

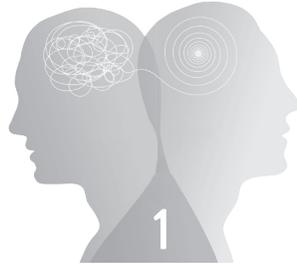
Enemy Mode is a brain state that occurs everyday where a person experiences others as adversaries. The authors put years of research to the test in assessing the possibility of loving one's enemies. This book is for all who desire harmonious relationships at home, at work, and in their communities.

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ENEMY MODE IN DAILY LIFE

THE GROCERY STORY WAS NEARLY EMPTY when Jim heard metal hit metal. He turned to see a woman in her seventies repeatedly smashing her grocery cart into the cart of a woman half her age. It was the early 2020s—a global pandemic was raging, and enemy mode was spreading more rapidly than COVID-19. The older woman’s shouting was muffled by the mask she wore. The younger woman wore no mask. The younger woman glared silently, but belligerently, at her assailant. A man in his twenties intervened almost instantly. “Get away from her,” he told the older woman. “She is going to get you sick. Stay away from her.”

All three brains were in enemy mode. Because of Jim’s background in neuropsychology, he suspected that a specific brain state was causing a rapid transmission of alienation from person to person. The human brain is a natural amplifier, easily detecting unfriendly signals and returning them with more intensity. Enemy mode feels as if “you are not on my side.” We don’t like people being against us. We don’t like the way

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enemy mode feels. Suspicion, wariness, and hostility toward others, even those trying to help, follows. Relational joy levels drop drastically.

Most shoppers would have recognized the COVID symptoms as a fever and dry cough. Few would recognize the symptoms of enemy mode in the brain as they stared at the banging carts, angry faces, and rapidly escalating hostility that was sucking them into the conflict. Instead, bystanders blamed the conflict on differing beliefs about COVID between the two ladies. Yet, shoppers who were not banging carts also held differing beliefs.

ENEMY MODE SYMPTOMS VARY

Could one brain state explain why we hate, stop listening, stop talking, start blaming, raise our voices, see others as against us, want them to lose, unfriend, post nasty remarks online, sue others, fall out of love, divorce, stop caring, abuse, bully, feel alienated, despise a politician, race or religious group, start wars, or carry out a genocide? Those reactions may be hot and cold, attacking and withdrawing, silent and loud. The elderly woman with the demolition derby grocery cart was in a hot and angry enemy mode. The younger lady in the store without a mask was in a cold and calculating enemy mode. The same person can be in either at different times. Opposite beliefs and both sides of an issue can react alike. Could one brain state create a whole range of social issues from genocides to lynchings, from domestic violence to confrontations in our local supermarkets? What can these social issues have in common? If there is a brain state behind these symptoms, then knowing how it starts, spreads contagiously, and lingers could help us escape enemy mode.

Characteristics of a Brain in Enemy Mode

- wants the “enemy to lose”
- can’t discern when others are trying to help
- recruits others to attack the enemy
- feels justified in hating
- sees other people’s motives as “bad”
- turns people into objects (not fellow humans)
- feels alone (no one on “my” side)
- will often attack or withdraw from allies
- sees enemy mode as a strength

After Jim witnessed the altercation at the supermarket, he realized that recognizing enemy mode did not help him stop it. Enemy mode spreads quickly but dissipates slowly. Words easily escalate enemy mode but are rarely enough to disarm it. As soon as people in enemy mode start talking, they can more easily lose friends. People want the other person to lose and find it rather hard to “let go” or “move on.” Battles can be long and expenses huge. Sometimes people die.

Law enforcement is often called into enemy mode situations to try and stop the damage, so Jim went to see what his friend Ed Khouri knew. Khouri served in law enforcement for years and saw police officers face, and also exhibit, both cold and hot enemy mode. Either kind could escalate dangerously. For instance, domestic violence calls inevitably put officers between people in enemy mode. A brain in enemy mode cannot tell when others are trying to help. For those involved, having officers present felt like a threat, not a help. If the officers themselves went into enemy mode, they increased the use of force rather than de-escalated the situation. Khouri’s stories made it clear that engaging people who

are in enemy mode should only be attempted by people who are not.

