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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 001

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Greetings!

In this, the inaugural issue of Uncommon Sense, we tackle a time management issue, provide a peek at culture, and allow you in on a personal journal entry. You also come away with a new word you can add to your vocabulary.

Be sure to forward this email to any of your contacts you believe would benefit from this eZine, and encourage them to subscribe.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

Start Early, End Early

You've all heard the cliché: *The early bird gets the worm.*

This cliché has merit, even if it bores us due to its pedestrian nature.



I am here to advocate the idea that the management of your time is one of the single most important and fundamental skills you can acquire. The management of time is a practice. But it's not one of those special skills that only a few people can have a talent for - like ballroom dance, or eye surgery, or mastering the oboe. All of us can improve our time management skills - and all of us should.

Consider this: time is a constant. The clock is always

ticking. And our time here on this earth will one day come to an end. Even assuming we all live a normal life span of somewhere between, say, 70 and 90 years, we only have so much time allotted to us. My bias is that we ought to use our time to accomplish good and noble things, to pursue worthy aims, to build warm relationships of deep meaning, and to occasionally enjoy the finer things of life that bring us personal satisfaction and joy. What I dread, truly dread, is to see someone sitting on their rocking chair at the end of their life and look back on that life with regret, remorse, and a feeling of "if only. . ." I don't want that for myself and I don't want that for others.

Interestingly, as we get older, time seems to speed up. In reality, it does not; time is the great constant and its consistency is unfluctuating and ever stable. But our perception of events gives us the impression that life seems to accelerate as we age. Hence, it only makes sense that we should do all we can to get control of our time and our life while we have the opportunity to do so.

One way to do this is to simply be an early riser.

Upon reading this, many will throw up their hands and reject my advice on the grounds that they are a night-owl, not a morning person.

Being a night-owl is not something that is innate to you, like having blue eyes. I was a night-owl once. Or so I told myself. But just as you and I can change our other habits, we can change our habit of when we start our day. And I have learned through experience that when I get a jump on the day by getting up at 5:15 AM, the day becomes a race and my productivity sky-rockets. I accomplish more than my peers who begin their day at a later hour. Period.

Now, here is my key bit of advice for you: in order to be a consistent early riser, you have to discipline yourself to shut off the day early enough in the evening and get to bed at a reasonable hour. For me, I strive (though I often fail) to start shutting things down around 9:00 PM. I like to be in bed by 9:15 PM and have the lights out soon thereafter. And truthfully, I find that this is the most difficult aspect of self-management. But when I do it, my ability to accomplish results soars.

So make a decision: decide now to discipline yourself

to wrap up your day and get some shut-eye at an early enough hour so that you can hit the ground running early the next morning. This is a simple thing - so simple, that many will consider it trite and nothing more than bland pablum. But in overlooking this simple suggestion they are doomed to mediocrity, or at least, doomed to handicapping their ability to be more productive. I'll be addressing many other aspects of time management in future issues of *Uncommon Sense*, but this is a good place to start.

Is This Art?

Yoko Ono redefines vocal performance

One of the more popular couples in the rock music world was Yoko Ono and the late John Lennon. Lennon was gunned down by a deranged fan in 1980. While the couple certainly made various contributions to rock and roll lore, they were also involved in activism, although what they stood for was often opaque, perhaps due to the illegal drugs consumed by the pair. Yoko was and is considered a musician. I was curious as to the type of music she is composing. Here is a recent example of her work, a piece she titles "Voice Piece for Soprano". I will leave it to you to decide if this constitutes the art form known as music:



VOICE PIECE FOR SOPRANO & WISH TREE at MoMA, Summer 2010 by yoko ono

What is astounding to me is not the cacophony of madness that this performance constitutes, but the fact that otherwise sane people would applaud and congratulate her on a stellar performance. You'll

hear this at the tail end of the recording.

Yes, we do live in interesting times.

