

‘Live and let live’ is good advice

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It was recently brought to my attention how divided Americans seem these days. Whether it’s religion, politics, pandemics, or where to go for dinner, reaching consensus appears increasingly beyond our reach.

Given the social and cultural diversity that has always characterized our nation, this shouldn’t come as a real shock to anyone. Lately, however, it does feel as though our disagreements have spiraled out of control.

From my vantage point, there are those who seek to bring us together and those who try to push us apart. We need more of the former and less of the latter.

But who, exactly, are these folks dedicated to accentuating our differences as opposed to celebrating our commonalities?

After reflecting on this for a while, I’ve been able to identify five groups responsible for most of our current woes.

First, there are the religious zealots who want to impose their moral system on everyone else.

Second, there are the racial/ethnic supremacists who are convinced their tribe is better than the other tribes.

Then there are the fearmongers who want us to be afraid of everything – especially those who don’t look like them.

Next, there are the authoritarians who apparently want to install the kind of leaders past generations went to war to overthrow.

Finally, there are the conspiracy enthusiasts who see hidden agendas everywhere they look.

“Those who can make people believe absurdities,” Voltaire wrote, “can make people commit atrocities.”

The underlying theme: Some people want to take away other peoples’ freedoms.

Personally, I think we’d all be better off if we just listen to my mother. Several decades ago, she told me to “live and let live,” and “mind your own business.”

As I’ve gotten older, the inherent wisdom of that sage advice has only grown more profound - and more obvious.

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