

Chapter Three — We Need To Avoid Having Any Part Of Us

Be Them

If we want to succeed at The Art of Intergroup Peace — and if we really do want to create a culture of inclusion and mutual success for all groups in America, we need to be very sure not to activate any sets of instincts that cause us to perceive any segment of the population to be “Them.”

We need to create an America of inclusion — with an overarching culture that appreciates, celebrates, and builds on our very real and growing diversity as a country.

We need to create alignment — based on our shared beliefs — as a values-linked American “us.”

We also need people in each community, school, worksite, and organization to have a sense of being an “us” for each setting.

We Need Groups To Be Aligned, Collaborative, And Trusting

We need groups of people in each setting in this country to be aligned, trusting, and collaborative. We clearly need all groups acting in accord with

our collectively agreed upon common goals and our shared agendas, if we want to achieve Intergroup Peace.

We need our behaviors to be aligned with positive intergroup interactions.

We need to create alignments — and we need to protect the alignments we create. It is good strategy to be very protective of any positive alignments that are created.

Any positive alignments we create can far too quickly be impaired. Groups of people who have come together to function collectively in any setting will always tend to have some levels of intergroup distrust — and intergroup division can be reactivated quickly in any setting by any actions that cause people to believe that the other group is truly a “Them.”

Division in a peaceful setting can happen quickly if we insult the other groups or if we deceive or even significantly mislead the other group.

Those intergroup alignments that we create in any setting can obviously be directly damaged if we damage the other group, or if we clearly discriminate in some meaningful or visible way against the other group.

Any instances of clear discrimination against people from another group can be seen as a proof point that the people who are doing discriminatory things deserve to be regarded as a “them.”

That can be a very damaging perception.

If there seem to be instances of discrimination or damage in any setting where we are building intergroup Peace, we need to be able to talk directly with each other about those incidents and situations. We need to be able to deal in an “adult” and trusting way with the other group in that setting, instead of triggering our going to war emotions and our war instincts based on those inflammatory events or those negative behaviors.

We particularly need to avoid insulting other groups. We all instinctively react with great negative energy to insults. A positive intergroup setting can be destroyed and turned into the exact opposite of Peace — with the clear sense that the other group is a “Them” — if anyone from our group insults, demeans, or verbally attacks the other group in that setting.

Making people angry in a confrontational intergroup way is obviously not a good strategy for achieving and maintaining Peace between groups.

Mutual Respect Is A Good Foundation For Peace

We need a positive and proactive strategy for *The Art of Intergroup Peace* that can help reduce the risk of us/them emotions being triggered in us or in the other group. Mutual respect is a good place to start. We need to very intentionally create and very intentionally demonstrate mutual respect between groups and people in each setting.

We need to intentionally be respectful in dealing with other groups of people. We need to be respectful of each other at a very basic human level.

We need to see the other groups of people as also being fellow human beings. We need to respect the culture and the history of the other group of people, and learn to enjoy the diversity of our cultures as a strength for our society. We need to make learning about the other relevant groups in each setting something we do deliberately and do well.

Most groups of people tend to have relatively low levels of understanding about the cultures, history, current situation, and shared values of other groups. We need better learning processes for each of those topics.

We need to learn key information about other groups in order to understand and appreciate those groups.

We need people to get to know people from other groups, so that we can all recognize our shared values and our shared humanity. We need to reach out as individuals and as groups — in person and through various levels of social media contexts.

Trust between people needs to be anchored between people from each group actually knowing other people from other groups. We need those relationships to exist because those kinds of personal interactions can create much better levels of interpersonal understanding and interpersonal trust.

We need to create learning opportunities where we get to know members of other groups as individual human beings so that we do not just see other people only as depersonalized and conceptually objectified stereotypes for their group.

We need people to intentionally befriend and get to know other people across group lines. To make that process easier, it can be done, when possible, in the context of joint efforts that we create together to make things better for us as a community and an American people.

Our Team Instincts Can Help Us Achieve Intergroup Peace

Creating various kinds of teams and acting together as team members can be a key part of that strategy.

Our team instincts are very powerful. We can overcome some of our other basic us/them differentiation factors in almost any setting when we form teams of people from that setting. The chapter of this book that describes the six triggers we have that can create alignment, rates team instincts and team behaviors as a major tool for alignment.

