

K.I.S.S. Away Problems

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“The Teachings (Torah) of God are simple, they restore the soul.” Psalm 19:8

Throughout my career as a pastoral counselor, I have discovered that the vast majority of life's problems, which people deal with daily, all boil down to one basic disturbance. That disturbance is complexity.

To coin an old phrase, “too many cooks spoil the broth.” Too many ideas, desires and philosophies all collide with each other, in an individual's mind and, more often than not, lead to nothing other than confusion. It is this confusion of thoughts, feelings and the behaviors they lead to, that create for the individual so much conflict and turmoil that it ends up causing a loss of much good that life has to offer.

I have discovered that the “K.I.S.S. Rule” is usually always the best. “Keep It Simple & Straight.” That about sums it up. When all is kept simple, everything remains manageable and easy to handle. The problem we thus face is, if we are already heavily involved in a complex state of affairs, how then do we return to simplicity? And this is what we will now address.

Essentially, we make “mountains out of mole hills,” and fail to realize the opposite. If we can make mountains out of mole hills, then we can make mole hills out of mountains.

Problems become insurmountable when they become confusing. Problems become fixable when they are approached like a math problem. All we need to do is apply to them the proper rules in the proper order, and then the answer “magically” appears. Problem solving of the personal kind, or of the math kind, is really simple, if and when we approach it in the right way.

Now, herein lies the problem. The problem of problems is nebulosity. This is a state of mind in which, rather than a problem before us being a specific behavior, we aggrandize the problem into being an attitude, or a character flaw, something grandiose, and thus way too big to be handled easily. Those who view any problem within themselves, or with another individual in this light are subject to suffering, pain and disaster. Bluntly, we can change things, but we cannot change non-things. We can alter the way we, or others, act. We cannot alter how others think.

Address real problems. Forget about attitudes. Attitudes are perceptions, and perceptions are always subject to taint, coloring, and falsification. Deal with what is real, and right in front of you. Address behaviors! We are not going to stop a way of thinking, but we can, with proper address, change a way of behavior. And this, in and of itself, can magically change the way we perceive a situation, or how we look at a person. Once behavior has changed, it seems that magically perceptions about said person or problem, also change. Behavior is the key, so address the behavior, like a math problem. Fix it and forget it.

Feelings and emotions should never be part of the problem solving equation. Yet, I forever hear, “I feel this way,” or “I don't feel that way.” Well, let me tell you this, everyone has feelings and emotions, not just you! Why should your feelings be any more important than the other guy's?

Why should feelings be involved here, at all? We need to address behaviors. The bottom line is this, your feelings are yours! They do not belong to another! So, don't try to pass them on. Do not expect others to accept your emotional framework as the reality in which they must live. That is selfishness and egotism at its heights. And boy! do we have our share of egotistical, selfish people out there!

How many people feel that their way is the right way, and anyone not accepting it can “take the highway”? How many people make others in their lives miserable by demanding, maybe in word, maybe only through insinuation, that either accept the way they feel, and accept their world outlook, or prepare for a life of hell, until you do! Sound familiar? Sound like anyone you know? Maybe this may sound at least a little bit like the person you see every morning looking back at you in the mirror?

When we look out at life and see only our way and our points of view and then expect everyone and everything else to be compliant, we are the cause of the problem. When the individual is so egotistical to believe that while others have their ways, no other way is as good as “my” way, such an individual is the cause of the problem.

People believe all kinds of lies about themselves and the world around them, and they may never change their perceptions. Such changes may take a life time, and with problem solving, we do not have that much time. A problem in front of us has to be addressed and solved so that we can move on in life.

Step one, remove the nebulousness. Identify the real problem. Don't say that the problem is that this other person thinks such a way, or has such an attitude. Step one, address the actual problem in fact, not in attitude. Address what the other person is actually doing that bothers you. What is the problematic behavior? What

is the actual behavior itself that bothers you? This is part one in identifying the problem.

Once we have focused in on the problematic behavior, now let us address this, what is so wrong about the behavior? Is it generally wrong, or only specifically bothersome and wrong to you? It is important to distinguish between the two. Bad behavior overall should be addressed by everyone. But that behavior which you yourself do not like, this is personal and has to be addressed by you.

With personal choices that individuals make, just because you don't like something, does not mean the other person has to change just because of your objections. The other person, just like you, has the right to express themselves and be the individual they are, regardless of your feelings in the matter. And your expressions of resentment and attempts to emotionally punish that other for expressing their rightful choices and personality makes you the guilty party here. You are the source of the problem, not the person about which you complain.

Don't complicate issues with things you cannot influence, and with things that are none of your business. For example, another person has the right to believe as they do and to practice what they will, but this does not give them the right to shove their behaviors and attitudes in your face and make you deal with them or attempt to force you to accept them.

Many groups with social and political agendas violate fundamental laws of human respect and dignity by demanding that their minority views and opinions be elevated to the forefront of public opinion, and acceptance of them be forced on everyone. This is the very definition of oppression. This is fundamentally wrong.

What people do behind closed doors is a matter of their own privacy. If matters behind closed doors spill out into the public arena, then the local public, which is exposed to this, must be willing to embrace such things, otherwise it is best that such things go back behind the closed doors from which they came. No one should be forced to accept or embrace that which they personally find offensive, just because egotistical others demand that they do so.

Our focus is not to change the other person's beliefs, but rather our focus is to change their behaviors. What they do is what they do. Leave it for them to do whatever it is that they do, as long as they are not intentionally being oppressive and aggressive. Public behavior we can address and change. As for what goes on in private, who cares? Let God worry about what an individual does in private. If one finds the behavior of another offensive, so be it. Just stay away from said people.

We should not object to people making public expression of their views and beliefs, as long as said beliefs are embraced by the majority of those in that local arena, and as long said beliefs are not being imposed upon others who may be non-believers. Mere exposure is not an imposition. Claims to the opposite are egotistical.

For example, although I am an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi, I totally support my Christian neighbors who seek to have public displays of Christian religious symbols. I am not offended by a manger scene, a cross and certainly not by a display of the Ten Commandments. But I am offended by those who are offended by this, and seek to have Christian (and other Biblically based) symbols removed from the public arena, especially when the majority of said public desires their presence. Since when does the minority dictate to the majority? That may be the way of kings, but we have no royalty here!

Live and let live, not live and let die. Keep issues simple. Address real behavioral problems and change the behaviors that are real problems. If they are not real problems, then leave them alone. Respect all others and expect that they too must respect you.

If we all just practice basic self respect, and address only problems that are rightfully problems, and not address problems just because we say that they are problems, we will simplify matters greatly, and go a long way to solve real problems once and for all.

Keep It Simple & Straight. Focus on real issues. Only seek to change behaviors that are honesty and actually harmful. Do not try to change other people's attitudes, leave that to God.

Do not offend and insult those who are different because of their differences. Live and let live. Think of problems like building blocks, make a plan how to build and get to work.

Be patient, when patience is due, and be strong when strength is due. Go with the flow and remember you have rights just like the other guy. Don't let him step on your toes, and don't you step on his! This is how we K.I.S.S. our problems away.