

Critical thinking abilities are declining

Posted: Tuesday, July 25, 2017

Concerned about fake news? Stay tuned – it’s worse than you think.

While watching a recent “news” segment on the possible causes of cancer and what we should do to maximize our odds of staying healthy, a medical doctor made the following statement: “The research tends to be inconclusive, so just choose the studies that seem to make the most sense to you.”

What kind of trained professional gives this kind of inane advice?

Sadly, this type of throw-in-the-towel, anything-goes mentality has come to characterize our modern-day “enlightened” culture – even in the sciences.

We currently have access to more information than at any point in human history. But as knowledge has become more ubiquitous, our critical thinking abilities seem to have declined sharply. Many of us feel less certain about what we know for sure.

You see evidence of this everywhere, but it is most apparent in the rise of conspiracy theories and other off-the-wall explanations for things we simply don’t understand – yet.

An unfortunate side effect of the escalating avalanche of data is the emergence of a relativistic ideology that seems to equate truth with whatever you want it to be based on the circumstances at hand. Please note I am not talking about conscious lying; I am referring to the inability of a growing number of people to distinguish fact from fiction.

This line of reasoning has, at its core, the somewhat dubious premise that nothing is inherently good, bad, right or wrong – everything is of equal value just different. The possibilities suggested by quantum mechanics notwithstanding, reality is simply whatever you conceive it to be.

Look, to quote the tag line from one of my all-time favorite TV shows, “The truth is out there.” I think it’s high time we renewed our search for it in earnest.

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