



Applying the Ethics of Collaboration

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Upcoming Events

With [David Gleason](#)

Community Roundtable Meetings:

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 8:30-10AM at [Bob's Chocolate Cafe](#), 1 Main St., Franconia, NH 03043

- ***Applying the Ethics of Collaboration***, June 24
- ***Doing Well by Doing Good***, July 8 & 22

All are Open to the Public

Good morning and happy Friday!

There's tons of resources out there on collaboration techniques, tricks, tips, and so on (see "Read More" below). So rather than rehearsing all the standard stuff again, this newsletter explains the ethical behaviors that lead to the joy of collaborating when everyone is striving to bring their "best self" to the table.

This feels imperative to me: *Humanity must figure out how to get along better*, because collective solutions to our biggest problems require effective collaboration at every scale of global society... it's daunting, so we better get started!

-David

Summary

Whether we recognize it or not, working well with others is required for survival. Meeting basic needs like food, shelter, and clothing necessitates cooperative trade, at least. Collaborating isn't just a social convenience—it's our species' greatest evolutionary advantage.

Homo sapiens have taken over the globe because 300,000 years ago we learned to collaborate. We hunted together, built villages, established cities, created markets, and developed institutions coordinating millions of people. Today we extend that capacity into cyberspace and artificial intelligence.

Yet collaboration is not automatic. It requires clear and shared goals, focused attention, ethical habits, emotional maturity, and deliberate effort. In a world increasingly driven by rage, distraction, and polarization, a return to our fundamental evolutionary advantage remains humanity's best hope.

Collaboration Requires Emotional Maturity

What's your collaborative style? Guaranteed it's shaped by what you value—the people and things you care about, your goals and motivations, your self-perception. They manifest in your interests, reactions, and behaviors, to name a few.

Some argue that someone must be in charge, dominant, in control. But a good family vacation, business venture or community event all require that you work well with others. Direction and collaboration a different approaches.

Humans are programmed to collaborate on shared goals the way lions are programmed to hunt. We often help out a stranger in trouble, even at risk to ourselves—it's instinctive.

Emotional Reactivity

Such reactions are *preconscious*—emotional responses triggered deep in the central nervous system—activated before the rational mind knows what's

happening. These vital responses help us protect our kids both on the savannah and in traffic alike.

But there's a down side: strong fear and anger emotions also fire instantly, like when a boss turns mean during a meeting, triggering an adrenaline rush, elevated pulse, sweating, etc., and leaving us debilitated in a fight, flee, or freeze state of mind.

Staying Calm

Fortunately, we can train ourselves to react more calmly. Practices like cognitive behavior and exposure therapy, team-building, yoga, and meditation quiet our emotions so that they can inform without overwhelming us.

And we need calm these days—tech, economic challenges, and harsh conflict have us stressed, hyper-vigilant, hyper-reactive, and news-hijacked into emotional knots. Drinking from the firehose is our default mode these days.

As an antidote, keeping our wits requires quiet emotions and an attentive mind. Training ourselves to internally collaborate between emotions and reason leads, in Aristotle's framework, to "good character" and "virtue." With practice, we can remain mindfully present during that high-stress meeting or family crises when attentive collaboration is critical.

One of the simplest ways to improve collaboration is to create a small space between feeling and acting, like taking a breath, asking a question, and considering alternative interpretations.

Cooperation, Teamwork, and Collaboration

Consider three increasingly sophisticated levels of goal-oriented activity:

- *Transactional cooperation*: People coordinate actions to achieve a specific goal or fulfill an obligation.
- *Teamwork* involves people with complementary skills working together toward a common objective. It requires real-time communication, trust, and accountability.
- *Collaboration* goes further. Participants share ownership of both the process and the outcome. They generate ideas collectively, solve problems creatively, and produce the novel and life-saving results (like vaccines) that no individual could achieve alone.

Most of humanity's greatest achievements—from agriculture to modern science—have emerged from this highest level of collective effort.

Curate Collaborative Resources

Collaboration requires institutions, reliable information, and multilateral dialog. By contrast, online advertisers buy user engagement by deliberately triggering fear, outrage, and seduction. As AI slop proliferates, shared and trustworthy sources become ever more critical.

Instead, choose where to focus your attention: doom scrolling before getting out of bed is bad for you!

Practical Strategies to Consider:

- Limiting outrage-driven media and .
- Seeking diverse viewpoints.
- Spending more time in direct human conversation.
- Focusing on information that helps you act constructively.

Communication

Every meaningful relationship depends on communication. And if collaboration is humanity's greatest advantage, and we want to understand before acting, then active listening is our most powerful skill.

- Set and document clear goals; keep work focused
- Establish protocols, resources and repositories
- Proact: repeat back, acknowledge, and improvise solutions.
- Ask questions: replace assumptions with curiosity.

Bonus: people become far more cooperative when they feel heard.

Practical Strategies

1. Set shared, documented goals.
2. Invest in team-building, share credit generously, and support the success of others.
3. Be transparent about challenges, develop continuous improvement loops, and use disagreements productively.
4. Follow through on commitments.
5. Listen and pause before reacting
6. Share credit and successes publicly.
7. Focus on collective problem-solving.

These practices cost nothing, yet they transform outcomes over time.

In Sum

The ethics of collaboration is not abstract philosophy. It is a daily personal discipline in quieting the mind and reactivity, and then bringing our best selves into relationships, work, and public life.

Every conversation presents a choice: compete or cooperate, react or reflect, divide or connect.

Most of the time, the future is shaped not by dramatic events but by these ordinary interactions repeated day after day. The way we speak, listen, disagree, encourage, and cooperate gradually creates both our own character and the culture around us.

If we want stronger families, healthier workplaces, better communities, and a more peaceful society, the place to begin is surprisingly close – with ourselves and our ability to collaborate with others.

Read More

- [*iPhone generation predicted in 1993 on Northern Exposure*](#) from VeritasIncrebresco on YouTube
- [*4 Essential Collaboration Skills & How to Develop Them for Workplace Success*](#) from FranklinCovey
- [*Ezra Klein Interview with Yuval Noah Harari, NYT Podcast*](#)
- [*14 Companies That Love Collaboration – And Are Good At It*](#) from Purpose.jobs
- [*"The REAL Lord of the Flies"*](#) - Seth Meyers with Rutger Bregman, YouTube Short

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