular group three separate times. I have chaired it in times when the industry was in a state of concern about various and immediate national health care issues... so I was able to use that role and that forum as a learning opportunity about various interest groups and their points of view as well.

I also served as the chair for the Health Governors for the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and as a participant in The Forum itself. I have worked with several of the Economic Forum activities in both governance and guidance roles. Some of my presentations on various issues to the World Economic Forum are on their website.

That whole range of experiences in being CEO of half a dozen companies and serving in the governance levels of a number of other organizations have all given me a wide range of very real functional and operational opportunities that I used shamelessly to test the various practices and the specific theories that are outlined in *The Art of InterGroup Peace*, *Primal Pathways*, and *Peace In Our Time* the three sister books to this book and the other key pieces of the core curriculum for intergroup learning.

## **Being on the Ground Creates a Very Real and Grounded Perspective**

In each of the countries where I have worked on core delivery issues, I have interacted directly with the people served by those settings.

I was on the ground and met people in the remote clinics of Bangladesh — with Muhammad Yunus as my guide — and I had direct contact on the ground with the patients who received care in the sites of Jamaica.

I talked to caregivers last year in the only care site in Culebra.

That direct first level contact with those sites helps me get a better a sense of what the real issues are in each setting.

As a perpetual learner and a constant experimenter, I have been able to test the instinct-linked approaches in real world settings and I have been able to test them at scale, both in the U.S. and in several other countries.

What I have learned in all of those settings is that our instincts do guide behaviors in very powerful areas.

I have also learned in that array of settings that we do need to accept the status of being personally accountable for who we are and what we do. In each setting, we need to make our instincts tools of our enlightened beliefs and not have our instincts function as blind guides for primal and sometimes primitive behaviors.

We need to define ourselves by what we do.

We also need to understand clearly what we have done in our own country relative to intergroup behaviors in the past. As we go forward to build a culture of intergroup alignment and Peace for us as a country, we need to start with a clear and honest understanding of what we have done in the past and why we did it.

Again, knowledge is power. With that knowledge of our past, we can have increased power over our future.