Neutralizing enemy mode was sounding like disarming a ticking bomb. Jim worked for Life Model Works, an organization that aimed to solve such problems. When the shopping carts began colliding, Jim recognized enemy mode quickly, but was unable to help anyone escape. That bothered him, but that was also his job. Jim felt his shoulders getting tight. He needed to know what made the bomb tick.

The Army General Joins the Quest

Jim's Board of Directors informed him that Ray Woolridge, a retired US Army Brigadier General, had been hired as Executive Director of Life Model Works. The General should know something about enemy mode, but would Ray endorse getting *out* of enemy mode? Would a General consider enemy mode a weakness or an asset?

Most of Jim's childhood friends, neighbors, and teachers had been Mennonites or Brethren pacifists. These traditions, along with "plain people" like the Amish, refused military service during the religious wars between Protestants and Catholics that spread across Europe for centuries. Would the General be on his side, Jim wondered? Of course, feeling that someone is not on your side could be a symptom of enemy mode starting between him and the General.

Jim's job was converting the best brain science and theory into the simplest real-life applications. Ray joined Jim's work applying neuroscience to build resilient people and cultures. On the trauma recovery side, they helped people recover from damage that family, tribe, race, religion, and nationality had done to them through people in enemy mode. On the resilience side, they taught relational skills that built joyful relationships.

Ray admired Jim's work and was beginning to grasp that staying relational was the opposite of enemy mode, but could he live that out? Ray didn't know if he could stay relational in his personal life, much less while leading an organization. Ray was about to be working on himself.

He knew he could get things done by ignoring relational cues. Ray sensed an inner impression: “Rush to relationships; the tasks will take care of themselves!” Could he embody this impression? Could Ray lead a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people become more relational?

The world’s 2.4 billion Christians constitute one of every five people on earth. The Life Model Works’ “big hairy audacious goal”¹ was training these Christians to form caring attachments with their enemies spontaneously—a seemingly impossible mission. According to their founder, Christians should be distinguished by their ability and eagerness to form good relationships with people who act like enemies. “Love your enemies,” Jesus said.² The Life Model Works strategy was to teach this largest religious group on earth how to do what they claim to believe. Jim and Ray were aiming to help the world stop living as enemies. The question was “How?” Were there helpful solutions that actually worked?

What is your impression of Christians? The US has a higher percentage of Christians than most of the world. Statistically, two out of every three people in enemy mode at the grocery store would consider themselves Christian. Yet, Jim saw no one get out of enemy mode or, for that matter, seem to even try.

John Lennon imagined a world without religion. Ray and Jim imagined a world where people did what they said they believed. What would life be like if one out of every five people actively, skillfully, and enthusiastically loved their enemies? This book is for all who hope our best selves will become friends, not enemies.

ENEMY MODE CREATES RELATIONAL BLINDNESS

The trouble is that enemy mode produces relational blindness and keeps us from seeing people as fellow humans with value. Some people succumb to this more easily than others. Jim needed to know much more about the process. He decided to observe everything he

could about enemy mode. Since enemy mode doesn't dissipate quickly, it proves easy to observe. Could careful study reveal a way to slow or even prevent its spread?

Jim knew that signals pass through the brain in a specific order. Damage along the path will block the signal flow. Visual blindness happens for several reasons: no light gets into the eyes, the eye is damaged, nerves to the brain are damaged, the occipital lobe of the brain is injured, or signals from the visual cortex do not reach other parts of the brain. In this last case, people might be blind but are still able to avoid obstacles they could not consciously see.

Jim's mother suddenly lost her vision in half of each eye when she was in her seventies. The problem was not in her eyes, but rather down the signal path beyond the optic chiasma on one side of her head. X-rays revealed that a cyst filled with cerebral-spinal fluid was putting pressure on the right side of her brain. She would need brain surgery.

