

A Leadership Lesson Within a Civics Lesson

By Michael J. Farlow, PhD

A number of you know I read the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) and encourage clients to do the same—to broaden their views. In the Saturday/Sunday edition (July 20-21) this weekend, Peggy Noonan has a piece called *America Needs to Rediscover Tact*. The outward reason for the article is to address our nation's lack of civility these days. However, as always, there is a lesson within a lesson. Think tact.

She says in part "... we have to give each other a little room. A little space. We have so many different thoughts and ways. We have to be easy with each other, not pick on each other all the time.

"This requires tact, which sounds sissy and small time, but it is not. Tact takes brains and discipline. It's a form of empathy [where have you heard that before?]: You see the other guy is embarrassed or unhappy [or maybe not doing a good job at the moment], and you decide not to make it worse. You hold back from causing unnecessary pain. It is connected with graciousness: You let your foe up easy."

Unfortunately, Ms. Noonan says, we as a nation and, in my view, as organizations, need to embrace tact/empathy or we won't hold together and survive. Remember to put yourself in the other person's shoes. Why are they doing what they do? Then, ask yourself what you can do to help. As I always say, leadership is all about making a difference—mostly in other people's lives.

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