



Reflections

Breaking news — boon or bane

ONE of the key benefits of local newspapers, including the Okehampton and Tavistock Times, is that we get to read news reports rather than headline breaking news.

The print news reports are finely layered with care, concern, warmth and fondness; last week's front page featured 'Major plan for Chagford's Proper Job Resources Centre' while the last page covered the sports 'Tough test for the Okes'. In between the paper reported on bereavements, charity appeals, reflections, health and

beauty, plans to tackle childhood poverty, carnival preparation, arts, events, notices, property sales and lettings — all presented to aid local knowledge and encourage community involvement. Even the reports on crime and politics are presented with positivity. This sort of news reporting helps increase the readers' overall well-being, especially our mental health.

In contrast, most breaking news from mainstream national and international media is often little more than just reporting. The public needs to know about Brexit, political battles, knife

and hate crimes, obesity, climate change, wars and violence around the world. Equally, the media is duty-bound to address life and well-being, education, arts, culture, values and virtues. Sadly, the latter rarely has much airtime in breaking news, nor significant space in online or print newspapers. This is because a focus on values is considered to contribute less to commercial success and profits.

As humans we have an evolutionary disposition for instant excitement and an active curiosity for new and unfamiliar information. This natural phenomenon

is tactfully manipulated by the breaking news marketing ploy. Our curiosity and excitement are triggered and over a period of time this 'unsettling' can breed a pleasant anxiety. This is the same technique that some of the social media platforms use, which is why most of us cannot put down our mobile and digital devices. Although pleasant anxiety is exciting to begin with, if unaddressed it will eventually increase levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, and can lead to mental and physical health hazards.

We need more positive and

upbeat breaking news to help us lead healthy lives. We need our media to put human, social and cultural values and ethics ahead of commercial profit.

'Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things' (Philippians 4:8).

Darline Joseph Marianathan
St. Boniface Okehampton
Holy Family Chagford