

# GUYdelines

A few thoughts for outdoor lovers and leaders from

*WILD GUYde Adventures*, LLC

Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring, 2018)

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## TEAM: Together Everyone Achieves More

**The backpacking story:** On every group backpacking trip that I have taken (and I have been on a lot), there comes a day when one group member is struggling. It might be fitness level on a tough climbing day, or digestive discomfort or a leg injury like tendonitis or a blister, but they are not going to make it. And when it becomes clear what the issues are, I will go to Hurtin' Harry and say, "Now I know this will be hard for you to agree to, but we would like to split your pack and let you carry on with a reduced load today." Now there is a lot of resistance at this point, and it traces to two sources. One, *pride* is at stake. Splitting my load means that I am not carrying my part, and that attacks my self-definition as capable and strong. Closely related to this is a misconception of *team*. Many people simplistically and mistakenly believe that team means that everyone carries their load – meaning everyone has the same expected of them. But this is not true. We are all different with different strengths and capabilities. And this can even change by the day. Today, Gung-Ho Gary is

feeling strong and ready, and Hurtin' Harry is feeling weak and out of it. But tomorrow, Gary may be having rough day, and will need the help that Harry or someone else can provide. Moreover, NOT splitting your load means the whole group



**Lester, Ethan, and Aaron (WILD CHYLDs Nos. 1 and 3) at the Virginia Adventure Education Conference in February. A great chance to connect with other outdoor leaders from around the Old Dominion!**

must adjust its output down to the level of the weakest member. Why would we NOT load Gung-Ho Gary up today, and use his excess energy, and thus also allow Hurtin' Harry to have success at his current capability? This misconception persists in the realm of marriage. Folks say marriage needs to be 50-50, but my marriage rarely is. There are days, for example when I had my recent shoulder surgery, when our marriage was 90-10, with Robin carrying most of the house care duties, as well as

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Lester R. Zook, *WILD GUYde Adventures*  
1047 Stuart St.

Harrisonburg, VA 22802 (540) 433-1637  
[lester@wildguyde.com](mailto:lester@wildguyde.com)

taking care of me. And there are days, like after her 4 childbirths, when she needs me to step it up to 80-20 or whatever. The point is, a good team is not marked by identical workload and responsibilities, but by a flexibility and responsiveness to each situation and an ability to adjust; eventually, good teamwork will look like *“individual capabilities identified and utilized, and individual limitations acknowledged, accommodated and neutralized.”* What this means is that on a highly performing team, not everyone will do exactly the same. Some people have particular strengths and abilities, and these should be identified and utilized. And others have particular weaknesses or needs and these can be freely acknowledged and accommodated. This is a better picture of an effective team. As they say in marriage and sports, *“If you and your partner are identical, one of you is not necessary!”* And when you think about this deeply, you will come to the not-so-surprising conclusion that what makes all this possible is TRUST.

Could you help your team (workplace, family) achieve more by starting an honest conversation about the strengths that each person has to bring to the table, and the weaknesses that each needs help with? What kinds of trust might be necessary to have this conversation be candid and productive? More on trust next time; we will look at *the trust foundation* of relationships, and how this applies to team and leadership. Happy adventuring out there! **LRZ**

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