

A PRAYER FOR CONTENTIOUS TIMES
by Eugenia Burkes

Are you having to avoid all discussions of politics these days? Is it just too stressful? Consider meditation or prayer and I suggest using the Serenity Prayer. If you are not familiar with this prayer, here is what Wikipedia says about it:

“The Serenity Prayer is the common name for a prayer written by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971). The best-known form is:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can
And wisdom to know the difference.

Niebuhr, who first wrote the prayer for a sermon at Heath Evangelical Union Church in Heath, Massachusetts, used it widely in sermons as early as 1934 and first published it in 1951 in a magazine column. The prayer spread through Niebuhr's sermons and church groups in the 1930s and 1940s and was adopted and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous and other twelve-step programs.

I consider the basic elements of the prayer brilliant. Just look at the order. First I must have serenity to find the courage and wisdom to face the challenges in my life. As I have meditated on these words, I have been able to react in a different manner from previous knee-jerk reactions to upsetting events. For example, if someone says something political that I am totally in opposition to, my knee-jerk reaction would be to engage in debate/arguing/self-righteous indignation. My guess is the result would be nothing positive — the other person would not be persuaded to change his/her opinion, (no matter how brilliant I thought I was) and would probably dig in his/her heels. Just as important, how would I be? Probably agitated and stressed out for hours if not days. I would replay the scene in my head like an endless-loop tape.

What if I selfishly put my own serenity as my paramount objective? Could I just politely say “I do not want to discuss this.” and walk away? Another way to think about this is to ask yourself “Do I want to be right or happy?”

Do not assume I'm saying there aren't appropriate ways to “fight back” — first and foremost is vote, next — get involved, as many of us already are - yeah AAUW! Don't give up but only act in a positive manner that is not harmful to you or others!