

Lessons From Geese



(Transcribed from a speech given by Angeles Arrien at the 1991 Organizational Development Network, based on the work of Milton Olson.)

"Fact 1: As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an “uplift” for the birds that follow. By flying in “V” formation, the whole flock adds 71% greater flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson: People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier, because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

Fact 2: When a goose falls out of formation it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of flying alone. It quickly moves back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird immediately in front of it.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we stay in formation with those headed where we want to go. We are willing to accept their help, and give our help to others.

Fact 3: When the lead goose tires, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies into the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership. As with geese, people are interdependent on each other’s skills, capabilities and unique arrangements of gifts, talents or resources.

Fact 4: The geese flying in formation honk to encourage those in front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking is encouraging. In groups where there is encouragement the production is greater. The power of encouragement (to stand by one’s heart or core values and encourage the heart and core of others) is the quality of honking we seek.

Fact 5: When a goose gets sick, wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow it down to help or protect it. They stay with it until it dies or is able to fly again. They they launch out with another formation or catch up with the flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as geese, we will stand by each other in difficult times as well as when we are strong."

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