How to Overcome Divisiveness

Today, I want to read a quote to you from Goethe. He says, "We see what we look for, and we look for what we know." " We see what we look for, and we look for what we know."

This is an important quote to consider, especially in the environment we find ourselves in these days with a pandemic and racism. You know, we come at these things from a certain perspective, with certain beliefs, with a certain worldview. When we're in our own worldview, our own particular worldview, it's very difficult for us to consider other people's worldview. That leaves us pretty limited in our ability to respond to what is happening in our world.

The point of this quote is that we really look for what we know and it's very difficult to consider anything that we don't know. And that's a function of a brain whose top priority is to keep us safe and to conserve energy. It takes a lot of energy to consider things outside of your perspective, outside of your world view. One of the things about being a mature adult is learning to take someone else's perspective, learning to take multiple perspectives. This is what it means to grow up, what it means to be mature, and we get quite stubborn with our own perspectives, with our own way of seeing the world. That leaves us very limited and it also can lead to polarization.

We see so much of that right now. First of all, have compassion for yourself for being kind of stuck in your own worldview. We all get stuck, every one of us does. There's nothing wrong with you that you want to live in your own worldview. It's just that we're at a time in our culture, in our evolution in our history, that we must begin to learn to break out of that and expand our perspective so that we can begin to step into other people's shoes and consider other people's viewpoints. It can be taxing on a brain that wants to conserve energy, to really learn to take someone else's perspective.

How do we learn to do this? I think first of all we have to check our own biases. We have to see where bias might be showing up in our own lives. And we can do that by studying other perspectives, studying other worldviews. We can do that by really increasing our capacity for listening. We've got to learn to listen. So many of us listen to respond, rather than listening to understand. So, today I want to encourage you to read outside of your perspective, to sit down with someone who disagrees with you, to listen for understanding, not to give your point of view, but to listen for understanding. Remember that we all are living in our own separate realities. When I understand that I'm acting and behaving in the way I do because of the way I believe and so are you, it really helps me to know that if I believed what you believed, I would be saying and doing and acting in the same way that you are. This gives me a lot of compassion, and it gives me more patience to hear your perspective. And I have to say that I have a long

long long long way to go in this. We need to get better and better at listening and taking on more perspectives. So today I just want to encourage you in the midst of all this happening to listen for understanding, listen for understanding, listen for understanding. Open to another person's perspective. Read outside of your worldview and see what shifts for you because I believe that is going to allow for more connection and we need that in our world today.