

When will we learn?

Which is the right way to put the toilet paper on the roll? When I've asked this question in my classes, I've always gotten a variety of responses, often split between the toilet paper rolling "over" or "under." I remember when an engineer tried to explain, based on the law of gravity, why it should roll a certain way! People usually have pretty strong feelings about the right way to put the paper on the roll. In fact, a great number of people are so invested in their ways, that even when they're a guest in someone else's home, they turn the toilet paper around! You may laugh, which usually happens in my classes, but this is not funny. Imagine someone turning your toilet paper around...

Now let me tell you the right way to place the toilet paper on the roll. (This usually evokes even more laughter.) Of course the right way is *your* way. If you really believed that there were a better way to do it, you'd switch. But what happens when your "right" way differs from someone else's "right" way? At some point we need to learn to respect our individual differences.

People clearly are different. Who really knows the right way? How are we going to learn to get along with one another if we keep insisting on our way? And this is the crazy history of our world: People are so invested in their way of doing things, that, at the extreme, if you do it differently, they may want to kill you! Think about wars and what has gone on for all of recorded history. People's cultural conditioning is often at the root of war. "You have to do it my way!" When will we learn?

Excerpt from *Doctor's Orders: Go Fishing* by Dean Shrock, Ph.D.