

A Sermon on Degrees of Tolerance

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for February 26th, 2023 (and beyond)

On a scale of 1-10 tolerance, 1 would be zero tolerance or intolerance, 5 would be tolerance without investment/care, and 10 would be investment in total acceptance. What you may find intolerable, others may totally accept and everyone is equal. For example, I suffer allergies and my body finds things I'm allergic to intolerable because they cause me harm or suffering. I could protest the existence of all things to which I'm allergic and voice my dictate that all things to which I'm personally allergic be prohibited and annihilated. This would include peaches, plums, and apricots. It is possible you are like the 92.1% of the population that has no sensitivity to those fruits and who may enjoy them. (Source: <https://www.thermofisher.com/allergy/us/en/allergen-fact-sheets.html?allergen=peach#:~:text=In%20a%202014%20European%20study,a%20rate%20of%207.9%20percent.>) But, I find them intolerable. Do I just avoid those allergens or do I demand everyone join me and accommodate my special needs whether I plan to be in their vicinity at any given time or not?

A family friend is allergic to strawberries. I love strawberries and am not allergic. Another is allergic to pineapple. I love pineapple too and have no allergy to that. Due to my own allergies, my diet is also limited in some ways and I do not want those two limiting it more. I personally would feel that they should do as I do and just avoid their allergens, ask for ingredients, and adjust as needed while preparing for a reaction by carrying antihistamines of some sort.

Less than 1% of the US population is allergic to peanuts. Source: <https://peanutallergyfacts.org/2020/06/23/how-many-people-have-a-peanut-allergy-the-curious-case-of-determining-prevalence/#:~:text=One%20of%20the%20most%20common,of%20Americans%20allergic%20to%20peanuts.> I'm not allergic to peanuts and can handle most tree nuts with exception to walnuts and almonds. I'm allergic to the skins on the almonds and walnuts. If the nuts are properly blanched and all skin is removed, I can eat them with little to no allergic reaction.

Are people with allergies exceptional? If so, should we decide everyone else's diet? In a free market, we all decide for ourselves, and can base those individual choices on any information or lack thereof we choose. If I'm harmed though, is that enough to ban peaches for everyone? I just don't think so. For me on the scale mentioned, I'd choose 3 or 4 and not 1 in terms of my tolerance of things to which I'm severely allergic even if my body alone without respect for equality nor democracy would choose 1.

In law, actions that are prima facie harmful to anyone are outlawed. I can't outlaw peaches, but I can sue you or report you to law enforcement if you intentionally and knowingly cause me harm or through deceit fail to disclose where such is required by law or were asked prior to consumption or exposure. And, being aware of my own vulnerabilities puts me in the best position to protect myself responsibly without requiring anyone else be psychic or prepared for a situation that has a 92.1% chance of

never coming up in their position. Would it be reasonable at all to expect everyone to prepare for a 7.9% probability beyond disclosing ingredients? What about a 1% probability?

When it comes to crimes, there is over an 80% recidivism rate or probability of re-offending if ever convicted. Source: <https://usafacts.org/articles/how-common-is-it-for-released-prisoners-to-re-offend/> . But, only 8% of the overall US population has ever been convicted of a felony. Source: <https://news.uga.edu/total-us-population-with-felony-convictions/> Should we require everyone be as prepared to be a victim of felonious crime as we are to suffering peach allergies? If you've never been a victim of crime, perpetrator of crime, nor allergy sufferer, how much of your own time would you devote to the subject matter? To what extent would you expect everyone else to devote their time in the same way and for what reason?

Say you are part of the 92% that is not allergic to peaches and has never committed a felony nor been a victim of one. How sensitive are you to victims of crime, sympathetic to convicts, and/or conscientious about allergies you do not personally suffer? Would it be hypocritical to expect everyone to prohibit and destroy all known allergens regardless of how few are allergic? If the benefits outweigh the risks of something by 92%, would you outlaw it? Would that be reasonable?

I can't see myself rallying with the other 7.9% of those allergic to peaches to condemn and call for a prohibition of that or other fruits in the same family to which I'm allergic. But, I know people who would and the peanut bans in places prove it. Evidence shows the bans make the problem worse. Source: <https://parenting.kars4kids.org/peanut-bans-are-they-doing-more-harm-than-good/> I would not support giving 7.9% of the population control over the lives of the other 92.1% and am surprised the peanut 1% got any traction in the first place. It is somewhat impressive, but also disconcerting in full context.

Live and let live or live and let die. That's tolerance without investment/care. Intolerance 3-4 is avoidance while being prepared to recognize torts or crimes and take legal action as needed. And, the free market will take care of the rest because we are free to contract, support each other, and support charity.

I don't represent the 7.9% who are allergic to peaches, just myself. I am allergic to peaches, but I don't politically or socially identify with those with peach allergies as a basis around which to socialize or organize. It is a free country and I recognize the rest of the 7.9% have the right to do so. It is my hope that those who threaten majority rule/consensus are sidelined. I think the peanut debacle should be enough of a warning.

I recognize the equal rights of everyone including the 92.1% who have no peach allergy and may enjoy those fruits. I'm happy with disclosure and managing my own sensitivities as needed. And, I'm happy others enjoy peaches, plums, and apricots as I do pineapple and strawberries even though members of my community are allergic to those too. For the sake of peace, I rest my case. Amen.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>