

# Democracy Matters 5

## **Lesson Nine: Be kind to our language.**

Avoid using the same expressions everyone else does. If your beliefs are truly your own and not someone else's, it ought to be possible to express them in your own words.

Pay attention to how the language of public discourse comes to take the shape it does. Notice how the same small handful of talking points permeate the media, creating a kind of hypnosis as they are repeatedly echoed and amplified across various platforms. Feel how this narrows our vocabularies, stripping our discourse of nuance, and making it next to impossible to think clearly in a sustained fashion about anything that matters.

Make an effort to separate yourself from the internet. Read books. Fiction or non-fiction, it doesn't matter. Reading books will not only broaden your vocabulary, but also your sense of what is possible. Reading gives us a wider perspective. It reinforces our attention spans and helps strengthen our ability to think through ambiguous and difficult situations. These are all skills that modern life demands.

## **Lesson Ten: Believe in truth.**

To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticize those in power, because there is no basis upon which to hang the criticism.

You submit to tyranny when you renounce the difference between what you want to hear and what is actually the case. Although such a move can feel natural and reassuring, it is the death of any political system that depends on individualism. Only those who are prepared to engage with what is actually the case are equipped to build a society with others in the real world.

(Adapted from Snyder, Timothy. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. Vintage Digital, 2017.)