

Running With The Bulls

Managing conflict is a big one, so I'm taking a page from my own private journal and sharing some of the things that I've learned from Nature with you.

The Stoics encouraged people to spend time in nature and to learn from the natural world. These days we all spend a lot of time indoors and looking at screens, so the idea of observing nature and taking lessons from it might seem a little old-timey and antiquated, but there is something to be found out there if you take the time. Here is just one example from my life.

Every day I jog a path that runs beside a roadway. On the west side are a bunch of apartment complexes (miles of them) but on the other side is a large pasture, forest, and swamps. A good portion of the pasture is a cow field, and the ranchers rotate their stock so there are always different types of cattle there. There is a section of the pasture that is separated from the rest by barbed wire, and I've noticed that in this smaller area they put the bulls. Not always the same bulls (I can tell because of their coloring and apparent ages).

Many times when I've run by, I've noticed the bulls snorting at each other, being aggressive, and even butting heads. It's always an interesting sight to see them; I know anytime I see two bulls in there that there is going to be a battle.

So while out jogging and having nothing to do but think, I wondered: Why do they fight? They are nowhere near any cows to fight over. There is more than enough food and water, and it looks like they both have plenty of space. I would understand if it happened just occasionally. I'm sure every now and then one bull just wouldn't like another bull. But that's not the case...it is every time. It seems like if you put two bulls in the same pen, they are just going to fight. I suppose they have an instinct to establish dominance, even if in the end they are only the head bull in a small pen with only one other bull.

That got me thinking about human behavior; how some people constantly attack others, judge and demean others, run other people down, always bucking for dominance, even when there is no reason and no real reward from it. Like some LEOs I know who are so heavily invested in being the "best" or "top-cop", who spend every waking moment trying to establish how great

they are. Those who spend their days alternating between bragging and bullying. (I know you just put a face and name to that person.)

I deal with coworkers in law enforcement who are just like those bulls. I have decided to start calling them bullheads. They attack, backstab, and buck for dominance. Usually the only reason behind it is ego or pride.

I realized it's not personal; it's not me. We are just in the same pen together. Any other person stuck in the pen with them would get the same treatment. If I were to go join another agency, there would be another one there just like them. I've battled bullheads many times in the past, and win or lose I've always regretted the experience. I've learned through experience that I don't have to play their game. The situation is temporary; one of us will be moved to another pasture soon enough.

My lesson from nature: Butting heads with bullheads isn't worth the headache, and don't take it personally.

"Nature. All things come of you, have their being in you, and return to you."

— Marcus Aurelius

My advice: get out there and enjoy nature maybe take away an insight in the process.

Amor Fati

- Sgt. Steve