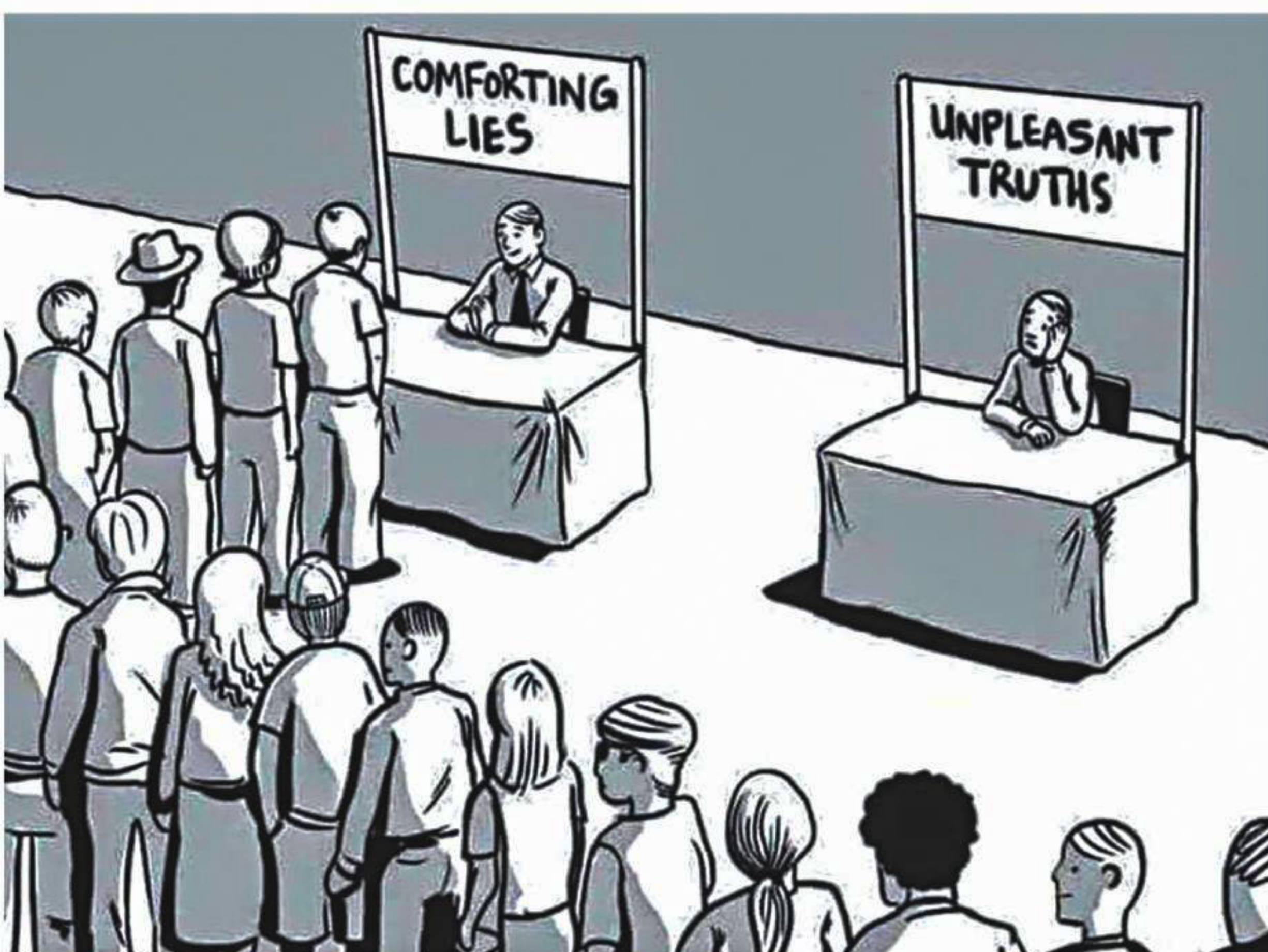


The phenomenon of cognitive dissonance

AAQIB HASIB

Cognitive dissonance might sound like one of those fancy terms that you learn in school or university, which you will never have to use in your real life; the reality of cognitive dissonance, however, has quite a significant effect in our lives.



The phenomenon of this psychological theory can be easily observed in our daily lives, mainly in the form of self-delusion. Initially the term was coined by social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1956; he showcased his theory of cognitive dissonance in an experiment involving choices between different gifts. Once the people, who were part of the experiment, formed an opinion as to which gift they desired, they would disregard the initial gift which they rejected.

