



## Wellbeing Insight

### Your Truth

When considering the matter of 'truth' it becomes apparent that there is the kind of truth which relies on facts and figures and there is personal truth which is contextual and shaped by past and present experiences.

Neither is mutually exclusive, and each has its place in my view. Too often 'objective' truth is upheld as the final arbiter of rationality and 'personal' truth is dismissed as emotional and indeed oftentimes conflated with gender – a feminine approach.

Our world would be kinder, more truly compassionate if decisions were made which considered both truths. I am not advocating ignoring evidential based knowledge, in fact it would be foolish of me, but I am advocating bringing into the discussion the emotional truth – often based on lived experience – of all the parties in the discussion, regardless of gender or circumstances.

I also do not support wielding your 'truth' as a weapon, blurring rationality and passing off cruelty as honesty. We have a societal obligation to consider the facts and to study what history has taught us before committing ourselves to a decision. The adage, attributed to Winston Churchill, that 'those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it' is an adage for a reason. Study precedence and consider history as well as relevant scientific and contemporary advances in the issue at hand, but also ask what is 'your gut' telling you, what is your lived experience, what is your truth? Having said that, when others with personal stakes have a different truth, how well do you listen and how blunt are you in delivering your truth?

Truly listening to others' perspectives is a practice to cultivate, especially when they may differ, even contradict, one's own. In our troubled world, ideology and absolutism can obscure the issue at hand and block our ears to the voices of the exponents of other ways of seeing. And we are the losers.

A blend of what can be agreed upon by most as the truth of the matter, and a respect for the differences that arise, as well as an acknowledgment of their *right* to speak or write their truth, is the recipe for lively discourse, sadly often missing in today's exchanges. True empathic listening, which acknowledges the inherent dignity of all – our common humanity— and affords head space to the consideration of alternative views, individual truths, is the way forward.

Brené Brown has a contribution to this discussion:

*We need to dispel the myth that empathy is 'walking in someone else's shoes'. Rather than walking in your shoes, I need to learn how to listen to the story you tell about what it's like in your shoes and believe you even when it doesn't match my experiences.*



With this approach, we may broaden the debate, enrich the possibilities, and choose a way which honours truth telling, and truth tellers.

This is the way I see it.

This is my truth.