

INTRODUCTION

It infuriates me to be wrong
when I know I'm right.

—Molière

Far too much time and energy are wasted in the world today because we are mired in endless debates about who's right while bickering, politicking, and posturing. It's such a waste because there's a completely different approach available to us—a simple shift, a change of thought pattern and behavior that has the potential to end the world's madness, to heal our relationships, and to regain our humanity (both individually and collectively).

It's available—right now. If we'll only look.

No, it's not some utopian mumbo jumbo, some “Stepford Wives-esque,” robotic approach to shut down conflict and to make people go along. And no, it's not some religion, doctrine, dogma, or chemical. No drugs, no brainwashing, no requirements to “be saved.”

It's something very, very different.

It's this: let's focus on “what's right” instead of “who's right.”

In the thirty-plus years I've been working in the field of organizational development, transformational change, disruptive strategy, and cultural intervention, I've found the shift to “what's right”

WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHO'S RIGHT

is the single most powerful change agent of them all. It's simple; however, that doesn't mean it's *easy*. Difficulties aside, I believe we can do a much better job when it comes to treating one another with dignity and respect—even when we disagree. Or maybe *especially* when we disagree. We're losing our humanity because we're addicted to “being correct” instead of “being connected.”

Now, don't get me wrong. I don't think human nature is perfectible. We've been trying to change our nature for *centuries* through philosophy, religion, and such with some benefits here and there. However, most of our efforts fall short. After all, people are messy creatures who have all kinds of issues and imperfections—and we have opinions, attitudes, personalities, and egos. We aren't alike. Nor should we be alike. However, despite our differences, we can still be aligned.

That's what this book is about. It's about getting messy human beings to choose to be aligned in the midst of disagreement and differences of opinion.

Yes, the world can be a hard place—some things that people do to one another shock and stun us.

Just watch the news on any given day, and you can see members of the fringes of our society hurting and killing one another. In my work as an organizational change consultant, I all too often see mean, ugly, violent behaviors. However, these behaviors are often rooted in pain, worthiness issues, fear, and other “unprocessed suffering.” The older I get, the more I realize that ugly responses to ugly behavior just create more ugliness, and the wise teachings of our elders are correct. Gandhi said, “Be the change you want to see.” Here’s what this means to me: If we want more love, peace, understanding, and healing in the world, we need to *be* love, *be* peace, *be* understanding, and *be* healing. Oh—and something I think Gandhi might have said as a footnote—“Be the change you want to see, even when it’s hard, even when it’s inconvenient, and even when you risk ridicule and possible violent reactions.” There’s a new way to look at this idea, true?

The single most powerful way to *be* all the things I mentioned above is to shift your consciousness, your thinking, the lens through which you see the world. Focus on *what’s right*, *not who’s right*, and you

WHAT'S RIGHT, NOT WHO'S RIGHT

start to *be* those things. No question, it takes a certain kind of leader to have the patience to search for what's right instead of pushing the who's right button. "Because I said so" didn't work when we were children; why should we think it would work with adults? Leaders with this kind of patience don't think less "of" themselves; they just think less "about" themselves. Their mantra? "The needs of the many outweigh the egos of the few." Or stated another way, these kinds of leaders take situations seriously, but not themselves. *Be* the change you want to see—great advice. Let's try it.

To get into and *stay* in the energy of "what's right, not who's right," there's a list of insights I've found to be helpful (I'll dig into each in more detail in subsequent chapters):

- Some suffering is often needed before transformation is possible.
- See the value in our collective humanity.
- Recognize that it's more important to be connected than to be correct.
- Two wrongs never create a right.

- Be kind; everyone is struggling with something.
- Humanize rather than demonize “the other.”
- Manage the energy *you* bring to the situation.
- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Keep “what’s right” in front.
- Heal yourself so you can be a healing force in the world.

By doing these things, we leverage the power in “what’s right” instead of dealing with the toxicity of “who’s right,” and the world around us transforms. We rethink our thinking and reimagine our leadership style as a result. Plan on it!