Jim's dad called the doctor as soon as these symptoms appeared. He recognized that having only half of one's vision was not normal. Several years before, however, he'd also noticed that his wife had stopped seeing other people's points of view. She only had "vision" for her own opinion and perspective. When it came to dealing with others, she only "saw" one side—her own. The growing cyst was causing both her visual and her relational blindness. Jim's dad did not call the doctor. To him this self-oriented, self-absorbed, and relationally blind half-vision seemed normal enough even though his wife hadn't always been that way.

If seeing both sides is normal, that means people who don't have that capacity are experiencing some kind of pressure, not usually from a cyst, but rather from emotional and relational sources. The inability to see other people's points of view is a symptom of something abnormal in the brain.

MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE GROCERY STORE . . .

After the initial altercation between the two women, Jim became aware of other shoppers showing symptoms of enemy mode. A man walking down Jim's aisle glanced with contempt at the traffic flow arrow—a product of early COVID protocols—taped to the grocery store floor. His face said, “I dare you to say something to me.” A brain in enemy mode is blind to others' motives and thinks everyone else is in enemy mode as well. A brain in enemy mode sees other people's motives as “bad” without the slightest curiosity about what is in the other's mind. Helping others out of enemy mode can be dangerous; helpers are frequently attacked.

In another section of the store, the cart-crashing woman was agitatedly telling her side of the mask issue to anyone who would listen. A brain in enemy mode recruits others to resist or attack the enemy. Sometimes a brain in enemy mode feels like “I'm fighting for my life” and escalates a conflict, blind to the damage created.

The younger woman without a mask passed Jim while avoiding eye contact, thus increasing her relational blindness. Her expression would have melted asphalt. A brain in enemy mode wants the other side to lose. Making others lose is a “win” in enemy mode, regardless of the cost.

As Jim neared the checkout, a middle-aged man with earphones pushed past. He was not angry but was relationally blind at the moment; he simply didn't notice that the obstacles in his path were human. A brain in enemy mode turns



A brain in enemy mode:

- **sees other people's motives as “bad”**
- **recruits others to resist or attack the enemy**
- **wants the other side to lose**
- **turns people into something like inanimate objects**



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people into something like inanimate objects. Annoyed looks shot his way didn't register with him. He had created a mild enemy reaction in others.

Since enemy mode sees other people more like objects than humans, shouldn't we suspect something went wrong in the brain? The brain uses the posterior cingulate cortex to recognize members of our species. The cingulate is one of the most vulnerable areas of the brain when it comes to injury or toxins. It is also vulnerable to fatigue and stress. When impaired, the cingulate fails to respond to members of our species and cannot distinguish them from objects like rocks, hats, or chairs.

Just as there is a pathway for visual signals passing through the brain that converts light into vision, there is a pathway for signals that reveal we are with another sentient human being. This social awareness pathway travels directly through the cingulate. If cingulate processing fails, we become relationally blind. While the cingulate is only one part of the pathway we need for relational vision, as we will see, the practical question is how we get the pathway working once again when something goes wrong.

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We might think the solution is to avoid enemy mode in the first place. The problem is, simple avoidance doesn't work. Slipping into enemy mode is too quick and easy, and it spreads just as quickly and easily. And once the brain has identified a specific person or topic as the enemy, it responds even faster the next time. We can become increasingly lonely and depressed . . . unless we get faster at "refriending." The brain systems that detect potential danger can "unfriend" others before we are even conscious that we have seen them. This speed can be protective but very reactive and unfair. The speed is meant as a warning to the brain and not as a final rejection of others. While this warning is hardwired in the brain, the refriending process must be learned.

While going into enemy mode is like falling down a hill, re-friending is more like walking up the hill. Re-friending is the process of changing how we react to others, from antagonism to finding the best outcome for both sides.

That day in the grocery store, Jim left feeling frustrated. Despite everything he knew as a neuroscientist, he was unable to help anyone in the store re-friend their “enemies.” Recognizing the different styles of enemy mode and knowing how people got there wasn’t helping anyone re-friend. Could he “reverse engineer” enemy mode and find practical ways to escape it? The brain is a learning machine . . . now if he could just teach escape in the way the brain learns. If re-friending became contagious, fewer people would leave grocery stores in enemy mode.

