

How Far Should You Develop a Relationship with People You Disagree With?

I speak with anyone who is willing to have friendly discourse, but I associate incredibly narrowly. I tend to get hit on both sides of this, and I thought I would talk about this a bit.

I only have friends who respect my values and like me as a person. I don't disconnect myself from my opinions. I am a whole me. While I don't exactly have purity tests, I find that I have no friends who are communists, socialists, fascists, feminists, political hacks (heavily invested in contemporary politics), and the list can go on quite a while. Most of my friends know how to have cooperative relationships, they treat children with respect, and are libertarians to one degree or another (the ones that aren't, still have inclinations in that direction and respect my views).

This isn't some executive decision I made from watching Molyneux. This is a sentiment that naturally manifests itself in my choices. I lose interest in people who think taking my stuff is okay, I should feel shame because I am a man, thinks I should toughen up and tolerate them acting like a dick, thinks kids are a nuisance, or wants to tell me how to live my life. I just naturally feel like I don't want to really be their friend. This idea extends far beyond most other people to the point where I don't talk to most of the people in my extended family, and my wife and I don't interact with her family at all (she holds the same beliefs).

I am open about these ideas for myself, but I am not prescriptive. My wife and I are incredibly social people and we are able to attract plenty of friends who do share similar and complimentary ideas on the world, and respect within relationships. If I was unable to harvest great relationships, I probably would not hold the views I have today.

People are critical of this for many reasons. People dislike the idea that family has to provide value in order to maintain relationships. People dislike that I am going to judge them based off of the value I perceive they have to me, rather than the value they think they have of themselves. There are plenty of other reasons. However, I am finding that people are less so of it today ... maybe it is because it is hard to be critical of a person's individual philosophy on association who has good relationships, or maybe because I have insulated myself within my good friend bubble of like minded people that I can no longer hear people objecting.

Someone would naturally think this idea goes into who I discuss ideas with, and they would be totally wrong. I want to discuss ideas with anyone who is able to be friendly in discussion, and able to improvise and speak somewhat coherently about what they believe (not because I need them to be brilliant, but because I get annoyed by people retreating into poor argumentation because they get lost, or don't know how to counter the points I make). I can have incredibly friendly discussions with Nazis, Commies,

fascists and even feminists.

I enjoy the intellectual stimulation, and strategic nature of speaking with people I disagree with. I often learn more about my own ideas, and when I hear arguments I have never heard before I get excited (even if they are wrong). Also, if I am able to convince a dedicated commie to be a libertarian, that is much more effective than convincing a political moderate.

I believe all sorts of ideas getting passed around is great. I think people should be respected in discussion up until they act like an ass, or actually try to enact their murderous ideology. If a guy says he wants to murder a lot of people ... shaming him will be dumb. Talking to him in a friendly way and discussing his emotions and ideas (up until he pulls out a gun) is likely far more efficacious.

I like most everyone when they are held at arms length. I get along with most people I run into, and I genuinely like them. However, I don't let people get closer than arms length unless they are a benefit to my life. You aren't going to be a benefit to my life if you hold very different views than myself. I hold a philosophy of modesty and peace ... I am happy to discuss these ideas with you, and try to convince you of something. However, outside of discussion, I'm not going to surround myself with arrogant and violent people.