

'Either/or' mentality harms problem solving

The more I watch cable TV, the more I read the newspaper, and the more I listen to my colleagues, the more convinced I become that our real problem is an almost complete loss of perspective.

We no longer seem capable of appropriately dissecting critical issues and making subtle distinctions because we are too busy drawing arbitrary lines in the sand based on our immature and often inaccurate understanding of the principles that supposedly underlie our positions.

In short, our entire decision-making apparatus is being increasingly short-circuited by the following either/or thinking at virtually every turn:

Either we have to provide health care for everyone or we shouldn't provide it for anyone.

Either we extend long-term unemployment benefits to everyone or we close the door on those who desperately need them.

Either we make everyone pay minimum wage or we allow employers to remunerate workers at third-world, slave-labor rates.

Either we impose some regulation on the markets to ensure fair competition or we let free enterprise devolve into a free-for-all.

Either we put an electric fence around our borders or we allow anyone to immigrate to this country no-questions-asked.

Have we really come to a point in our history where we are no longer capable of developing complex and customized solutions to complex and customized problems?

Either we are too stupid to make these kinds of common-sense distinctions or we lack the will to work out our differences through civil discourse and compromise.

We are never going to come together as a society as long as we have people who keep espousing a "one size fits all" approach.

The only way to meet everyone's needs in a fair and equitable manner is to take individual differences into account at every stage of our decision-making.

Everything should be decided on a case-by-case basis.

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