

If you only have a minute: Rooted and Unwavering is all about connecting deeply with ourselves, others and our service in the world. Helping people soar above their day-to-day for a bird’s-eye view can inspire their connection with the bigger whole.

The Compassionate Overview Effect

By Esther Groves and Hylke Faber

There’s something exquisite about experiencing a bird’s-eye view of the world for the first time. When Jill Meyers was 12 years old, a family friend took her for a ride in his private plane and from that moment she knew she was meant to fly. She could hardly wait until she was 17 when she was finally able to get her private pilot’s license. “I was completely enamored,” she remembers.

“Astronauts go through something really miraculous – they call it the Overview Effect,” she says. “There’s something about getting perspective about your own life when you see the Earth from above, and part of it is you realize how small you are in the world, that you really are just a piece of something bigger.”

Reflecting on her career in the military, Jill notes that she loved wearing the Air Force uniform, placing the medals just so, and marching in formation because it made her feel connected to something larger than herself.

Recognizing her part in a larger whole remains a meaningful theme in her life that extends to her leadership style. “You need to have perspective no matter what you do,” she says. “When I lead an organization... I over-communicate. I always tell people, you’re going to get more information from me than you probably want, you can always delete it or ignore me. But I want to give you the opportunity to hear it.”

As a senior leader at a Raytheon facility, Jill managed an entire sonar program for the first stealth Navy destroyer ever built. On one of her daily visits to the workers on the manufacturing line, she realized that they had no idea what program they were supporting, only their small piece of the puzzle. After obtaining union permission, she gathered everyone for a briefing that started with what each widget was for and why it was important to the larger whole. Morale in the plant skyrocketed once the workers got that “birds-eye view” and recognized how their jobs connected to the success of the entire program.

“I think the most important thing about leadership is to be a compassionate leader. You have to really care about the people, because if the people who work with you are not feeling part of something and don’t know why and no one cares about them, you’re not going to succeed as an organization,” Jill says.

“As a leader, your job is to make everyone in your organization as successful as they can be.”

Jill Meyers