It can be a very good strategy to use a team-based context in each setting to get to know one another better.

There is an ample supply of relevant and important topics for teams in various settings to focus on. We need teams to improve our education efforts and we need teams to give our infants and our children the best start in life.

We need teams that create better population health — through healthy eating and active living collective programs and strategies.

We need to create multiple ways for people to work together in an aligned way to achieve mutual goals in order to both achieve the mutual

goals, and to get together and interact as people who can learn to understand and trust people as a result of their the interactions.

The tactics and the strategies for intergroup learning and context setting that are listed in this chapter of *The Art of Peace* apply both to individuals and to groups.

Those tactics of learning and collectively creating interpersonal linkages between groups apply with particular relevance to group leaders, but they apply to all individual group members as well.

We Need Leaders From Groups To Know Leaders From Other Groups To Build Trust

Leaders are often key to any Peace effort.

In a number of cases, the strategies that are outlined in *The Art of Peace* function in an organizational context that requires formal, deliberate, and direct action by leaders from the various groups to define, structure, and actually accomplish the targeted intergroup interaction.

To make that particular intergroup interaction process successful, it can be very useful to have leaders from our various groups get to know the leaders of other relevant groups. One-to-one understanding and 1-to-1

relationships between key leaders in key groups can be a very important step in the Peace process.

Interactions between leaders need to happen in credible ways — and they are most effective when they involve specific people in leadership positions who personally want to achieve intergroup understanding and intergroup Peace.

That same set of interpersonal linkages needs to be created at non-leadership levels as well. The whole Peace process is enhanced when people interact with people and when understanding results.

We also each need to go through our own process as individuals of personal learning and personal intergroup relationships. We need to get to know each other as people and we need groups of people to have a better sense of the common humanity of other groups of people.

We Need To Know People As People

In our various intergroup settings, we need to each seek out opportunities for direct communications, interpersonal activities, and personal interactions that we can create between individual people from various groups.

When we know another person as a person, it is much easier to move past the stereotypes that we too often use now in ways that let us understand and relate to other people in direct and personal ways.

When we get to know people as people — with shared beliefs and shared values — then intergroup conflicts can be muted because the common humanity of the various groups is understood by people in each of the groups.

Those kinds of new relationships between people from various groups can be somewhat fragile. Unfortunately, there have been too many situations where a flare-up of intergroup anger can destroy the person-to-person relationships that have been built by individual people with one another — but we need to build those relationships anyway as a key step in the Peace process.

Our likelihood of holding on to those relationships in the face of various levels of intergroup stress points can probably be enhanced if the various people involved read books from the intergroup trilogy, and understand more directly the pull away from person-to-person relationships that our instinctive reactions to intergroup interactions and stress can create.

Knowledge is, for that level of understanding, power.

We Need to Expand Our Sense Of Us

Dealing effectively with and ending the negative impact of our us/them instincts is a clear objective of several of the interpersonal connectivity and person-to-person learning strategies.

We need to stop thinking of people from the other groups primarily as “Them.” We need to expand our sense of “us.”

We need to create a broader sense of us so that we can extend our trust and our acceptance to the other groups, and so we can feel instinctively pleased when the other groups succeed and thrive.

We have very good and enlightened behaviors that are possible and that can happen when we perceive someone else to be a type of “us.” We can be supportive in good conscience of whoever we perceive to be an “us.”

We also act in very predictable and negative ways toward who ever we perceive to be a “Them.”

So it is extremely clear that we need to perceive fewer people in each setting as “Them” and we need to perceive more people in each setting to be “us.”

We need to be careful not to activate our us/them instincts in a negative way about other groups of people, in any setting, because the individual values, emotions, and behaviors that can be triggered when a negative us/them activation happens can be so damaging and divisive — and because the group behaviors that can result from us/them instinct activation in any setting can be so destructive.

We need to be very careful not to activate a sense, in any setting, that other people in that setting are “Them.” We need, in each setting, to avoid creating a sense of “Them” — and we need to respond quickly and directly when the threat that people will be perceived to be “Them” exists.

Negative Us/Them Instincts Need To Be Avoided, Minimized, Derailed, Neutralized, Negotiated, Or Replaced

Leaders in any setting — community, corporate, organizational, or even national — should work very hard to be sure those negative “them” perceptions are not triggered and activated in their setting.

The damage and division that stems from the behaviors triggered by those negative instincts should be avoided whenever possible.

