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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 004

May 21, 2011

Greetings!

I type this message to you on the very day that many believe the rapture is to take place. So in case this is my last issue, I hope you get the most out of it, it contains some important information, some of it distressing, some of it hopeful.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

Becoming a Transition Figure

One of the more fortuitous events of my life was targeting my first employer following college graduation. I targeted an unknown (at the time) consultant by the name of Stephen R. Covey.

Covey had recently retired as a university professor from my Alma Mater, Brigham Young University, and had opened shop in Provo, Utah. He would go on to write what is perhaps the best-selling business book of all time, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and become a household name in the field of leadership development.

I gained a lot of experience during my years with Covey -- far more experience than I was prepared for. And I learned a great deal from my exposure to his ideas. A key idea that has stayed with me was his description of a "Transition Figure" which, according to Covey, was a person who stops the transmission of negative habits, and breaks with the past

I think there is something very liberating in the notion. What it tells me is that we are not bound by our past. Naturally, whatever is in our past that is good and noble and praiseworthy we want to maintain. But all of us have things in our past that leave something to be desired - perhaps a habit or a tendency that displeases not only others, but ourselves as well. Perhaps we talk too loud, or perhaps we are lazy, passive thinkers. Some of us may put too much value on the trappings, the appearances, on form, but not enough on substance. Perhaps we do not have in our past a love of health and fitness, or a deep appreciation of religion and the spiritual life, or perhaps we have never taken deep, intimate, meaningful relationships with others very seriously. Perhaps a person is a bit narcissistic and self-centered.

Whatever undesirable traits of our past, and regardless of how they got there, being a transition figure suggests that we have within us the ability to overcome the pull of the past.

This column has simply alerted you to the notion that you are not bound by your past. But I have not yet gotten very specific on what you can do to be a Transition Figure. I would love to hear some of your ideas, and you can write to me at the usual email address (ara@aranorwood.com) but also rest assured that I will be delivering on the specifics in the next issue of Uncommon Sense.

An Old, Sad Story

In some disheartening news, we learned that Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife, Maria Shriver, are ending their 25-year marriage due to infidelity on the part of Arnold that produced a

child from a tryst with his former housekeeper. And on the heels of that sordid story, we learned of accusations that the head of the International Monetary Fund, a Frenchman named Dominique Strauss-Kahn, sexually assaulted a hotel maid in New York.



(Strauss-Kahn's wife is dismissive of the charges and claims, as of this writing, to be sticking with her wealthy husband.)

In pondering the sad implications of such stories, I started to recall a flood of similar stories that made the news over the last several decades. Just from memory, I recalled the following:

- Gary Hart, former senator and presidential candidate dropped out of the race after allegations he had been with model Donna Rice.
- Congressman Barney Frank had a gay prostitution service being run out of his apartment, allegedly unbeknownst to him.
- President Bill Clinton sullied the office of the presidency with his affair with intern Monica Lewinsky.
- Congressman Gary Condit's 2001 affair with intern Chandra Levy, when he was 53 and she was 23, came to light shortly after Ms. Levy was found murdered. Condit was never a suspect in her death.
- San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom, in 2005, had an affair with the wife of his campaign manager.
- Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, in 2007, had an affair with a woman who worked as a TV reporter. This resulted in the breakup of his marriage.
- Unmarried senator Larry Craig was alleged to have been involved in a sex solicitation scandal that took place in an airport bathroom.
- Former New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, who was known for being somewhat of a Pit Bull against ethics violations, was forced to resign as Governor of that state in 2008 when it was learned he had spent

- perhaps as much as \$80,000 on prostitutes.
- John Edwards fathered a child with a campaign employee while running for president in 2007. His wife filed for divorce, but she died of breast cancer before the divorce was final.
 - Mark Sanford, then Governor of South Carolina, disappeared for about a week in 2009, causing a bit of a media stir. When the facts came to light, he admitted to having an affair with a woman in Argentina. His wife divorced him and he was almost impeached as Governor.
 - Tiger Woods, (the only non-politician on my list) was involved with multiple women, leading to the breakup of his marriage.
 - Last year, former Vice President Al Gore and his wife Tipper, ended their 40 year marriage; allegations of sexual misconduct involving a masseuse, arose, but the charges were never proven due to a lack of evidence.