While the fast warning systems in the brain that trigger enemy mode are mostly visual and nonverbal, the most common approach to recovery is through talking about our beliefs. However, beliefs and words develop far later in the brain’s relational pathway than where enemy mode starts. How well does “talking it out” work to re-friend?

Talking through conflict with friends and family members can offer some relief. Even then, we continue to be a bit more guarded with one another. We’ve all been surprised the next morning when loved ones who are still in enemy mode continue the attack. We thought the disagreement had been resolved. There we are, right back in enemy mode!

Talking things through might even speed the next enemy mode episode. The warning systems in the brain will fire to warn us to anticipate an enemy when we see the people involved in painful conversations that drag on and on. Talking can even escalate enemy mode. Marriages and in-law relationships frequently deteriorate while talking.

Another common attempt to get out of enemy mode is to let some time pass. The time that passes is always longer than the time it took to get into enemy mode. The next enemy mode episode can begin before we get out of the last one. The brain starts into enemy mode more easily and quickly each round.

If we keep falling down the same hill with someone or a certain kind of person and have the hardest time climbing back up, we default to enemy mode with them. Is it even in our best interest to learn to escape enemy mode quickly? We will resist escaping enemy mode because it feels like a kind of protection. Refriending will then sound like a bad idea. Watch children being told to say they are sorry, kiss, and make up. The women crashing shopping carts were not asking for anyone's help either.

Few people see enemy mode as a problem or weakness. Some people even see enemy mode as a sort of body armor or strategy for victory. Since enemy mode produces a degree of relational blindness, it facilitates conflict. Jim, the pacifistically inclined neuropsychologist, was concerned when Ray, the retired Army general, commented that enemy mode operations might be necessary when real threats were present.

HOW RAY DISCOVERED HIS OWN NEED TO REFRIEND

While Jim was watching the pandemic produce enemy mode reactions in the grocery store, Ray was beginning to see his own enemy mode reactions manifesting at home. During the pandemic, Ray's entire family was living together for the first time in ten years. Most of Ray's family had moved in for the holidays and were working in his home where he worked as well. Another son, with his wife and three children, visited often. Ray and his wife Deborah's four-bedroom home was constantly filled with ten adults, four children aged five and under, plus five pets. Despite the chaos, it was a fun family reunion with a lot of late nights and good food.

Ray had just started as executive director and could not take a vacation. Could he stay relational with his family while getting his work done? Some days he could. Other days, he found his mind racing, urging him to get back to work. He fought his hardwired brain the whole month.

“Several times one of the kids would ask my wife, ‘What’s wrong with Dad?’” Ray recalls. “In the past, my wife, Deborah, would have said, ‘Dad has to work.’ Back then, I would quickly disappear to my office without another word. This time, neither of us did that.”

Ray was getting his relational vision restored. Partnering with Jim began to open Ray to change, even if he didn’t know where to begin.

But Ray still observed his enemy mode while at work. For three months, Ray found his new job was like a carnival “whack a mole” game. Ray had learned to decide quickly, often without collaboration, and then later inform his team of the decision. He thrived making decisions in this “whack a mole” manner. That had worked in his military career, but what about now?

Ray was leading a meeting of his new team when an executive questioned two decisions Ray had made unilaterally. The executive told him, “You were nonrelational when you made these decisions.” Ray readily agreed with the executive but was stunned by his recurring relational blindness under stress. He knew he had to learn to lead collaboratively and stay relational.

When Ray used enemy mode as his best tool, he was not being relational. His neural pathways became hardwired so that he responded quickly to challenges in the way he always had. Could Ray learn a new way to lead in his sixth decade of life? A successful leader usually doesn’t change, especially in their sixties. Could he become relational and collaborative and escape the transactional and controlling ways of enemy mode?

THE BIG WHY BEHIND THE QUEST

Ray and Jim’s interest in escaping enemy mode was professional. After all, it was their job. But the mission was also fueled by deep personal pain and a longing for life change.

