

New Information Will Change Minds

Quick, name something you really and truly believe even though you know it's wrong.

You can't, can you?

If you knew your belief was wrong, you'd change it.

It's the same for every person on Earth, no matter how different their beliefs are from yours. No matter how certain you are that they are wrong, they are just as certain your different beliefs are wrong. If they believed they were wrong they'd change their minds — even if they wouldn't admit in public they did so.

No one believes they are wrong or they'd stop believing what they believe and would believe something else they believe is correct.

How confusing is this?

You're not going to change their minds by saying "You're wrong." You're probably not even going to change their beliefs with evidence or information, either.

I'm not claiming evidence and information are useless and can't change people's beliefs. I know from experience they can.

My beliefs have changed since I was young. In every case, I believed I was right until new information made me change my mind. Afterward, I once again believed I was right until the next time something made me change my mind again. I never much regretted changing my mind, but I occasionally wished what I believed before had been right. The old belief was more comfortable or comforting than the new belief. If I could still believe what I believed before I wouldn't have changed my belief.

I'm as sure my interpretation of the world is correct as you are sure yours is correct. I'm as sure yours is wrong where it differs from mine as you are sure of the opposite. How can this stalemate be broken, or should it be?

Although no one is going to automatically change their beliefs when presented with new evidence or information, you shouldn't let that stop you. Put it out there. Let them accept it or not.

People are more likely to accept information that agrees with what they already believe, but sometimes — even years later — the new information finally germinates and starts to grow. I've had people write to let me know something I said years ago finally broke through their defenses — often due to events — and changed their long-held beliefs. It does

happen.

Never give up nor lie about what you believe to make someone comfortable, but don't be too fast to condemn those who believe differently than you do. You may end up on the same side eventually.