

## A Stitch in Time:

I want to talk to you today about the folks in your life who may be having trouble dealing with the fact that we have entered the twenty-first century and that things in this century will be different and challenging. We no longer live in a Norman Rockwell painting. We never did. This is difficult for some people to accept. It's difficult for me and that's why I want to help.

Do you know people who are incapable of accepting the fact that we have an African American, liberal, son of an absentee father President? Are you a little intimidated by the ravings and threats that these poor souls spout? Are you experiencing the same emotions that I felt with my liberal friends while W. was the president? They would say the craziest things and accuse Bush of the most far fetched crimes all the while painting themselves as reasonable citizens. Well, I'm working on a solution. I call it 'Involuntary Isolation' and it goes something like this.

At the earliest signs that a loved one is politically crazy, when they say that Obama is a Commie or that Newt killed Kennedy, you should cut them off completely from any cable TV program on any network other than the Golf Channel or Telemundo. The first is so vapid, so much the toy of materialistic airheads that they don't "do" politics and the second is in a language that no crazy has the time to study. They can not be fueled in their outrage by either of these stations. You might actually find that your troubled friend is soothed by the glacial pace of the first or mesmerized by the faced paced foreign tongue of the other. In either case the new medium will be so much more important than the old message that they might show signs of improvement simply by losing themselves in an apolitical void.

I have a dear friend who goes bananas at the mere mention of ex-president Bush. There is nothing I can say, no recollection of his two terms in office that does not drive her to apoplexy. I think she might benefit from the Golf Channel. There is so little on this channel for the left-leaning moralist to relate to that she just might relax for a minute, might even enjoy the fact that she's not shouting at the TV. There's a point to mindless focus, Zen and its sister arts have been reaffirming this notion for centuries.

I have right-leaning friends who are incapable of having a conversation about the current administration without sending their blood pressure to unexplored levels. A discussion of deficits will tempt a stroke, mention health care and you could be convicted of involuntary manslaughter. For these folks I say try "Sabado Gigante". It is a variety show in another language that is so over the top, so 1950's America that they just might forget what it is they're paranoid about. There's even the chance that, realizing Spanish can be fun, they'll relax about immigration.

If these fairly innocuous solutions don't work there is another alternative but it requires special will on your part and the lack of weapons on their part. It must be done during a political episode, when the loved one is hitting bottom. You must strike as if your target is a drunk and leaving his third bar of the evening. You can show no mercy and you must be relentless in your conviction.

For a right winger you should strike when they are watching a compilation of O'Rielly's greatest hatchet jobs. Wait until your loved one is glassy eyed and stamping her feet in glee over his attacks on perceived enemies. Feed her paranoia by reading from the UN Charter as she rages with Bill. Then pull the plug. Wheel out the old TV and wheel in the new, nothing but Spanish language TV, a 'Sabado Gigante' marathon. The effect will be akin to a concussion, sleepiness, slurred speech and a goofball smile. Be patient and keep the patient warm. She will soon realize that there is more to life than bile and angst, might even learn to value her neighbors.

For the lefty in your life, entice him by Netflixing the complete works of Keith Olberman. Wait until Keith is dancing on the grave of Reagan and digging a grave for Cheney and then pull the plug. Then slap on "Twenty Years of U.S. Open Highlights". Your loved one will need a minute to grasp the fact that a world without shouting moralisms is possible, that everyone else does not need to be like him. The lack of opinion, the absence of any political point at all, will slowly seep in. If boredom doesn't kill him he just might come out the other end realizing that it takes all kinds to make a world and that "stupid" is not an appropriate word for people with a difference of opinion.

There has been a lot of brain research recently into the idea that for ideologically committed humans, right or left, there comes a time when facts simply lose their meaning. The emotional centers of the brain take over and process the information in their own special way. Dopamine is released and the subject begins to feel good simply by resisting the presented facts and replacing reason with a tenacious loyalty to their chosen philosophy, party, candidate or President. I'm serious. It's an effect that can be measured, it's real.

I'm sure you have witnessed the phenomenon. There are still millions of people who believe that Saddam had a hand in 9/11 and millions more, on the left, who refuse to acknowledge that the guys who are managing the bank bailouts are the guys who caused the bank disaster to begin with. Facts are useless on them. Continued argument and pointed reasoning are water off a duck. Dopamine talks and reason walks. You might as well preach to the door knob.

That is exactly why the Telemundo/Golf Channel Program for Ideological Deprivation is sure to work. We have to replace agitation with mind numbing wallpaper. We have to fight fire with fog. We have to let raving Uncle Joe and vituperative Aunt Betty hit rock bottom, right in the middle of their favorite shows, and then pounce on them with the cure.

In the meantime don't waste your time resisting the irresistible. Stop debating and start planning. Stay cool and begin to plot the Intervention. Let Dopamine have its day for now and look forward to endless hours of Golf Highlights in the future, just you and the loved one staring blankly off into space, Bill and Keith but a whispering memory.