Two Phone Calls

Two surprising phone calls in 2008, twelve years before Ray began his work at Life Model Works, opened his mind to his need for change. The first was a dream fulfilled.

The US Army Major General and Chief of Chaplains called to say, “Ray, congratulations on your selection for promotion to Brigadier General!”

Ray and his family were overjoyed. He felt elated by news of his promotion and was eager to make a difference for the Army. They held a party to celebrate with their five children. He would serve three years as the Assistant Chief of Chaplains assigned to the Pentagon.

The second phone call soon after was a nightmare. Ray’s doctor interrupted the celebration: “I am sorry to tell you that malignant melanoma has returned, and it is in three of your lymph nodes. We will have to do surgery and chemotherapy or radiation.”

Ray and Deborah didn’t know how their lives would change after these two phone calls. Ray was terrified, angry, and began having trouble sleeping. Not long afterward, he decided to do all he could to beat cancer and succeed as Assistant Chief of Chaplains. He only knew one way to do that: focusing on his work. With a real threat present, Ray became relationally blind to his wife and family. He didn’t see how his focus was empowered by enemy mode. Ray’s enemy mode cost them a lot.

Treatment began immediately and continued for the next six years with multiple surgeries, immunotherapy, and radiation. Meanwhile, Ray “soldiered on” and traveled as Assistant Chief of Chaplains half of each month. Time to connect relationally with his wife and family was not a priority.

Deborah was extraordinarily supportive. She selflessly served him and their family while he battled cancer and served in the Army. She became Ray’s hero! Deborah carried him when Ray couldn’t take another

step. She was also a homeschooling mother and had to care for herself, her sick husband, and their family of five children without losing herself in the process. In that season, two sons suffered serious injuries. A daughter and son graduated from high school. Two sons graduated college, got married, and began serving in the Army—both deployed to Afghanistan the same year.

While Ray fought melanoma and traveled for the Army, Deborah suffered emotionally. She had a husband who could not feel and validate her pain, isolation, and fear. Ray's relational blindness cost them both dearly.

The General's Enemy Mode Surrenders to Deborah's Refriending

During that painful season, Deborah began to communicate honestly about how Ray's actions had made her feel, not just during his career change and health challenges, but for three decades. Ray's dangerous cancer diagnosis had fueled her determination to live the rest of her life without regret. She was a relational person in ways Ray was not.

Cancer and Deborah became Ray's wake-up calls. Ray knew that career success was meaningless if the cost was making his wife and children feel unseen and unheard.

The couple had many hard conversations. Eventually a pattern emerged that is common for communication-based efforts to climb back up the hill after slipping into enemy mode. Deborah would speak about the pain Ray made her feel. His mind would immediately switch into enemy mode. Ray would be distant for a few days. Deborah would refriend Ray, and they would start again.

Slowly, Ray realized that Deborah might not be an enemy. She was actually very good at refriending because she kept helping him escape enemy mode. She gave Ray hope that refriending was possible. She provided powerful working examples. Now when Ray thinks of Deborah, he feels warm gratitude, admiration, anticipation, and the unworthy sense of being treasured. In a word, he feels love. Ray is forever indebted to her.

Ray Discovers His Enemy Mode

“As a direct result of being refriended,” Ray says, “three discoveries changed my life.”

Ray’s first discovery was how thoroughly nonrelational he had learned to be. He remembers, “I treated others, even my loved ones, as transactions. My brain was focused on doing rather than being. I found it hard to be present in the moment with others.”

Deborah would frequently say to Ray, “I don’t feel connected to you,” and he would have no idea what she meant. Ray would answer, “We’ve been doing things together all day! I don’t understand. How can you feel that way?”

Deborah’s understandable longings continually collided with Ray’s relational blindness and lack of emotional intelligence—both symptoms of enemy mode in the brain. He mistakenly concluded the problem was with her, but he was wrong. He was beginning to understand and share what Deborah felt when he locked her out like she was the enemy. The problem was his.