When those instincts are intentionally or inadvertently triggered in any setting, then they need to be addressed.

If they continue to be activated in any setting, they will tend to grow in damage levels and power in those settings.

The Art of Intergroup Peace calls for people to deactivate, neutralize, de-energize, defuse, and where possible, simply replace those negative us/them beliefs, emotions, and behaviors with other intergroup interaction levels. Damage can be avoided or minimized with the right interactions. That basic work to keep those instincts from damaging us needs to be done well, because the consequences of having those instincts activated can be significant.

The list below offers six basic sets of responses that we can directly use in response to our more negative Us/Them instincts in any situation where those instincts are at risk of becoming the relevant and dominant responses of people to other people in any setting.

Six Steps Can Offset Those Negative Instincts

There are six parts to the basic us/them instinct risk mitigation approach.

If we want to achieve and protect Peace in a setting where our more negative Intergroup us/them instincts might be activated in ways that could destroy Peace, then we need to have our more negative Us/Them related instincts (1) Avoided, (2) Minimized, (3) Neutralized, (4) Derailed, (5) Negotiated to Truce Status, and (6), whenever possible, Replaced by a larger and more inclusive sense of “Us.”

Each of those six basic response, mitigation, and minimization strategies for our negative us/them instinct activation is explained below. Each has its appropriate role and each has its appropriate time of use. Countries in Europe who are finding themselves in intense us/them instinct activation situations today should look at those six basic approaches in each relevant setting.

Work places, school systems, and various organizations that are at risk of internal us/them instinct activation should look to that list for tools to use to keep those instincts from doing destructive things to people in their setting.

(1) Avoidance Is A Top Priority

The best way of dealing with those negative instincts in most settings is to avoid them entirely. Avoid activating them whenever possible. Full avoidance of having those instincts activated should be a very conscious priority for leaders in intergroup settings.

Those instincts do no damage when their activation is successfully avoided. Whenever possible, the negative side of those instincts should be simply and deliberately avoided.

Avoidance is strategy number one.

That is a very simplistic point to make, but avoidance of our most negative us/them instinct packages is often a very good strategy, and leaders should make avoidance of those instincts a priority. Avoidance is often the best approach.

The consequences of not avoiding instinct activation are usually much more negative than the consequences of avoiding instinct activation. Any thing that can be done that keeps those “Them” instincts from being triggered in a bad way, in any setting, can be both a good strategic approach, and a good tactical choice.

It is much easier to avoid those issues in many settings than it is to mitigate them. So a clear awareness of what behaviors can trigger those instincts in any setting is a good awareness to have.

Leaders, in any setting, should constantly be aware of any factors or situations that might trigger those negative instincts in their setting and activate them. In settings where there are multiple risks for issue activation, that scanning and awareness process by leaders for those instinct triggers should be constant.

We each need to understand the settings we are in and we each need to understand what us/them instinct risks exist in that setting. We clearly need to be on the alert for the intrusion of any new us/them risks in each setting as well.

We need to be on constant alert for any behaviors, actions, communications, or interactions that can trigger negative us/them instinctive responses.

We need to avoid inflammatory language and we need to avoid inflammatory situations.

We need to know from experience and judgment in each setting what situations, events, interactions, communications, and behaviors can trigger those negative instincts, and then we need to very deliberately not do those trigger things in those settings.

When someone else in a setting is acting in ways that create a high risk of the activation of those instincts — it is good for Peace to focus attention on those behaviors and on those persons in ways that can intervene with the activation process and minimize their negative impact.

(2) Minimize The Impact And Relevant Issues

When those instincts actually are triggered in a negative way in any setting, then minimizing their impact is a very good thing to do. We need to minimize the damage and minimize the risk of continued damage from those instincts to the degree possible for each setting.

Speed of response is important and valuable. Doing the work quickly to minimize risk and to reduce levels of damage can be a very good thing to do. Limiting their negative impact by time, or by geography, or by creating interpersonal contact levels that can defuse negative behavior can also all be very good things to do.

Work hard to keep the activated negative instincts that are triggered from taking root in any setting.

Any direct and effective limitation strategy for those activated instincts is generally far better than letting those instinctive reactions take root in any setting, and then spread across the setting to involve growing numbers of relevant people.

