



**PLEASE, DON'T FUEL THE FIRE,
WITH *EXTREME* COMMUNICATION**
It'll Burn Down The One Home We All Live In



Sid Galloway BS, M.DIV. — SidGalloway.com

“We must **learn** to **live** together as **brothers**, or **perish** together as **fools**.”
Dr. Martin Luther-King Jr. - [bold added]

Have you noticed that people today, along with groups they're associated with, seem to be unable or *unwilling* to say anything *positive* about others they disagree with? And that many people rarely if ever voice criticism about anything their *own* group believes, says, or does? People seem to be *afraid* to communicate in humble, *balanced* ways — apparently for *fear* that their own friends and group will reject and shun them. It takes *courage* to publicly express balanced compassionate understanding.

After 40 years as a counselor & conflict-mediator, I've never been more concerned about where civilization is heading. Please consider your answer to this simple question, “*Whose fault is it?*”, for the cultural chaos raging all around us. No, it's not “*their*” fault. We're ALL at fault. Yes, that means liberals, conservatives, theists, & atheists. It means me, and it means you. Please, beware, lest you become *the same as* those you “*hate*” in attitude and action. Only *humble*, compassionate, informed, and *balanced* dialogue can lead us toward real lasting solutions.

We humans psychologically tend to gravitate toward *extremes*. Why? Balance can feel *boring*. Extreme views, statements, and behaviors *unconsciously* give people the feeling of being *special* — particularly when their self-supporting peer group bonds around those extremes. This *dangerous* psychosocial tendency (technically “*acrophily*”) is a *part* of what's driving the escalating divisions in the world today.

“This tendency is called **acrophily, or love of extremes**. Helping people make more **accurate evaluations** of **their group** could therefore reduce acrophily and inform how individuals shape their views. If we are exposed to less extreme views in our social environment, our ideas may also become less extreme, which **could reduce further political segregation and polarization**.... We found that the combination of acrophily and homophily likely leads people to rapidly self-select into **more extreme camps**. Ultimately, that **pattern** speeds up segregation and makes it harder to cooperate, compromise and find common ground—all essential features of a **healthy society**.” [bold added]

Scientific American Journal - Amit Goldenberg. “Extreme Views Are More Attractive Than Moderate Ones”.
[https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/extreme-views-are-more-attractive-than-moderate-ones/#:~:text=This tendency is called acrophily, or love of extremes.](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/extreme-views-are-more-attractive-than-moderate-ones/#:~:text=This%20tendency%20is%20called%20acrophily,%20or%20love%20of%20extremes.)

Please think about something that too many people forget. *Each* of us has very *limited* knowledge about the issues facing the world today. Even supposed “*experts*” cannot know everything about any particular issue. So, it seems *wise* for each of us to be *cautious* about our opinions, and *careful* with our statements, especially in the *public* arena. Pridefully *failing* to express humility and communicate balanced opinions never advances anyone's “*cause*” long-term. Eventually it'll backfire on you and your group. *Unwise*, unbalanced communication is divisive and fuels the fire. It contributes to the burning down of the civilization we all must either *thrive-in* together, or *suffer-through* alone.

Below are a few bridge-building counseling considerations and conflict-mediation suggestions that I try to remind *myself* of each time I think, speak, or write about controversial issues. When I pridefully *fail* to practice them, and cause a *barrier*, I know it's my job to humbly *apologize* and fix it.

Motives & Attitudes

Whenever we think or speak about an important controversial issue that we're passionate about, two core motives are possible. For most of us, it's a combination of both. One is "*other-centered*". But the second is more "*self-centered*". The *most* positive motive is to spread what we genuinely believe is truth, in order to help *others*, and to enhance *society*. The other, *less* positive, motive is to merely fit-in with our *group* and enhance *our* own feeling of being accepted and not rejected.

Strength & Courage

Courage is not the absence of fear. True strength is the willingness to speak a *balanced* view even when we risk rejection from our peers. Fear of peer-*pressure* is one of the most natural — yet destructive — forces in society. Please don't forget that just because someone stands against the majority does not mean they stand against cultural peer-pressure. That same person might actually be *giving-in* to the pressure of their own small subcultural peer group.

Words & Tones

Remember the old adage, "*Sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me*"? It's dangerously wrong! Long before *physical* sticks and stones are used to *beat* one another, *nonphysical* words and tones have already fueled the fires of battle in the hearts of the "enemies". Did you know that seventy-percent of human communication is through tones and facial expressions? Even when we write or post the writings of others, our *choice* of words can convey tones that build either *bridges* or *barriers*.

Balance & Fairness

Both require *accurate* knowledge that can only be gained through *humbly* asking questions and *listening* to the views of others who disagree, including those we assume to be "enemies". It's the kind of listening that genuinely seeks to *understand* the experiences of others, and to honestly evaluate *their* evidence which led to their feelings, beliefs, and actions. Only then, with this *personal* knowledge, can we share our own opinions in balanced, *fully informed*, and fair ways. Ways that are willing to *agree* with positive truths from others, and willing to *challenge* any and all of our own *less-than-perfect* perspectives.

Some Questions to Ask Ourselves Before We Communicate

Do our facial expressions, tones, words, writings, or postings *clearly* communicate humble compassion for *everyone*, regardless of their views and associations? Do we reflect love or hate? Are we seeking to *understand* other people and willing to *learn* something from them. Or are we just trying to *force* others by *our* loud intimidating voices to somehow accept *our* views — which always has the opposite effect.

Consider A Few Common Controversial Conflicts that are Creating Chaos instead of Cooperation

Conservatives vs Liberals, Pro-Israel vs Pro-Palestinian, Religious vs Non-Religious, Socialism vs Capitalism, the false dichotomy of "White-People" vs "People-of-Color" (*we're all the same color = melanin*), etc, etc.

All issues that have potential for causing conflict and cultural chaos desperately need humble, *teachable*, cooperative communication. The most important element is a commitment to listen to and learn from one another. We need each other's different perspectives to see full truth and the best path into the future. *Please, beware* of "confirmation-bias" whenever you seek information on an issue. Please, step out of the echo-chamber of your own group. *Research* opinions from *scholars* who *oppose* your views.

***Please, live humble compassionate-love for all people,
not just the ones who agree with you!***