“My second discovery,” Ray says, “was how early in life I learned to operate in what I now know is enemy mode. Good grades brought approval at home and so I worked harder to achieve. Achievement drove me early in my career in the infantry and later as a pastor and senior chaplain in the Army. In the military I learned to win the argument, hold my ground, dominate the opposition, and get things done, no matter who or what stood in my way. Back then, I was a husband and father in enemy mode. I pastored a church the way I had led in the military—nonrelationally. That may sound odd, but I didn’t know any other way to be.”

“Once I became aware of enemy mode, I saw it everywhere in my life. I discovered that even though I had thought I was physically and spiritually mature, I was emotionally and relationally still a child in some areas.”

While researching with Jim, Ray remembered a typical moment of enemy mode. “One night at home the Apple TV remote was missing, and our oldest granddaughter wanted to watch *Daniel Tiger*. I was frustrated and I blamed everyone in the room. I knew that someone else was at fault! My heart was racing, and my vision was narrowing. I didn’t know it, but I was in enemy mode and everyone else was the enemy. There was no one on my side. I said and did things I would regret.”

Most painful to Ray was his third discovery. What had living to win cost him? He usually acted as if mission and task were everything. He got the mission accomplished without staying relationally connected. Ray turned on the charm to win key people to his mission. As we’ll see later, this is enemy mode at its intelligent worst.

Ray’s beliefs were not the source of his enemy mode. He genuinely believed people had value and worth because of who they were, not what they did. But his manipulations made others feel like cogs in a machine, not friends and partners. Ray would feel lonely in leadership and wonder why he had no deep relationships. He told himself, “That’s just the way it is, let’s get back to work.”

Christians and Jim’s Enemy Mode

Jim grew up in Colombia, South America, where his Protestant mother did literacy work with women and children in Catholic villages. She began teaching before Jim was born while World War II raged around the world. It was a time of violent civil unrest in the country where an estimated quarter of a million people were killed by their neighbors. The old antipathies between Catholics and Protestants—hatred that had caused so many European wars—still raged in Colombia. Protestants were denied medical treatment in Catholic hospitals. When Jim’s mother developed appendicitis, the local Catholic doctor saw his opportunity to kill her and, after she survived, to cause her pain and suffering.

Jim's mother belonged to a little missions group made up mostly of Mennonite pacifists who rejected violence, so the Wilder family did not leave. Jim cannot remember how young he was when he learned what the local doctor had done. As he grew up, anything Catholic set off fierce amygdala alarms in his brain. His mind flooded with anger, fear, and attachment pain for what his mother had suffered. Catholics horrified him; Catholic symbols panicked him. Every Saturday morning at 5 a.m., a priest brought a procession and stopped in front of Jim's window. The priests knew where the Protestants were. The crowd outside was not on his side. He looked out his window at their torches, knowing Catholics had burned Protestant churches with everyone inside. Jim went deeply into enemy mode each Saturday morning.

Centuries of disagreements about beliefs had separated Protestants and Catholics, but given that the relational processing pathway in the brain did not start with beliefs but rather with alarm systems, the solution to enemy mode did not lie in discussing beliefs. Since most of the 2.4 billion Christians in the world are Catholic, Jim knew he needed to face his own enemy mode. Teaching others to escape enemy mode meant some brain changes for him as well.

Escaping enemy mode needed to start with Jim and Ray making their personal escapes. The trouble in the grocery story made it clear that some method of helping others out of enemy mode was also needed. It was becoming increasingly clear that much talking, discussing, and changing beliefs was not the path forward. How could the science help Jim—and the rest of the world—escape enemy mode?

THE QUEST FOR ESCAPE

Ray was an expert at working and living in enemy mode without knowing it. Enemy mode felt like an asset. Leaders, entrepreneurs, politicians, ambitious pastors, and even parents eager for their children to excel unknowingly employed enemy mode for the win. Ray

was not about to give up being a winner, but might there be a way to stay relational throughout the last season of his life? As Ray talked with Jim, who was already working on the brain science involved, he saw the relational cost he was paying for distancing his wife and children emotionally. Ray's growing compassion made him long for an alternative way to excel without slipping into enemy mode at home and causing harm to his family relationships.

