

# 8 PIECES OF ADVICE

## A GUIDE TO RESPONSIBLE ONLINE BEHAVIOR

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1.

Test your own argument: Do you have independent reasons for believing what apparently everybody else thinks everybody else believes? If you can't come up with your own such argument, you may just be following other lemmings bubbling along who lack independent reasons for believing whatever is on the agenda.

2.

Try your argument on others: One thing is for you to believe what you take to be the case based on your independent reasons – yet another is why others should accept the correctness of your information. Test-drive your argument – in that way you may steer clear of the bubbling bandwagon, and possibly get others already on it to jump off.

3.

Think as you 'like': Administer a 'like' or an 'upvote' with great care – testing and trying. As opposed to voicing your opinion in person, virtual registration of opinions through 'like' and upvote gestures is cost-free, non-committal and sometimes also ambiguous. Pay attention to the framing of an issue under discussion – that's what really determines what you're about to 'like'. Your individual 'like' is insignificant, but the aggregation of 'likes' can make up for a strong public signal as to what apparently is the right thing to think or do. And so the bubble may grow.

4.

Triangulate your information: Before you make up your mind as to whether like, join or jump consult sources of information you agree with, consult with sources you disagree with and then check against third party sources neither necessarily for or against. It's somewhat more work. But it certainly pays off in terms of knowledge and truth, and thus qualified deliberation, decision and action.

5.

Truth to the matter: Does the triangulation of information indicate that there is something to whatever seems to be bubbling? Or is it just incorrect information, rumors, hoaxes and hearsays bamboozling everything from some financial market to the free marketplace of opinions? Remember, opinions come cheap; even ignorance is an opinion. Truth is hard, but in the end we are suckers for it. And truth only bubbles benignly.

6.

Ask questions. When in doubt, ask questions instead of just liking or sharing a post. For example: "Where did you get this? Who is behind it? How can you trust this source?" The answer will help you make a better assessment. If you get no answers, or only partial ones, it could be that there is something rotten about it.

7.

Deception. Not only words lie - also pictures and videos may be misleading. It is easier than ever before to manipulate a picture or a video. Visual content is often perceived to be more truthful than words and will therefore often enough be used by those who wish to mobilize or twist a certain view.

8.

Pay attention to whom you share content with. Is it a public or private group? On Facebook you can divide your friends in lists with whom you can share selected content. Know that all content placed online runs the risk of being shared with others than you originally intended it to be shared with.