

## 4 - Why We Don't Get Involved

One of the interesting dichotomies of a democracy is that while a democracy needs participation from its citizens to sustain itself, its citizens are free not to participate. There are a variety of reasons why we aren't participating and aren't fulfilling our responsibilities as citizens. Understanding them may help us learn how to improve our participation.

### Removed from Past Crises

First, we become removed from past crises and forget what it has taken to get to the lifestyle we currently enjoy. We forget what it takes to sustain a democracy. Life becomes too good, we take what we have for granted and we lose our sense of urgency. The Israeli people make a point of keeping the horrific memories of The Holocaust alive. The controversial Jewish Defense League's motto "Never Again" is a poignant reminder of the past. We even diminish the importance of some of the country's special holidays by adjusting them to create long weekends.



### How To Participate?

Second, we are not taught the importance of, and how to, participate. During our formal education, we are often taught American history – important facts. And throughout our lives we often hear about our "rights" – all perfectly correct and good. Yet there is rarely any formal education about citizenship, nor is much attention given throughout our lives to learning our responsibilities as citizens.



We're not taught the reality that freedom isn't *free*, that it requires tremendous and constant energy. We aren't taught that we have a responsibility to our country. We not only have "inalienable rights," but we have "inalienable obligations," even though they aren't spelled out in any of our founding documents.

Brandon Stoddard, a former head of ABC programming, in discussing the "onslaught of protest against "Amerika," an ABC network made-for-TV mini series, said, "I think it can make people ask some questions about their behavior as citizens. It might even make them think about the responsibility part of freedom."

### Just Getting Along

Third, we are brought up to get along and not to address issues when they occur. It's called adaptation. We are not taught how to address issues without confrontation.



Here's another quote from the "Amerika" mini series: "These Americans, after all, are not can-do patriots, but meek dispirited folks who simply want to get along.

Just surviving - no heroics, no strength of character, not even dignity." There may be more truth to this than we'd like to believe or admit to. We don't need a war on drugs, a war on crime or a war on poverty – what we need is a war on *complacency*.

### Can I Make a Difference?

Fourth, with the number of issues that need attention, we become overwhelmed and don't believe that we can make a difference. We believe that if we do get involved, there is no stopping. Intellectually we see what individuals like Candy Lightner, the founder of [MADD](#), can do, but realistically we know we are not going to have that kind of global impact.



The importance of one person's daily actions cannot be emphasized enough. They are what change the country. At some level, it's all that matters. Until we become "standup" citizens, our freedom will not prosper.

