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My opinions matter...and other misconceptions

"Small actions, big difference – welcome to the digital neighbourhood"

'Opinions are like noses; everybody's got one, but it usually has a couple of holes in it.' (Author unknown)

Introduction

Have you ever had an argument with someone on a social media platform? Did you think about any lasting consequences of that argument on your professional or private life?

We've all seen articles and posts that make our blood boil or make us sick to our stomachs. We don't agree with the author's opinion. In our opinion they're ignorant or maybe even uneducated. But, therein lies the heart of the problem. It's their OPINION. And everyone has the right to their own opinion.

If my opinion matters, then other people's opinions also matter. We are all entitled to our opinions and there will always be people who disagree with ours. An opinion – defined as being a judgment, viewpoint, or statement that is not conclusive – is not necessarily based on fact or knowledge, and is highly influenced by an individual's background and experience.



How to protect yourself

Some guidelines to consider when engaging with people on social media:

- How well do I know the person I'm engaging with? If the communication is formal, try to avoid giving your opinion, unless asked for it. It also helps to be respectful.
- Is the person ready to hear you out? If not, the conversation might degrade into an argument.
- When being assertive, put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Remember that everyone has different backgrounds and experiences, and this will influence their opinions on matters.
- Use conditional clauses when talking or writing about your opinion.
- Start sentences with clauses like: 'As far as I know...' or 'In my experience...'
- Remember, you're stating your opinion, not a fact.
- When your emotions are not under control, take time out to calm down before writing something that you may regret later.

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