**Why Needing to Be Right Is Wrong**

By: Dr. Roger Landry

I know this is going to sound like a commercial for a miracle product, but here goes…

Would you like to be happier? Have more friends? Better relationships? Less stress? Better sleep? Better overall health? Even be and look more peaceful? Whatever this product is, most would think it must be expensive, hard to use, or can’t really deliver on these claims … and they would be wrong on all counts.

What is this magic formula that can make our lives better in just about every way?

Drum roll … *GIVE UP THE NEED TO BE RIGHT!*

**“Do What?!”**

Yes, you read correctly. Give up the need to be right. I know, it’s like asking you to stop breathing, right? We are conditioned from birth, it seems, to fight for our piece of the pie, defend ourselves, or at least convince people that our views are the correct ones. We do it with our families, at school, work, and social gatherings. If we’re wrong, we somehow seem to be lessened, defeated, or humiliated. In some cases, being proven wrong can upset our very view of the world, leaving us unanchored.

The problem is that since nearly everyone except – perhaps – Buddhist monks feel the same way … well, Houston, we have a problem. Opinions are like belly-buttons. We all have one, and therefore we have the perfect storm for disagreement, resentment, and yes, conflict.

**The Dark Side of Needing to Be Right**

Eckhart Tolle, in his magnificent book *The Power of Now* tells us that needing to be right is a form of violence. It is, in fact, a type of inflexibility on the milder side, and of dominance on the less mild side. It is the need to inflict our own view of the world on others. It originates in a place that refuses to believe that “variety is the spice of life” and that knowledge and understanding are the outcomes of openness and compassion. Yes, compassion. Does not the Golden Rule itself tell us to treat others in a way we would like to be treated?

Why doesn’t the other person see our point of view? Why don’t they accept that we are indeed, correct? How can they be so wrong? They must be ignorant, or rigid, or just out to get our goat. You’ll just keep banging away at them until they flinch and accept your point of view. Well, how’s that been working for you? You’re reading this because at least one relationship isn’t working for you.

**Acceptance is not Weakness**

On the contrary, acknowledgement of another’s differing view of the world is a powerful and humane act of understanding, courage and compassion. It is the basis of the Hindu greeting Namaste … It is the foundation of peaceful coexistence and even more important, of rich and durable relationships. It is the first step into a beautiful world of humanism, peace, and even joy. Here’s a few tips to make the leap into this foreign but welcoming world.

1. **Take a Baby Step:** You are not going to become the Dalai Lama in a day. In the next 24 hours, resolve to let one opinion that is contrary to yours exist without attempting to destroy it. You don’t have to believe it. You don’t have to give up your contrary opinion. Just say “I understand what you’re saying.” Or “That’s a perspective I hadn’t considered.” Or just listen and nod. Of course, if you are confronted with a position that is inhumane or violent in nature, you can acknowledge that you disagree without mounting an assault against it.
2. **Allow Other Opinions to Exist:** Other positions contrary to yours will ALWAYS exist. Acknowledge that … hold on to your hat because this is big … probably about half of them are correct, or at least, have rational interpretations of a topic. Let the little ones go. You may state your differing opinion without attempting to inflict yours on your fellow humans.
3. **Value Compassion and Kindness over Righteousness:** Understand that these tower over winning or converting the world to your very limited view. We all live lives that are challenging in their own right. We all suffer loss and pain and have opinions formed by many events of which we have no control. Unless you walk in another’s shoes, you cannot fully understand why she believes what she does. Listening to the reason another believes what they do can be a revealing and educational experience.
4. **Look for an Opportunity to Change Your Opinion:** In a situation where your opinion differs from another’s, tell them you’re open to accepting their view if they provide a good rationale for it. In may not change your mind, but you can simply respond that you understand where they are coming from without accepting their view as your own.
5. **Know That You Can Be Right or Wrong … and Still Be You:** You are a unique miracle of existence. You will make mistakes and succeed; help and hurt others; be right and be wrong … but you are still OK. Compassion begins at home.