

Enlightened Leadership

My younger sister, Susan, and I had our fair share of normal childhood squabbles. Our mother – being a wise and patient schoolteacher – was very skilled at stopping us before we reached the point of all-out battle. But, on those rare occasions when we frazzled her last nerve, she would reach into her bag of tricks and pull out her ultimate “cease and desist” strategy.

“Just wait until your father comes home!”

Snap. Just like that, Susan and I would call a truce. No doubt about it. Regardless of how strongly we disagreed on an issue, there was one thing we could both agree on. Neither one of us wanted to make our dad angry. Susan had my dad wrapped around her little finger and didn’t want to jeopardize her privileged status. Me? I was just plain scared of him. The last thing I wanted was to endure his wrath. So ...united by our shared desire to keep Dad happy, we would find something else to entertain us.

As a leader, what does this mean for you? Simply stated, shared values are a short cut to resolving conflict, finding win-win solutions and uniting the heads and hearts of people.

Look around you. Shared values are quietly at work everywhere. Devoted fans cheering for a losing team week after week.

Political factions lobbying loudly for their chosen cause. Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Book clubs filled with avid readers. Work groups driving toward a specific goal. Shared values are the foundation and super glue holding people together through thick and thin.

Think about it: the quickest way to stop a disagreement and bring people together is by finding their common ground. What do they all agree on? These points of common agreement are shared values. Despite our differences, Susan and I could quickly agree that we would be better off if Dad wasn’t angry.

Find the shared values and you dis-

cover the starting point of agreement. In some situations, shared values are obvious. In other situations, the shared values may be buried under a muddy layer of anger, strong opinions and competing agendas. Don’t lose heart. The shared values are still there. You just can’t easily see them. In these muddy situations, you may need to go way upstream to find a shared value. Look for something simple that everyone can agree on. For example, most people can agree that it is important to be respected and valued as a person.

Remember: It’s hard to fight standing side-by-side and looking in the same direction. ■

3 Questions to Identify Shared Values

1. What do you and the other person both value?
2. What can you appreciate about the other person’s situation – even when you disagree?
3. What does the other person want that you can also want for him/her?



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