But outside the home, could Ray actually lead a mission to change how Christians operate in the world without operating in what he had come to realize was enemy mode? If enemy mode was a necessary asset, how did that square with Jesus' command to love even our enemies?

Ray and Jim met to see where they stood. Jim asked if Ray could explain enemy mode to Christian leaders he knew; Ray asked if Jim could explain how the brain escapes enemy mode. Neither one could. This intersection of spiritual life and brain science remained elusive. But Ray liked the relational challenge, and Jim was going to figure out the science if he could.

Escaping enemy mode and taking the world with them became their quest.

ESCAPING NEEDS TO SPREAD

The more Ray researched his own experience, the more he wondered: Could he get church and ministry leaders to recognize enemy mode and then see it as a weakness? Would leaders see the harm enemy mode was doing to them and the people in their organizations? Why were so many Christians continually in enemy mode?

Ray was determined to find out why so many impressive leaders were disappointing in private. Many acted like winning was all that mattered. Some compelling speakers led beneficial projects, acquired social media followers, and influenced thousands but could be unbearable up close and personal. Like they say in Texas, they were "all hat and no cattle."

Ray had a vast network of influential leaders, mostly Christians, he counted as colleagues and friends—retired military generals, a former congressman, police officers, CEOs, business coaches, chaplains, pastors, entrepreneurs, and nonprofit leaders. As the list grew of those he might enlist to help, Ray was overwhelmed but eager to find out who would join the quest.

Ray's first attempts to describe enemy mode felt like speaking in an unknown language. After all, his colleagues and friends were in the winner's circle. Many of them also worked nonrelationally and had developed a relational blindness to other options. Giving up a favored way of working in exchange for an unknown relational way made no sense: How could they win at work and stay relational? No one was willing to lose productivity.

Refriending was not only for his personal life but also his professional life. Even if he had always thought enemy mode was sometimes needed, refriending would always be needed. Ray's new goal was living and leading relationally both at home and at work.

The Problem with Winning

A brain in enemy mode is all about the win. Enemy mode lacks compassion. Enemy mode lacks attachment. Enemy mode fights for status. At the same time, the human brain is deeply relational, so why not become more relational people? We would find the least harmful solution to conflicts and escape enemy mode more quickly. A rehumanized life would see us bring out our best selves—and the best in others—rather than making others lose. Rehumanized means to be fully human, living with our whole brain. Enemy mode dehumanizes because the person in enemy mode is not living as their best self with their whole brain.

Jim observed enemy mode during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections. Both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump declared themselves Christians; the same was true for Trump and Joe Biden. However, it would be difficult to look to these three leaders as examples

of loving our enemies and easy to see their interactions, instead, as illustrations of enemy mode.

In enemy mode, making the other side lose is a win. This desire to see the other side lose was quite strong among voters, many of whom perpetuate enemy mode thinking for their “side.” Many voters were not too keen on their candidate but clear about who they opposed. Several of Jim’s relatives proudly posted who they hated on social media, encouraging everyone to join the hate. The contagious nature of this thinking provided clickbait for the media.

Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist at New York University, had grave concerns about the corrosive effects of social media. Twitter and Facebook had become the modern public square with the power to shape news coverage, government policy, and interpersonal relationships. Haidt said: “When our public square is governed by mob dynamics unrestrained by due process, we don’t get justice and inclusion; we get a society that ignores context, proportionality, mercy, and truth.”³ A hate pandemic does not build herd immunity—except for immunity to other points of view.

The soldier and the chaplain in Ray were having a talk. Was life about winning, or about becoming a better person? When Ray looked around, he noticed most people chose winning. Making winning the *only* value in life was a symptom of both enemy mode and sociopathic thinking. Ray was looking for his best self and wondering what fueled the need to win.

Can Ray Stay Relational and Get Work Done?

