

On civility and our future | Choices for the Future

- [Beth Berglund](#)

If you spend time on social media sites, you know that a number of local Facebook pages are available for things like helping find lost pets, re-homing usable items and promoting events. Social networks are awesome platforms for enabling easy communication. But there is also a dark side to them.

During the last six months or so I've found myself distracted, and deeply concerned, by how many comments I've been seeing on local Facebook pages that were coarse and cruel, with people over-reacting and lashing out at each other.

How likely are we to solve the challenges that we face as a civilization if we allow relatively insignificant things to divide and alienate us from each other? The most primitive part of our brain evolved our fight or flight response to save us from predators and the like, not to guide our reaction to a divergent opinion on social media.

Admittedly, it was a recent lapse in my own ability to stay calm online which inspired my choice of this month's article.

When I find myself provoked, I try to pause and breath— using that time to gain a bit of objectivity about what I'm thinking and feeling. I've also found it helpful to adopt a phrase that reminds me of the vision of my best self. Gandhi's "Be the change you want to see in the world" is mine. Here are a few other examples that might resonate for you.

"This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.' " — Genesis 20:13.

"You can disagree without being disagreeable." — Zig Ziglar.

"Those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything." — George Bernard Shaw.

Clinical psychology professor, Dr. Dan Siegel, MD, uses the term "mindsight" to describe how we are able to change how our mind and our bodies experience emotional triggers. If I accept what Siegel is saying, the question I ask myself is "How are my current triggers serving me?"

It's easy to assume that our thoughts mean something, but generating thoughts is just something that a brain does. The more we practice pausing, noticing and then considering what meaning if any to give a thought, the less power our thoughts have over us, the more civil and meaningful our discourse, the more hope we have for our future.