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Ending the Blame Game

We went away on vacation for awhile this summer. One of the opportunities that resulted from our travels was seeing the daily news reported in different settings. We noted something interesting. Whether the news being considered was international or local, commentary was readily available and differing opinions about the causes of problems were plentiful. Apparently, whether we are here or halfway across the world, we humans like to analyze our problems at great depth and look for culprits.

Who is to blame? On many issues, pundits are ready to weigh in on all sides of this question with equal certainty. Yet, for all that, resolution of some of our most difficult issues seems no nearer. The “blame game” is frustrating at its best, and a contributor to further misunderstanding, at its worst.

Truthfully, we need a solution more than we need an analysis of many of these vexing problems. We need a cure more than we need a diagnosis. Sometimes even our own personal issues remain unresolved as we debate their origins, who should take fault for our problems, and why it is unfair that we should be experiencing them in the first place.

Recently we heard a story that stood in such stark contrast to this “blame game” that it caught our attention and made us stop to consider its applicability to our own circumstances. Here is the tale. It seems that a Special Olympics was held several years back in Seattle. The hundred yard dash was to be one of its major events. When time came, ten competitors, each with a mental or physical handicap, stood at the starting line, ready to go at the sound of the gun. The gun sounded and all ten took off. But one of the ten runners, a young boy, immediately fell and rolled on the track, unable to regain his footing and continue. He cried out in anguish and frustration. The other nine runners heard his cry and stopped. They turned and every one of them went back to the starting line. One of the girls in the race bent to kiss the cheek of the fallen boy and said compassionately, “There, now it will be better.” Then the nine helped the fallen boy to stand, and all ten walked, arm in arm, to the finish line together.

That day at the Special Olympics there was no analysis of the causes for the boy’s fall, no discussion of who was responsible, no commentary on who should be blamed. Instead the bleachers, filled to capacity, erupted with cheers that lasted for several minutes. Who could have anticipated an event where all ten competitors turned in the winning time?

Maybe our own problems, so often resistant to conclusive analysis, may nevertheless be ripe for simple intervention. Perhaps with the administration of compassion and the willingness to help one another stand and walk, an entirely unanticipated, but thoroughly welcome result may occur: less blame, more winners at the finish line. Wouldn’t that be worth cheering for?