Once he addressed enemy mode and refriending in his own home, Ray wondered how to embody refriending at work and how to ensure that his leadership was doing the same. At Life Model Works, Ray was leading an organization that aimed to provide practical and advanced tools to help people in their relationships, yet the leaders had inconsistently embodied escaping enemy mode. Ray discovered some broken

relationships, narcissism, and relational blindness among both leadership and staff. Would the organization embody refriending? How Life Model Works operated, collaborated with partners, and engaged supporters and the rest of the world was at stake. Could this organization reform and then raise the funding needed to develop a solution that worked well enough to spread?

Training the world's Christians to escape enemy mode would need to start internally. Ray took direct action. He set up a meeting with staff. The staff regretted their history of enemy mode and lamented how widespread enemy mode was with Christians. In general, most Christian groups were relationally blind to each other as allies. Some groups attacked while others withdrew. A brain in enemy mode attacks or withdraws from allies.

Ray doubted Christians would actually embrace loving our enemies, even though that is what Jesus taught. Managing distrust, disagreements, or even hate would not be enough. Refriending needed real relational attachments where none existed. Jim suspected that, as a strategist, Ray had calculated the chances of success correctly. There were six people working for his organization against 2.4 billion scattered around the world.

TWO INVESTIGATORS ON A QUEST

As early as grade school, Jim was fascinated by diseases and famous scientists who solved how illness spread and did its damage. Understanding causes led to prevention. Jim studied Anton van Leeuwenhoek's work with bacteria and Louis Pasteur's work with anthrax, chickenpox, cholera, and rabies. He also studied Alexander Fleming, Jonas Salk, and the Mayo brothers. Alfred Nobel and Madame Curie inspired Jim to believe he could make a difference by figuring out the things that were killing people.

As a teenager, Jim drew diagrams of the cranial nerves. His prize

possession was a microscope. When hemorrhagic Lassa fever broke out in Africa, he dreamed of finding the cause. As Oliver Sacks used L-Dopa to awaken encephalitis patients, Jim followed the weekly updates in the *Science Newsletter*. Dr. Sacks went on to become the storyteller of brain science for his generation.

In graduate school, Jim built research equipment, learned neurofeedback, and trained at VA hospitals before brain scan machines existed. He learned to read EEG brain waves and test for brain damage using A. R. Luria's methods. Luria had refined ways to check the function of each brain element in a processing pathway. Tracing brain signals was very similar to the electronic system diagnosis Jim had studied in college. Knowing what each stage of a television should do allowed the symptoms to reveal the part that was not working. A signal would be damaged or missing beyond the point of failure. Now Jim was eager to trace the source for enemy mode processing in the brain and discover where the symptoms started and how they got passed forward through the brain's processing streams.

Damaged brains dropped easily into enemy mode. Jim worked in a brain injury unit for patients with brain tumors, strokes, or motorcycle accidents. He expected to help restore memory function and muscle usage. The patients' families were more concerned by how easily the patients went "postal" and treated their families as instant enemies. Knowing where the damage had been done explained the behavior but provided few solutions.

Jim and Ray, a pacifist and a military man, a scientist and a pastor, fellow workers with their own enemy mode issues, agreed that what they wanted was to see the whole world refriending with the same speed that people were slipping into enemy mode. Gandalf and the General, their friends dubbed them. Impressive monikers, but now they needed a solution that actually worked.

As they began strategizing, Ray turned his attention to his many influential friends. He wanted to know who would back his fight against

enemy mode. Would people in power understand it and realize how it had impacted them? Would enemy mode be a necessity or a weakness in their eyes? Would they open doors for refriending?

This wasn't how Ray had pictured his new job. The idea of enemy mode was fairly new to him. He seemed to be planning a peaceful takeover of the world, or at least the badly divided Christian segment, with only six troops. The General needed backing and allies.

Jim wanted to develop a written plan. He argued that people didn't even try refriending enemies because solutions were too difficult and didn't work. Could refriending become contagious enough that people who "caught it" could pass it on? How far would it spread?

Jim would also need better science. Enemy mode killed more people than the anthrax Louis Pasteur had faced. First, he needed to understand what caused the symptoms. As Jim laid out the evidence and brain science, he observed three patterns. Not all enemy mode activity looked the same, as we will see in the next chapter.

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