Twitter Thread by Jo Luehmann



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We live in a society that misunderstands boundaries and consent. Most people think the former is about just saying no, and the latter is about sex. And while that's a part of it, they are about agency, autonomy, respect and interpersonal relationships.

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Unsolicited advice without consent is crossing a person's boundaries. Even if the advice is good advice, even if the person giving the advice is a pastor or a parent, even if the advice is important. Most people aren't talking about their life so that we may solve it.

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It is an honor to be trusted with someone's life story*, with their thoughts and their challenges, with their struggles and their musings. But it is not an open invitation to try and solve their problems, control their behavior, tell them what to do.

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For a group of people that speak often of free will and claim to follow Jesus, Christians are some of the worst at boundaries and consent in general, and advice giving in particular. Think about how many sermons are not sharing spiritual truths, but just giving advice.

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Think about how much pastoral counseling is just advice giving. Think about the many books that tell you how to parent, how to be a good wife, how to be a good Christian, how to... and how much of it is general advice as though our lives were interchangeable?

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This too is tied to white supremacy culture. This is another reason deconstruction without dismantling/decolonizing doesn't guarantee you stop causing harm. Because in some level giving advice we weren't asked for, without consent,

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is done out of the belief that we know better for another person. Otherwise we could listen, ask questions, and ask if our advice is wanted/needed. White supremacy culture tells us we have the right answers, we can fix others, we are needed for others to be well.

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Unsolicited advice and proselytizing are similar to me in some aspects. Those offering them see the other as less than, as lacking, as needing something they have. This may not be explicit or even conscious. But they subconsciously don't see the other as a full adult...

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able to make decisions on their own, find solutions themselves, or ask for help when they need it. It presupposes people are sharing not because they trust you, but because they need you to help them. It presupposes a lot about the other, and our biases are at play.

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How often are you more inclined to offer unsolicited advice to women than you are to offer it to men? Rich people over poor people? BIPOC over white people? Disabled people over abled bodied people? Fat people over skinny people? Non-religious people over religious people?

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Being conscious is part of healing, why do I feel the need to share unsolicited advice? Because let's be honest, the initial response that it is to help the other person is just a shallow reason, the hidden motivation underneath the behavior is rarely care for the other.

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it is often discomfort with another person's pain, feelings of superiority, feelings of inferiority, insecurities, or emotional immaturity.

Safe people/organizations respect people's agency. They understand consent and boundaries and uphold them for themselves and others.

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*Sharing traumatic experiences, difficult situations, or problems you are having also requires consent. Asking people if they have the emotional bandwidth to listen to things we are going through or processing is important, it communicates loudly care/respect/love.