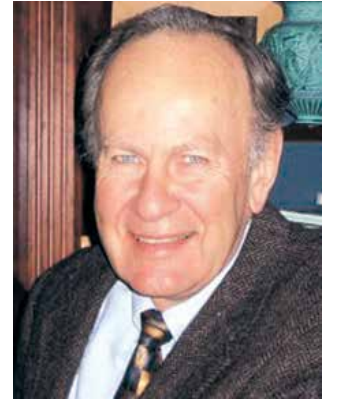


Spring Fashion has arrived!



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PUBLIC HEALTH AND AUTONOMY

As with many areas in my life, there is a tension between my autonomy and my responsibility to my fellow human beings. One could say there is a “tension” between my autonomy and the world I live in. I see this every time I take my 3 mile walk and pick up roadside trash! Someone’s strong belief in their own autonomy saw no problem with throwing their trash along the road.

What is autonomy? Are there limits to my autonomy? Why should there be limits? The dictionary defines personal autonomy as “self-directing freedom and especially moral independence.” People played the autonomy card when they refused to wear a face mask during the height of COVID. It is played to avoid getting immunizations. Autonomy is used in the abortion debate: “my body, my decision.” Autonomy is the right to not wear a helmet on the ski slope or when riding one’s motorcycle. You get the picture; it is basically saying “don’t tell me what I can or cannot do.”

What is public health? My article in the August 2021 issue of *The Bow Times* entitled “Where do you draw the line?” went into some of the details of public health. (Check it out online). There is only so much that public health policy can do. Success in public health comes more easily when the autonomy issue clashes with the health or safety of others. You may say it is my right to drink alcohol, but public health says it is against the law to drink and drive. Why? Because you have a higher risk of injuring, or killing, someone. Autonomy takes precedence allowing you to smoke cigarettes. Public health takes precedence by saying you cannot smoke in public spaces. Ask yourself these questions: Who is responsible for paying for the health care fallout from the use of cigarettes and alcohol? Do you think it is society’s responsibility to care for you (or those you injured) when exercising your autonomy leads to injury, disease, and death?

This tension exists “on steroids” in today’s culture wars. Wars that are fanned into raging fires by social media. We hide in the silos of our favorite news feeds, and we pick friends who affirm our beliefs. We read only one side of the argument, and support the overarching ideology (political or otherwise) that affirms us and does not challenge us to think. Because we are so focused on our own autonomy, we view ourselves as a victim, whose ‘rights’ are being stripped away. The question remains: Where will you draw the line? Will it be just about your desires, or will it include the desires and health of your community?

WISDOM LITERATURE CAN HELP US:

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another. Proverbs 27:17
Do not judge and criticize and condemn others, so that you may not be judged and criticized and condemned yourselves. Jesus, Matthew 7:1
Everyone’s God-given human dignity must be respected, regardless of his or her faith, race, ethnic origin, gender, or social status. Qur’an 17:70
The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing. Socrates

HOPKINTON POLICE DEPARTMENT



FEBRUARY 2024

4 Arrests • 2 Accidents • 310 Traffic Stops

02/10 Male Juvenile, 17, charged with Disobeying an Officer, Reckless Operation and License Required; Operate without Valid License.

02/12 Darren Rice, 52, of 216 Fox Run Road, Stoddard, arrested for DUI.

02/22 Sloane Page, 39, of 625 Dodge Hill Road, Henniker, arrested for DUI, Resist Arrest/Detention and Control Drug: Schedule 1-4; Possession.

02/28 Brentt Trudeau, 31, of 25 Cedar Street, Hopkinton, arrested for DV; Simple Assault; BI or PC, DV; Simple Assault – BI, DV; Obstructing Report of Crime/Injury, DV; Simple Assault; BI or PC, Criminal Mischief and Criminal Mischief.

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