**Conflicts and Core Beliefs During Covid**

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We all have [core beliefs](https://www.facebook.com/brightsideoflongevity/videos/201863667513909/), most of which were defined and shaped at a young age: how we view ourselves, others and the world around us. We have biases about what’s good and bad, safe and unsafe, who to trust and who to distrust. And we constantly seek out evidence to support what we believe. This is yet another example of our instinctive Fight, Flight or Freeze mechanism inherited from our ancestors as a means of survival. Yes, it turns out we respond the same way to an intellectual threat (i.e. threat to our core beliefs) as we do a physical threat.

Core beliefs are very personal and different for each of us, forged out of a lifetime of experiences, and we are seeing an unprecedented level of emotional and angry exchanges in this time of Corona. When someone disagrees with us, or believes contrary, we feel threatened because our core beliefs are the foundation of our entire lives. So, we react emotionally –angrily and sometimes even violently. Why? Consistency with our beliefs is safe. Anything else feels unsafe.

**And then there’s the Backfire Effect…**

Coupled with our core beliefs and our inherent survival instincts is what some psychologists call the [Backfire Effect](https://youarenotsosmart.com/2017/01/13/yanss-093-the-neuroscience-of-changing-your-mind/). It is what causes us to reject anything that conflicts with our core beliefs and hold onto those beliefs with more strength and rigidity. In some cases, we will go out of our way to seek out that which confirms what we already believe to be true, even if inaccurate, in order to build our case.

***Tip:*** Unfortunately, just because it’s on the Web, doesn’t mean it’s a valid source. When you read an article making a claim that you wildly agree or disagree with, check to see if it’s from an academic, medical or government site (most have .edu, .org, or .gov in their URL extension). If it’s from a commercial site or someone’s personal webpage, do a little [fact-checking](https://www.iste.org/explore/Digital-and-media-literacy/Top-10-sites-to-help-students-check-their-facts) first to confirm that we’re not getting biased information.

How can we handle these disagreements now, in this time of a shared assault from Covid-19?

**Remaining Calm in Times of Unrest**

1. **Pause before reacting.** Knowing that we have a built-in core belief system in place, and knowing that input is going to hit us emotionally first and intellectually second, take a few deep breaths before responding – even if that means walking away from a situation to calm down. When our minds are racing, and we’re ready to lash out, any response is likely to be one that will lead to more chaos, making tensions escalate. Adopting a regular meditation practice can significantly help maintain emotional control.
2. **After calming down, we can ask ourselves, “What if something else is true?”** Maybe it’s not as simple as right or wrong. What if there is more than one option, other than what we already know, that could be true? We don’t have to agree with it – just be open. Why? Because it can help us to understand a perspective other than our own. This leads to healthier communication.
3. **Learn to listen.** As a society, we’re not great at really listening, and being genuinely curious about other people and why they believe what they do. When we are committed to our opinion, we can become so agitated that we can’t – quite literally – hear someone else’s opinion. But *we* want to be heard and understood. Can we learn to hear others without losing emotional control? This doesn’t mean that we agree or consent to what someone else is saying, we are simply listening to understand another perspective. It is so much easier to love people when we understand them.
4. **Realize that responding to hate with hate is never the answer.** It’s difficult to listen when we want to silence the voices of hate and fear. But hating the haters, judging the judgers, and disrespecting others who disagree with us only divides us further. And, in this time when we’re all combatting a global pandemic, this is when we need to be the most united.

If we all dig deep into our hearts, we can learn to separate what someone is saying from who they are as a person. We can disagree with someone and still love and respect them. What would the world be life if we were willing to be genuinely curious, to listen completely, and respect someone fully no not matter what they believe?