The goal needs to be to not allow that package of instincts to spread beyond whatever setting and situation somehow triggered them — if that containment level is at all possible.

When those instincts are being activated in any setting, it is particularly useful to identify the specific activation triggers that are relevant in that situation, and then take steps as effectively as possible to de-activate those specific triggers.

Sometimes an event or a communication of some kind has triggered the instincts. Delineate the trigger events when possible and take steps to stop the triggers for those negative instincts from continuing to incite damage. Respond as quickly as possible to defuse the triggers.

Eternal vigilance is the price of Peace. Be perpetually aware and be quick to respond when those negative triggers are being pulled.

(3) Neutralize

Neutralizing and replacing those negative instincts is also a very good strategy for dealing with that package of instincts once they are activated.

Divert attention from the trigger issues and from the actual activation when diversion is possible. People can sometimes be distracted or diverted by introducing other influencing factors that become people's new focus in that situation and setting.

Offsetting those high risk and negative instincts with other energies, other instincts, or with basic enforcement and cultural tools that keep the instincts from triggering the wrong behaviors, can be a good thing to do.

Overloading people with new issues, new interests, or new focus or factors can sometimes neutralize the negative instincts in a setting. People can't do an infinite number of things simultaneously. When negative "them" instincts are causing reactions in people, try to insert a higher priority into the situation.

Don't make a bad situation worse. Do not increase the level of negative behavior or intergroup anger into the setting to divert people from the initial negative instinct. But do steer people's thoughts whenever possible in directions that get people in that setting to put their energy down a different path.

We have a number of good tools that we can use to direct people down a different path. The six-alignment trigger pyramid that is described in detail later in this book has some good neutralization and situational alignment tools in it. Look to see which alignment tools would be most useful in that setting to offset the triggered sense of "them" when that sense has been triggered.

Distracting the sets of people involved from the current trigger issues can be a very good thing to do. Changing the topic to a topic that captures the collective attention of the at-risk groups can be a good thing to do.

Finding a common ground topic or issue that has enough alignment power to offset a triggered "Them" perception instinct can be effective.

The alignment pyramid has a clear set of triggers that can be used to offset activated us/them thinking. The purpose of each alignment trigger is to get people to function as an aligned group.

Creating a sense of common danger or a common enemy can both take momentum away from whatever situational triggers might be creating a sense of “Them” about one of the groups in a setting.

When people perceive other people inside a setting in a dangerous way to be a “Them” — directing their energy and their thoughts to other sources of external alignment, and to other categories of “Them” can be very useful.

(4) Derail Or Delay The Instinct

When trigger events are creating a high risk of us/them instinct activation, it can be a very good thing to figure out the actual trigger events and re-channel the trigger events, themselves, to a safer place and to a lower degree of confrontations. Try to reduce the immediacy and relevancy of a triggering issue when possible.

As an example, it is possible to re-channel a sense of immediate turf conflict into a larger terrain turf discussion or to re-channel a current,

immediate, and highly situational turf crisis into a multi-year and carefully structured process to make relevant turf related decisions for the relevant parties.

It is sometimes possible to delay a crisis or inflammatory situation by creating a future context that can move the issue at risk into a future time frame. It's hard to un-explode an explosion — but it can be possible to turn the explosion into a discussion, or into a deliberation process, or even into a new area of concern.

Derailing and delaying trigger issues can be a very useful skill set that can keep negatively activated us/them instincts from doing immediate damage in a setting.

Any delay tactic that moves the crisis to a future point in time should be combined with a strategy that involves either resolving the trigger issue at a future point or one that will make it a non-issue for future interactions. Simple delay can be a good thing — but it is even better when it is part of a strategy to keep the issue from being a danger later.

(5) Create A Truce

When those negative us/them instincts have been triggered, and when they are driving behaviors, and when they are creating immediate and negative intergroup emotions or even conflict, then truces can be a necessary and extremely useful next step. Truces can stop immediate damage.

Truces are not always easy to do. But truces can stop the bleeding and put a hold on current damage being done.

Figuring out who in a given setting can actually intervene and who can negotiate a truce of some kind in that setting can often be a very good thing to do to minimize damage from that activated instinct.

Truces need to be negotiated quickly and clearly for maximum impact — but even a bad truce is usually less damaging than open conflict. Chapter Eight of this book lists nine categories of intergroup interaction options — and truces are a very useful component part of that list.

