

EDITORIAL

with Dawn Brown

The right to express an opinion

The world is filled with opinions, and these days thanks to the aid of social media, we have more opportunities than ever to both express those opinions as well as to be exposed to them. Opinions, ideas, world views come at us from all different directions—some we share and many we don't.

In an ideal scenario, when faced with opinions that are not our own, we would take a moment to reflect on new ideas with an open mind. Maybe the new idea would sway our own view, or maybe not. Maybe we would simply have to agree to disagree. Unfortunately, this seems to rarely be the case. All too often when confronted with opinions differing from our own, emotions swell and what could be an interesting debate reverts to name-calling. Incidentally, when someone name calls they automatically lose credibility and the argument—in my opinion, anyway.

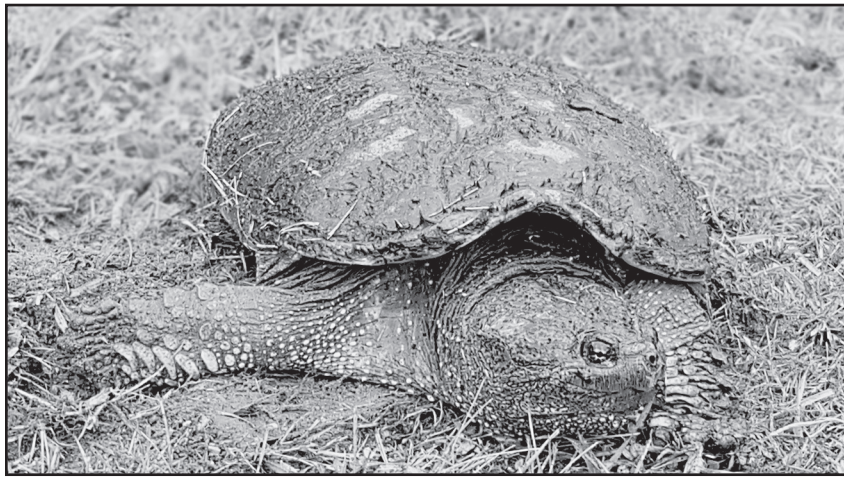
Years back, I read an essay written by writer Neil Gaiman who stated—and I'm probably mis-quoting badly here, but the sentiment is correct—that no one had ever changed his mind by yelling in his face. I think this is likely true of all of us. For someone reason, these days there seems to be a fervent need to convince others that we are right in our opinions while forcing those who don't share them to acknowledge that they are wrong, and vice versa.

I'm not sure where that need stems from. If that too is a result of social media. If after drowning in a cyber vat of validation in the form of likes, kudos and shares, when someone disagrees with us, we are wounded and angered by the reaction, vilifying those with opposing views. We take those differing opinions as a person attack instead of just an idea we don't share.

These angry reactions to opposing opinions really rear their ugly heads especially around election time—as our recent provincial election proved—or around controversial subjects.

We, living here in Canada, are fortunate that we are granted certain rights—among them the right to freedom of expression, and while there are certain caveats regarding hate speech, we have the right to express our opinions.

The truth is, none of us are any more special than anyone else, and our views and rights to express those views as valid as anyone else's. I may not agree with someone's ideas, political outlook, or values, but I believe wholeheartedly in their right to express them.



SNAPPING TURTLE: This turtle was spotted at Bovis Park last week, digging holes. It was the first time the reader had seen a snapper outside of Fairy Lake. - Submitted photo

Switching off the “helicopter parent” inside

When I was my kids' ages, I roamed the neighbourhood. My bicycle was my leader and my friends from up the road were always up for an adventure. I knew I put my mom especially through the ringer as they say. My sister wasn't maybe as bold as I was, and even though I would follow the rules of telling my folks where I was and when I would be home, I know my mom knew that she had to worry about me more than my sister.

