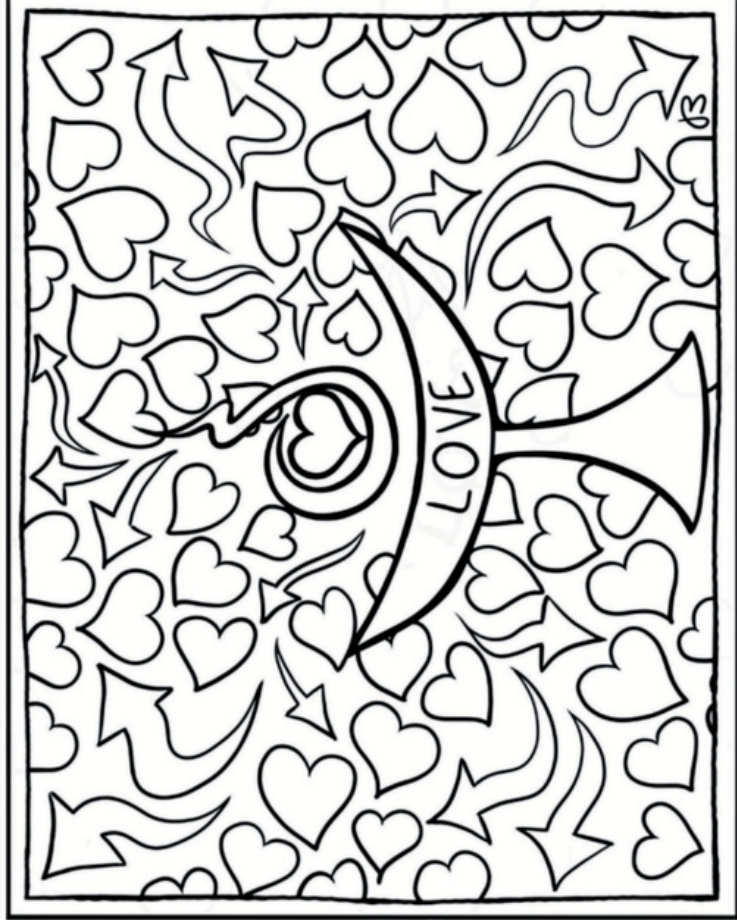




paying attention to the news

From Rev. EB, September 2025

Thoughts on “staying informed”

In theory, I “stay informed” so that I can take action to make things better...but mostly, I notice that looking at news websites or listening to news makes me tired and sad. I don’t want to be sticking my head in the sand about all the horrible things going on in this country, but I am not sure that our brains evolved to handle this amount of information, especially negative, violent information.

Increasingly I think “staying informed” and “taking action” aren’t that connected. I can call my legislator about Gaza without reading several news items a day about it. I can participate in an immigrant justice organization without reading about ICE raids every day.

I can protest the arbitrary, unjust, and violent detention of my neighbor without repeatedly watching videos of the detention. I can pray for people killed or people living in the aftermath of violence without trying to name and know the details. (I cannot, in fact, pray by name for everyone who dies every day. In my theology, I would say I trust that God remembers them.)

I think I might actually be better “informed” about something if I read several well-researched books, rather than track fragments of daily news. Or if I participate in organizing where I hear from directly-impacted neighbors.

What do you find? Does consuming more news motivate you to take more action for a better world?

How much time do you spend
getting news? Try keeping track:

Sunday:

Monday:

Tuesday:

Wednesday:

Thursday:

Friday:

Saturday:

other notes:

How much time do you spend
acting on your values?

What's the relationship between time
spent on news and time spent on action?

Where do you get your news?
Who pays for it?



How do you feel after getting
news?

☐

happy

☐

sad

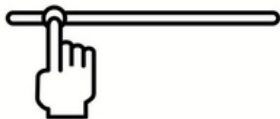
☐

surprised

☐

afraid

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐



Has getting news helped you
take action? Describe that here:

doomscrolling alternatives:

read poetry, pray, meditate, read a romance novel, knit, text a friend, pet a dog, listen to a favorite song, take up bird-watching, bake a cake, share cake with your neighbors, go for a walk/roll, introduce yourself to a neighbor, draw, make a collage, weed a garden, read a well-researched book, ask a friend for a movie recommendation, learn to play the ukulele, look up the lyrics to that one song, write a letter, learn a new skill...

thinking about SOURCES:

from *Copaganda* by Alec Karakatsanis

* or about anything!--Rev E

When you see a news story about public safety,* look at the sources reporters have chosen to tell the story. Ask yourself some questions:

- Whose voices are included?
- Who benefits from this point of view being presented as news?
- *What harms to which people in which places at which times* do the sources emphasize?
- Was anyone with a viewpoint critical of the punishment bureaucracy included? If included, where in the article were views challenging the narrative put forward by punishment bureaucrats placed? Whose voices were prioritized?

- How did the reporter choose which voices to quote and which to ignore?
- How might this source have gotten to the reporter?
- Which sources were granted anonymity and why?
- Did the reporter include skepticism for claims made by punishment bureaucrats, or note whether the source has a history of dishonesty or conflicts of interest? Did the reporter include skepticism for claims made by any critics of the punishment bureaucracy?
- How, if at all, would this story have been told by different groups of sources with different perspectives?
- What role do the ownership, consolidation, and business models of media companies play in determining which sources with what views are presented?

ON [THE MEDIA]

BREAKING NEWS CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK

1. In the immediate aftermath, news outlets will get it wrong.
2. Don't trust anonymous sources.
3. Don't trust stories that cite another news outlet as the source of the information.
4. There's almost never a second shooter.
5. Pay attention to the language the media uses.
 - *"We are getting reports"* ... could mean anything.
 - *"We are seeking confirmation"* ... means they don't have it.
 - *"[News outlet] has learned"* ... means it has a scoop or is going out on limb.
6. Look for news outlets close to the incident.
7. Compare multiple sources.
8. Big news brings out the fakers. And photoshoppers.
9. Beware reflexive retweeting. Some of this is on you.

More specific Breaking News handbooks
from WNYC's "On the Media:"



This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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