

Postscript: The Ten Suggestions

An activist rabbi I know suggested I do a postscript of the Ten Commandments for effective citizen engagement. Calling them Commandments seems a bit presumptuous, but here are ten suggestions that can make engagement more fruitful:

Suggestion #1: Start where you are. You don't need to know everything, and you certainly don't need to be perfect.

Suggestion #2: Take things step by step. You set the pace of your engagement. Don't worry about being swallowed up, because you'll determine how much you get involved.

Suggestion #3: Build supportive community. You can accomplish far more with even a small group of good people than you can alone.

Suggestion #4: Be strategic. Ask what you're trying to accomplish, where you can find allies, and how to best communicate the urgencies you feel.

Suggestion #5: Enlist the uninvolved. They have their own fears and doubts, so they won't participate automatically; you have to work actively to engage them. If you do, there's no telling what they'll go on to achieve.

Suggestion #6: Seek out unlikely allies. The more you widen the circle, the more you'll have a chance of breaking through the entrenched barriers to change.

Suggestion #7: Persevere. Change most often takes time. The longer you continue working, the more you'll accomplish.

Suggestion #8: Savor the journey. Changing the world shouldn't be grim work. Take time to enjoy nature, good music, good conversation, and whatever else lifts your soul. Savor the company of good people working for change.

Suggestion #9: Think large. Don't be afraid to tackle the deepest-rooted injustices, and to tackle them on a national or global scale. Remember that many small actions can shift the course of history.

Suggestion #10: Listen to your heart. It's why you're involved to begin with. It's what will keep you going...