This list is far from exhaustive, and merely reflects my own limited memory. But it shows a troubling pattern. An inability to control one's impulses can lead to disastrous consequences. Perhaps the individuals involved in these scandals might have benefited had they received a letter like the following. The letter was written by a father to his son, shortly before the son's marriage.

Dear Mike:

. . . You've heard all the jokes that have been roused around by all the "unhappy marrieds" and cynics. Now, in case no one has suggested it, there is another viewpoint. You have entered into the most meaningful relationship there is in all human life. It can be whatever you decide to make it.

Some men feel their masculinity can only be proven if they play out in their own life all the locker-room stories, smugly confident that what a wife doesn't know won't hurt her. The truth is, somehow, way down inside, without her ever finding lipstick on the collar or catching a man in the flimsy excuse of where he was till three a.m., a wife does know, and with that knowing, some of the magic of this relationship disappears. There are more men griping about marriage who kicked the whole thing away themselves than there can

ever be wives deserving of blame. There is an old law of physics that you can only get out of a thing as much as you put in it . . . Let me tell you how really great is the challenge of proving your masculinity and charm with one woman for the rest of your life . . . It does take quite a man to remain attractive and to be loved by a woman who has heard him snore, seen him unshaven, tended him while he was sick and washed his dirty underwear. Do that and keep her still feeling a warm glow and you will know some very beautiful music. If you truly love a girl, you shouldn't ever want her to feel, when she sees you greet a secretary or a girl you both know, that humiliation of wondering if she was someone who caused you to be late coming home . . .

Mike, you know better than many what an unhappy home is and what it can do to others. Now you have a chance to make it come out the way it should. There is no greater happiness for a man than approaching a door at the end of a day knowing someone on the other side of that door is waiting for the sound of his footsteps.

Love,

Dad

P. S. You'll never get in trouble if you say "I love you" at least once a day.

That letter was written by our 40th President, Ronald Reagan.

Shameless Plug: It's Been 56 Days

Exactly 56 days ago I delivered a full-day seminar to about 100 business women on the subject of launching an online business. It was my FAME workshop, and it attempted to spell out in precise terms exactly how to figure out your business model, how to launch your website for e-commerce, how to engage in the marketing of your service, and how to evaluate your results for course-correction purposes.

I wonder how many of the members of my audience have utilized the concepts I shared. Perhaps some of them are still a bit overwhelmed and stuck in a rut.

If that sounds like you, and you could benefit from some direct intervention and consultation from me, you can book my time at my website:

<http://aranorwood.com/personal-coaching/>

Or, email me directly to discuss how I can help:
ara@aranorwood.com

From Ara's Journal

A friend called me recently. He needed some help and guidance. Desparately. I had extended the offer to help in the past, but it was rejected. The time just wasn't right.



But now the needs were acute and he was desparate. I was simply pleased that he reached out to me. I feel it an honor to assist this good man, who has fallen in a ditch and needs some assistance getting back on his feet. He will surely need to do his part, but I am honored to be able to do my part.

And I sure am lucky that others have been there for me through the years.

It dawns on me that we are all in this together. It's not enough to be independent. We truly are in an interdependent reality.

The World of Words

Building Your Power of Expression

Fortuitous, adj

Pronunciation: fôr'toōətəs



Meaning: Happening by accident or chance rather than by design. Although this word is often used with a positive outcome in mind, the original usage of this word could refer to either a positive or a negative outcome.

Usage:

- *I was 20 minutes late to the meeting, which ended up being fortuitous, because Sam left the meeting shortly after it started and he was one person I wanted to avoid.*
- *The commonalities between the two reports may not be simply fortuitous; there may have been some plagiarism.*
- *Losing the election was completely fortuitous and utterly beyond my control.*

I'd love to continue to get your feedback on the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds." Feel free to drop me a line via email (ara@aranorwood.com).

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
Leadership Development Systems