

How to Heal a Country



My heart has become more and more broken over the past 15 or so years as I have watched my beloved “United” States of America devolve into two divided entities in a pitched battle for the soul of the country.

Not since the actual Civil War has the apparent chasm between two halves of our nation been so enormous and the words so hateful.

And while politicians on both sides of the aisle have almost always given lip service to “coming together,” the words and actions that follow typically signal a different agenda.

Thus, this article is not about our politicians. It’s about the citizenry. It’s about us. You and me. Because I believe it is we individuals ourselves – as it always has been – who will come together voluntarily in order to create the kind of mass movement that will eventually result in the reuniting so many of us so deeply desire.

In this article I ask the question, “Is it possible for the political left and the political right to unite as one country

rather than as two totally different countries within a geographic location?"

And my answer is:

Yes – However...

I believe it is possible; that it is very possible. However, I believe three things will need to occur in order for it to happen.

No, this is not about compromise. At least not yet. (We're far from even being at that point.)

First, it's about the willingness of both "sides" to see the "other side" as human beings with good intent rather than as evil creatures trying to destroy our country. Yes, that's where it begins, as difficult as that may seem.

Is it reasonable to ask if perhaps there really ARE evil monsters on the "other side"? Sure it is. I think we can all agree that there are indeed evil people in the world, and yes, they exist on the fringes of both sides.

But they are not the majority. Far, far from it. Most – the overwhelming majority – are honest, hard-working people who want the best for everyone.

In the heat of argument, this is easy to forget. And so, so vital to remember.

"Good" Doesn't Mean "the Same"

That said, while most people in both parties want what's best toward creating an environment where people in our country are prosperous, happy, and healthy, both parties tend to see the solutions differently. Sometimes very, very differently. You already know this.

Thus, after the first step of reminding ourselves that 99.9%

of us really are good people with good intentions, the second step is to *understand* why those other people have the views they have. You **don't need to agree**, but you do need to at least understand. It's only then that positive communication (and yes, even persuasion!) is at all possible.

This is why I suggest that if you get all your news, perspectives, and political opinions, etc. from "your side's" sources only, start watching, reading, and listening to the opposing media sources. Not to be disgusted or to disagree, not to reinforce your emotionally charged feelings about how "wrong" or "stupid" they are...but simply to *understand*.

When you watch/read the "other side's" media, you'll see patterns of thought emerge and, again, while you won't necessarily agree (nor should you), you'll begin to get a sense of the "why" of their thought processes.

May I also suggest reading the book, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* by Professor Jonathan Haidt, PhD. I found it to be very enlightening and helpful toward this kind of understanding.

Once you feel you have a sufficient understanding of their thoughts and motivations, now you can begin to engage people from a place of, "where are we in agreement?" as opposed to why we each think the other is a bad person.

Facts Are Important; Connection is Key

Indeed, study the facts and issues and have them at top of mind when discussing policy. Then, and this is the immensely-important third step, please realize that facts don't connect – people connect. And facts don't persuade – people persuade. Once they understand that your intent is benevolent and that you're seeking truth (as opposed to making them wrong) you'll be delightfully surprised by how open most people are to discussion.

This does not mean both sides will ever agree on the best ways and means for our country to operate. They won't, and that's okay. It does mean we'll begin to once again operate from a sense of goodwill and respect.

When that is the case, then – and *only* then – will we truly be the “United” States of America.