A truce is not an ultimate solution for conflicted groups, but a truce is generally better for an intergroup setting than open and destructive intergroup conflict.

In any given setting, it is important to figure out who from each group has the power and the credibility to negotiate a truce – and then it is good to

work directly with those people very quickly to figure out ways of ending actual conflict and dysfunctional and destructive behaviors.

Truce is almost always far better than open and damaging conflict. An early and proactive truce can be better than a truce that is attempted after conflict in that setting has been damaging, fierce, and prolonged.

In any permanent intergroup setting, it is good to plan in advance to identify who the relevant parties should be and who the negotiators would be who could negotiate and implement a future truce if flare-ups happen and if a truce is needed.

It can be very useful to have figured those issues out in advance, so they don't need to be figured out 'under fire' in a time of crisis. This is an area where proactive thinking can be highly useful in minimizing damage.

(6) Replacement Of Them With Another Category Of Us

Replacement of the other groups "Them" status by connecting the other group to another category of "us" can also defuse those instincts very effectively and very directly in many settings.

That can be the best long-term strategy in some settings for dealing with negative us/them instinct activation. Replacing the us/them instinctive

reactions, emotions, values, and behaviors in a setting that focus on other sets of people as “Them” with a more inclusive and accepting definition of us that includes the other relevant people, as part of our broader sense of us, is a strategy that can be extremely useful in many settings and can create long standing positive results.

The best way to eliminate “them” flare-ups in any setting is generally simply to not have a “them” in that setting. That is the most proactive solution. We don’t trigger our “Them” instincts when there is no “them.”

We don’t generate a sense of “them” when we perceive other people, in any given setting, to be “Us.” We can disagree with “us” — but we don’t hate, despise, fear, and damage “us.”

So the best way of dealing with our negative “them” instincts, for the long haul, is to minimize the sense and the perception that someone in a setting is an instinct-triggering “Them,” and to expand our definition of “us” to include all of the relevant sets and groups of people in that setting. Chapter Six of this book explains that overall strategy in more detail.

Other Instincts Can Exacerbate Our Us/Them Behaviors

The next three chapters of this book describe other sets of key instincts that we have that can compound the intergroup conflict levels that are triggered by our us/them instincts. Our turf instincts, for example, often exacerbate the emotions that are triggered by our us/them instincts.

Those packages of instincts can also each be used as a foundation for Peace — either by channeling those instincts in Peaceful directions, or by avoiding their activation with deliberate strategies that can keep those instincts from being relevant to any setting.

Both rechanneling and avoidance make sense as both strategies and tactics. To do either one, we need to know what those packages of instincts are, and we need to know what all of those instincts do to us and for us. That is the next section of this book.

Successfully Dealing With Us/Them Instincts Solves Major Problems

Successfully dealing with our us/them instincts truly is the key to almost all of our major intergroup problems. Other intergroup instincts are important as well. If we only had turf instincts as individuals, however, those turf instincts would not create intergroup wars. Those instincts might create

interpersonal dislike and interpersonal conflicts, but our turf instincts that are activated at the individual level will not steer us to war.

But when our group turf instincts are tied tightly to our us/them instincts — that combined package of instinctive behaviors have created wars and shed blood all over the planet.

We need to understand our us/them instincts. We need to use them in creative ways to expand our sense of us. Intergroup Peace relies on us having a collective commitment to all groups doing well. That requires us to have some level where we perceive ourselves to be a values-linked American Us.

We also need to deeply fear the truly negative behaviors that can be triggered when we see each other as Them. Those behaviors can be horrible.

Those negative instincts are activated in far too many settings at far too intense levels. Having leaders of various groups calling for other people to be tortured, expelled, damaged, and killed is happening at multiple settings in the world we live in today. Those sets of instincts exist in us all. We need to make sure we do not activate those sets of intergroup instincts here.

Inside organizations — workplaces, schools, associations, and communities — we need to work hard to create a functioning sense of “us” and we need to keep internal subsets of people from having their negative intergroup instincts triggered as warring “Them.”

A key to *The Art of Intergroup Peace* for our entire country is not to have those instincts, in their worst form, ever again activated here.

To keep that from happening, we do need to understand our turf instincts, hierarchical instincts, alpha instincts, and our instincts to never be a traitor to our group.

Those instincts deserve our attention and they are described in the next chapters of this book.