Twitter Thread by Jeff Giesea



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A friend asked what lessons I'd learned after spending two years off Twitter & away from politics.

Here are a few from my older, wiser, post-covid self.

These are just one guy's take-aways after some observing and soul-searching. Take them as you will.

1. Most people are nice. And normal. Most have common sense. There may not be a political constituency for the common sense middle, but this is where most people are. Twitter algos warp us so bad we lose sight of this. Sometimes we need to leave our echo chambers to see this.

2. No, the sky isn't falling. Returning to Twitter, I am struck by how much catastrophizing there is on all sides. From AMERICAN DEMOCRACY IS UNDER ATTACK to WOKE GLOBALISTS ARE TAKING OVER THE WORLD. I get it, the drama works. It creates urgency. But it is usually overstated.

The problem with catastrophizing is that it creates a sort of wartime logic. "We are in a WAR for ___ and you better pick a side and win by any means necessary." I see this logic a lot on this hellsite & in our politics. It often leads to moral compromise & bad decisions.

3. Social media controls us more than we realize. I used to think Twitter enhanced my independent critical thinking. Now I view it as a cesspool of weird social & psychic pressures. It activates this performative, dopamine-driven part of our brains. Staying away can be freeing.

Any wonder social media is creating a generation of mentally disturbed young people? Today's social media algos are unanchored from any sense of public good. This is having all kinds of effects on our psyches & societies.

It doesn't have to be this way. https://t.co/A3frl54Xq9

4. We live in an influencer-driven culture. But being an influencer is dangerous. It exposes you to harassment & bad-faith actors. It encourages & rewards your worst traits. It may turn you into an addict, narcissist, or kook. You can be led off a cliff

by your own audience.

Being an influencer & staying sane takes extreme fortitude. I admire those who can do it.

As a rule, I'd advise against it. Do not trade your soul for clicks.

5. Your journey, including your mistakes, can help others. It takes a while to own our stories, but we all have them. Think about the last two years under Covid. What was your experience it? How did it change you? I don't know anyone whose life didn't change.

6. If you've been through some stuff, remember there's only one member of your audience you can't change: yourself. Make sure you like the guy in the mirror. Start there, with the inside job. Ignore the external. Forgive yourself & get on track from within. The rest will follow.

7. Love & kindness matter. I know this sounds all yoga-Unitarian, but you can really feel the source of people's energy. "Is this coming from a good or a bad place?" is a question to ask. This doesn't mean being rolling over. Just make sure your edge is coming from a good place.

8. Guardrails are important. Moral, legal, Constitutional. It's easy to feel constrained by them when we are in the race. But remember the point of guardrails: they are there to keep us safe.

9. The political climate is so divisive, you know what's contrarian? Consensus-building. Lol. But seriously, when you hear someone's story of why they believe what they do and how they arrived there, it is hard to hate them. Political testimonies are powerful.

It's ok to acknowledge someone is a good person despite holding dramatically different views.

I remember crossing paths with an "annoying" leftwing influencer at a coffee shop several years ago. He smiled at my kid. I've viewed him differently ever since. https://t.co/1ThKDSRDkl

> Justice Sotomayor on the exceptional kindness of Clarence Thomas: \u201cJustice Thomas is the only justice in the building who literally knows every employees\u2019 names. And not only does he know their names, he remembers their family\u2019s names\u2026 He cares about people.\u201d pic.twitter.com/25No1CVXMs
>
> — Allie Beth Stuckey (@conservmillen) June 19, 2022

10. There's nothing more meaningful than building a family, creating life, raising kids. We may have different views about what forms this should take, but isn't there something universal here? Obviously, you can live a good life without having kids - but man, it is meaningful.

Parenting small children under Covid was rough. I remember recognizing the "exhausted parent" look on others at the time. Most parents, I realized, are just trying to hold it together. (Totally not projecting or anything, ha)