

Lessons From The Geese

by Dr. Robert McNeish

(People with disabilities, parents, staff, businesses, etc., all need to work together. Synergy is the concept that when we all work together the end result is greater than if each of us acts independently. There's a great deal to be learned from the teamwork shown in Lessons from the Geese.)



As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an "uplift" for the bird following. By flying in a "V" formation, the whole flock adds 71% more 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.

Whenever a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone, and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the "lifting power" of the bird immediately in front.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as a goose, we will join in formations with those who are headed where we want to go.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Lesson: It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership – with people, as with geese, interdependent with one other.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging - not something less helpful.

When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow member down to help provide protection. They stay with this member of the flock until he or she is either able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation, or catch up with their own flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll stand by each other like that.

Lessons from the Geese, was written in 1972 by Dr. Robert McNeish of Baltimore. Dr. McNeish, for many years a science teacher before he became involved in school administration, had been intrigued with observing geese for years and first wrote the piece for a sermon he delivered in his church.