

Extreme Attachment to Politics is Bad for Human Well-being

By Alex Taft

With advances in connectivity to current events through social media, more and more people have been consistently following politics. One can open up any social media app, and immediately be shown some form of political content. Especially with growing political division in America, politics are everywhere. Following politics isn't a bad thing by any means; of course it's good to know what's going on in the world's political landscape. However, research has shown that excessive attachment to politics may be bad for human well-being.

Recent studies have shown that attachment to politics can decrease one's overall happiness. In a 2017 study conducted by the University of Amsterdam, headed by political scientist Mark Boukes, it was discovered that average well-being falls by 6.1% for every additional hard political news program watched a week. The statistics propose a convincing argument for a correlation between increased political news consumption and lack of well-being, as the more political news one watched, the less happy they were. Perhaps other factors were in play, and the results just happened to place those who watched more political news as less happy. Inspired by this study, social scientist Arthur C. Brooks conducted a similar study to see if he would find alike results. "In an attempt to see more clearly how attention to politics is directly associated with life satisfaction, I conducted an analysis using 2014 data from the General Social Survey," explains Brooks. He then continues, describing how after controlling for household income, education, age, gender, marital status, political views, and race: he found that people who were "very interested in politics" were about 8% more likely to be not very happy about life than people who were "not very interested in politics." Akin to Bouke's research, Brooks shows a correlation between increased consumption of politics and overall well-being, as on average, people who reported being very interested in politics also stated they weren't very pleased with life far more than those who reported not being too interested in the subject. With the evidence provided, one can conclude that politics quite possibly have a direct effect on overall happiness with life. Over-attachment to politics can harm well-being in more ways than just negatively impacting levels of happiness, however.

Over-attachment to politics has been shown to sever ties with friends and even family. In a poll taken during the 2016 election by Reuters, a news organization which has been producing peer-reviewed articles since 1851, results showed that 38.7% of respondents had gotten into at least one argument with family or close friends over politics, 17.4% had blocked a family member or a close friend on social media, 16.4% had stopped talking to a family member or close friend, and 13.4% of respondents had ended a relationship with a family member or close friend over politics (From Disputes to). Is politics really something worth ending years of friendship, or completely cutting a family member out of your life over? In a similar 2016

publishing from Gallup, a poll known for its public opinion polls world wide, it was revealed that 60% of Democrats polled wanted their children to marry a Democrat, and 63% of Republicans wanted their children to marry a Republican. When political ideals of parents can so commonly prevent their children from marrying someone just because they don't align with them politically, or at least cause lasting disdain for the person marrying, there is something wrong. Politics is important, but with the exception of a few extreme scenarios, it shouldn't be preventing people from befriending or respecting someone just because they have a different political perspective.

As the world has been getting more and more connected to current political events, politics are being closely followed by many. While it can be good to know what's happening in the world around us, over attachment to these politics can take away some of the joy in our lives and end otherwise strong friendships, even causing the cutting off of family or end of relationships in some cases. So, what reasonable way is there to avoid getting too attached to politics without just abandoning society and living in the Alaskan wilderness to avoid ever seeing politics again? Well, there's a plethora of options that can be adjusted according to the person. If you still want to remain very up to date on political events but don't want to become too attached, you could possibly limit your news reading/watching to one, maybe two or three, days a week. It's enough days to keep anyone up to date, but also lessens one's chances of becoming too glued. You could also go with a more nuclear option like I have personally; don't watch or read news, and clear your recommended feed of politics by intentionally flooding it with other types of content, blocking any and all political accounts you can think of (agenda pages, politicians, news accounts), and clicking "not interested" on every political post you see if possible. Doing this keeps you fairly up to date on politics since political posts and information still sneaks its way into life every now and then, but the one downside is it can also cause you to fall a little behind on current events every now and again. No matter what our political opinions may be, we're ultimately all human, and humans could use a break from the events of our crazy world every once in a while.

