



Lessons from Geese

This was transcribed from a speech given by Angeles Arrien at the 1991 Organizational Development Network, based on work of Milton Olson.

Fact 1: As each goose flaps its wings, it creates 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 and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediate in front.

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

Fact 3: When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies to 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 from behind 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 the formation and follow it down to help and protect it. They stay with it until it is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation or catch up with the flock.

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