From Ara's Journal

Last night was interesting. I drove my wife's van to fill it up at the Pilot Gas Station a few miles away. My twin daughters, 16 years old, followed in the Civic so I could fill up their car as well. At the station, we saw a middle-aged woman digging through the trash bins nearby our vehicles, looking for soda cans and plastic bottles that she could turn in to the recycling center for cash. She had a dog on a leash and a shopping cart containing, presumably, all her remaining worldly possessions. After filling up the Civic, I sent the twins back home while I filled up the van. And then I went looking for her.



I found her not far away at a Taco Truck buying a plate of food. I then watched as she placed the plate of food on the dirt plot and allowed her dog to eat. She ate from the same plate, sitting in the dirt with her dog, which was only partially interested in the food. It was quite cold, and so I got out of the van and approached her. I asked her how it was going. Dumb question. But she stared at me inquisitively. I then asked her if she needed some money. She studied me intently to try to discern my deeper intentions. I removed from my wallet all the cash I had and handed it to her. I don't know how much was there - perhaps \$15; perhaps \$25. She accepted the money and said, "God be with you." I drove home.

Was God with me? I don't think so. What I honestly felt was that I had betrayed myself in taking the easy way out. I threw money at the situation. Certainly that was better than turning my back on her completely. But could I have done more? I knew the answer, and the grief I was starting to feel brought moisture to my eyes. I wondered if I should turn around and go back and try to do something more meaningful for her. But

I didn't.

When I arrived home, the twins asked me about my delay. I explained what had transpired. They told me they had been aware of the woman and had talked about her the whole way home. They also wanted to do something to help her. And they insisted we take action - now! One of them grabbed an old comforter and a few bottles of water, and the other filled a bag with dog food, and we piled back into the van to return to where I last saw her.

This is every parent's dream. We all want to have good children, and mine proved their mettle last night. Their hearts were pure.

We drove behind buildings, up and down the streets, and it appeared our search would be in vain. But just as I was about to give up the search, a daughter said, "Dad, I think I see someone over there with a shopping cart." We turned around and found her. We pulled up and conversed. We learned something of her story. 46 years old. Estranged from her husband. Homeless. Friendless. Living in a tent. Enduring the cold.

My daughters got out and gave her the comforter, the bottled water, and the dog food. She was elated. And I asked her where she would be sleeping that night. When I realized she would have to endure bitter cold and wind, I asked her if she would rather stay in a motel down the street. She agreed. The arrangements were made. And presumably she and her dog were treated to a restful evening providing warmth, comfort, and shelter.

It still wasn't enough. But it was something. I still didn't feel fully satisfied. But I felt better than when I had merely given her a little cash.

Life has its challenges. While there are many aspects of life that are splendid and wonderful, there is clearly much that is lamentable and sad. It's tough out there. We need to remember that we are all in this together. The Protestant aphorism comes to mind: "There, but for the grace

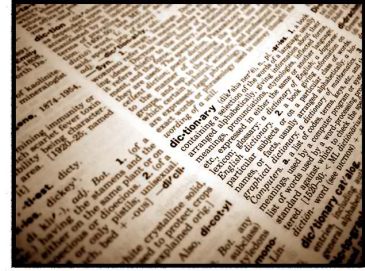
of God, go I."

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

Agnostic, n, adj

Pronunciation: ag'nästik



Meaning: While it normally is used as a noun to refer to a person who is uncommitted in terms of their belief (or non-belief) in God, I like using this word as an adjective to describe myself (or others) whenever I am (or they are) undecided or uncommitted on any matter - not merely religious matters. (Note: with respect to religion and belief in God, I am definitely *not* agnostic.)

Usage:

- *I don't know what my position is; I guess I'm agnostic until I learn more.*
- *I'm in favor of it, Janet is against it, and Tom's agnostic about it.*
- *I'm uncommitted at this point. You could say I'm agnostic for the time being.*

Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is in final edit mode and will be sent to your shortly. Thanks for your patience.

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara Norwood"), or on Facebook (keyword "Leadership Development Systems") or via my website: www.aranorwood.com

Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
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