She was right to think that way. My first destination that I reported was probably the MZ Bennett PS playground, but it wasn't usually our only destination. As we grew into our tweens especially, we would travel to Prospect Park and other places around town. Sometimes even to the top of Churchill to bicycle down at lightening speeds in moments of death-defying craziness. However, times were different 40 years ago, even in Acton the world has changed.

I can remember my mom sending me over to the BP Gas Bar or Beckers at a very young age to go buy the weekly newspaper. It was no big deal back then.

Over this past weekend, I realized I'm pretty close to being



By
Angela Tyler

a “helicopter parent”. We—the kids, me and my mom—were on a bit of a road trip when the backseat riders started to complain that they were thirsty. I was hot, they were hot and thirsty, and we needed to stop.

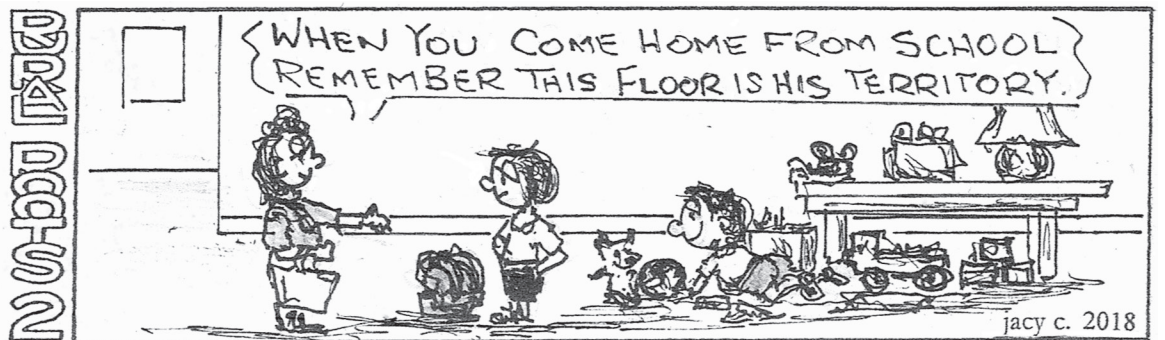
It may seem like a non-event, but it turned into a big one for our kids. I have been intentionally trying to slow my “helicopter parent” motor for a little while now, starting with some “you're getting older and I have to let go” tasks. I pulled into a gas station in a community that I was a stranger to, turned to both kids and said, “okay, you can go in and buy water for yourselves.” This had never happened before...ever. Yes, I am one of those moms and I make no apologies for it.

There was a look of doubt mixed with I'm sure the feeling that they wanted to scream with excitement. “Here's money for both of you.” I started and continued with my rules. “Stay together. Little J you hold the money and he will go with you. Get two regular size bottles and

if you don't have enough money, then one of you come back to me.” It was the longest four minutes of my life. All the ridiculous mom worries were running rampant through my head.

Finally, they emerged, each holding a bottle of water and running to my truck. “We did it,” they proclaimed proudly in unison, “And we have change!” They told me that one wanted to buy a big bottle of water while the other had repeated the rules back, and they decided to do exactly what they were instructed to do. “That was fun,” Little J almost squealed with delight.

I tried to be positive. “You both did great...you see this is the start to being responsible and acting maturely.” Yep, I told them that but inside mom is still trying to fire up that helicopter motor, worried some whacko is going to kidnap both kids from a 7-11 store right in front of me in the middle of the day. They're growing up, and I just want to keep them safe. It's not that I don't want them to grow up; I just want to protect them. I know exactly how my mom must have felt every time I took off on my bicycle. Boy does she need a better Mother's Day present next year.



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HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTOR: Scott Brooks

ADVERTISING AND CIRCULATION: Marie Shadbolt

PRODUCTION: Iain Brennan

LOGO DESIGN: Alexis Brown

CONTACT US:

379 Queen Street East
Acton, Ontario L7J 2N2
Tel: 519-853-0051
Fax: 519-853-0052

E-MAIL:

General: thenewtanner@on.aibn.com
(including Advertising and Circulation)

Editorial: tannereditor@bellnet.ca

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