Simply put, once we form an opinion on a particular topic, we refuse to believe anything contrary to our beliefs; even going as far as to reject factual information to rationalise our own opinion.

The more modern day iteration of this phenomenon is prevalent courtesy of social media and the internet. Some might call it being gullible or plain idiotic, but cognitive dissonance has its roots planted deep into the minds of a large proportion of the population, even in Bangladesh. Here are some of more observable instances of cognitive dissonance in our everyday lives:

DISTRUST FOR ONLINE BUSINESSES

While this may not be as widespread an instance of this phenomenon, it's still one common amongst those born before the 1980s. For instance, my parents would choose to physically go to an overly crowded shopping mall instead of ordering via one of the popular e-commerce websites that deliver directly to our home. Their belief is that online businesses cannot be providing a better service and product quality than a local one store. While that is true in some cases, the fact that online services are bound to get better as more and more people start using them is lost upon them as well.

TRUSTING NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook and Twitter have become a part of our daily lives; with them they have

brought a wide array of unverified news, which are so blatantly false, that their intent is nothing short of malicious. Fake News isn't a new phenomenon and neither is cognitive dissonance; powered by social media, they have both teamed up to create a nightmare. People will believe anything that aligns with their worldview, and that's exactly what they get when consuming news on social media. There's also the case of people believing hoaxes and conspiracy theories marketed by certain outlets online as well.

THE VACCINE CONUNDRUM

A recent outbreak in one particular baseless idea is that vaccines are harmful for children. The cause of this was a research paper linking vaccines with autism; and even though both the paper and its writer were eventually discredited, the lasting effect of that has not dissipated. Studies in Europe and America have shown that a large percentage of parents refuse to get their children vaccinated, which has even resulted in greater outbreaks in diseases like measles in recent years. Even when presented with factual information disputing this idea, there still exists a large group of people who have adopted the view that vaccines lead to autism.

While, only from a theoretical perspective, cognitive dissonance may be an interesting thing to observe, the reality of it can be a deterrent to our own personal growth as well as that of the society around us.

Reference:

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SATIRE

How to get along with people

ANTARA RAISA RAHMAN

There is nothing worse than being an individual who can't get along with people. And as someone who transferred schools every two years, I fell victim to this from a very young age. But eventually catching up on the idea that it should be one's life goal to be accepted by *everyone*, I came up with tricks that are so amazing even a tree can develop a personality and have its own group of human friends.

BE A LISTENER

When getting along with people, thinking about yourself should be at the bottom of your priority list. Be a listener. Listen to EVERY WORD they say for the entire time you converse. You may need to have a strong memory for this. In case you don't, making friends probably isn't for you. Before attempting to start a conversation, try to find relevant things to talk about. This works better when listening to a group of people. Eavesdropping isn't wrong if it's for the sake of friendship.

STAY UPDATED

The three M's never fail when trying to get along with people – music, movies, and memes. One of these will definitely spark a

conversation and next thing you know, you're talking about conspiracy theories and/or food. This is the time to unleash the stalker in you. Follow them on social media to know more about their taste in music, movies and memes. Even if you don't like the same things, you can always pretend. No one said you had to be yourself to make friends.

FOCUS YOUR ENERGY ON THEM

A crucial tool for getting along with others is to not talk about yourself at all. You may be a narcissistic human being, but for a few hours, tone it down a bit. Glorify everything they did. Even if it's relevant, talk about their accomplishments instead of your own. Their pointless achievements should definitely be the *only* thing you discuss the entire time you interact. Did you recently win an international competition? Doesn't matter. They woke up at 6 AM. THIS MORNING.

KEEP YOUR DARK HUMOUR TO YOURSELF

Because its 2018, there's no knowing what might offend people. So, it's better to keep your humour (and your opinions) to yourself for the first few hours of conversation. Walking on eggshells is very impor-



tant when it comes to fitting in. You don't want anyone to dislike anything about you. If you can't help it, slide in a few harmless jokes here and there. But avoid things that are sensitive to an argument. So, basically, you should stop talking completely.

STAY TRUE TO YOUR MOTIVE

Admit the fact that you're incapable of interacting with people. That may make you seem pitiful. But like I said, your reputation doesn't matter anymore. Be honest about your motive, but not too honest. You definitely want to fit in. But you also

need to have opinions of your own that are the same as their opinions. You should also remember to compliment them and do nice things every chance you get. Although, overdoing it may result in eternal enslavement, so be aware.

With these fail proof strategies, you'll start getting along with people in no time!

Antara wishes to conquer the world someday and bring back an alien from Pluto. To know more about her evil schemes, send an e-mail at: antara56.ar@gmail.com