

# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 031

July 10, 2012

## Greetings!

I hope your recent celebration of Independence Day was memorable -- and safe.

Mine was somewhat eventful, but I'll revisit that with you next time.

This issue is loaded with important content. Not only do I give you a key to more effective meetings, but I republish a piece by Dennis Prager, the second time I've drawn on him for a guest editorial. I think his column is very telling and very important.



Okay, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

## Six Thinking Hats

Sound thinking is the first habit of great leadership.

Most of us default to one particular pattern of thinking. We limit our options by doing so.

However, there is some great news for you. You can adopt a whole new approach to how you apply the thinking process.

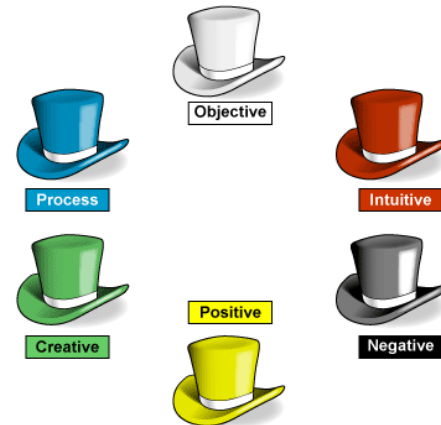
Edward de Bono has [devised a model](#) he calls Six Thinking Hats. The basic idea is that you can deliberately "put on" a particular type of thinking cap which applies the thinking process in a particular way. Then you can "take off" that thinking cap, and put on a different one - one which

enables you to think in a different way than before. This can be repeated several times resulting in more well-rounded thinking. You end up generating a more balanced approach to the thought process, and smarter, better ideas are the result.

Allow me to briefly describe the de Bono model in a bit more detail.

**The White Hat:** this hat is about pure, objective facts. You don't allow your own bias to enter into the thought process when you put on the

White Hat. You simply spell out in precise detail the facts without your own interpretations of those facts.



**The Yellow Hat:** when you think of "yellow" think of sunshine, as in optimism. Thus, the Yellow Hat is all about

the positive elements of an issue, why an idea will work, or why something has merit. This is easy to do if you are predisposed to favor an idea or issue; harder to do if you are against it from the outset. Yet either way, it must be given a fair hearing.

**The Black Hat:** when you think of "black" think of the Black Death that plagued Europe during the Dark Ages, or think Black Sheep, Black Magic, Blacklisted, etc, all of which carry negative connotations. The Black Hat is the polar opposite of the Yellow Hat. Thus, with the Black Hat, one embraces pessimism. You "put on" the Black Hat when you deliberately wish to uncover the weaknesses of a situation, idea, or proposal. Again, this is easy to do when you are already against it; harder to do when you are already in favor of it. Yet the Black Hat is a very important hat to wear.

**The Red Hat:** when you think of "red" think of emotion. The Red Hat allows one to consult their gut feelings. Regardless of what we learn from the objective data (White Hat), the positives (Yellow Hat) or the negatives (Black Hat) we usually form some instinctive impression inside. Think of it as intuition. The Red Hat allows for such expression.

**The Green Hat:** "green" is symbolic of life, of growth, of all things generative. In the context of the Six Thinking Hats, the Green Hat is the hat that is concerned with generating new ideas, of thinking outside the box, of being highly creative. With the Green Hat, you are given permission - an invitation - to break out of habitual or normative ways of thinking, of shattering the patterns of the past and giving free reign to bold and innovative ways of looking at the issue, where virtually anything goes. Breakthroughs occur while wearing the Green Hat.

**The Blue Hat:** when you think of "blue" think of the blue sky which is above you and over you. Thus, the Blue Hat is above you in the thinking process. It is over you and is a meta-hat - a hat that governs the other hats. The Blue Hat manages the thinking process. The Blue Hat governs and directs when everyone should put on one of the other hats, and when everyone should take off a given hat and replace it with another. Thus, usually it is only one person in a given meeting who wears the Blue Hat (though that same person may also put on and take off the other five hats along with everyone else.)

If you want to brainstorm an idea or run a more effective meeting, adopt de Bono's approach and you'll find you will enjoy a fuller, richer experience in problem solving, idea generating, or opportunity identifying.

## Middle Fingers at The White House by Dennis Prager

Imagine this:

A future Republican president invites Tea Party leaders to the White House. Some of them have themselves photographed standing in front of a portrait of President Barack Obama with their middle fingers extended. They then posted these photos on Facebook with the caption "F--k Obama." (Needless to say, the F-word was spelled out.)



Some questions:

1. How much coverage do you think the national press

would give to this?

2. How would Democratic -- and Republican -- leaders react?

3. How would Tea Party activists react?

The answers:

1. The mainstream media across America would widely report what had happened and repeatedly show these photos. *The New York Times* would editorialize about the racism of the Tea Party. Liberal columnists would be relentless in their condemnations of the Tea Party as a low life movement of yahoos.

2. Democrats and Republicans alike would condemn these leaders and demand their resignation.

3. Tea Party activists would feel embarrassed by these people who represented them, and they would be deeply concerned that their movement's good name had been permanently tarnished.

Now let's explore a real-life situation from this past week (Week of June 18th).

President Barack Obama invited activists to the White House's 2012 LGBT pride reception. Two of them, Matthew "Marty" Hart, a director of the leftist organization, Solutions for Progress, and an activist photographer, Zoe Strauss, posed for a photo in front of a portrait of President Ronald Reagan with both their middle fingers extended. They then posted the photo on Facebook with the caption "F--k Reagan" (the F-word is spelled out).

Now let's answer our questions:

First, the liberal, or "mainstream," media never mentioned the incident. Not a word about it appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times* or on NPR (which had given Zoe Strauss extensive and laudatory attention just a few weeks earlier). There was no coverage on ABC News, NBC News, or CBS News. *The Huffington Post* reported the incident in this way: "If several raised fingers are any indication, some LGBT activists who visited the White House last week are fully evolved on what they think of President Ronald Reagan."

It was reported by Fox News, on conservative talk radio shows, by the *The Weekly Standard*, *National Review* and

other conservative journals and websites.

Second, aside from one tepid rebuke from a man named Shin Inouye, the "Director of Specialty Media in the White House Office of Communications," the Democratic Party and other left-wing organizations said nothing.

And, of course, not a word of condemnation from the world of gay activism, other than the conservative gay organization, Log Cabin Republicans.

What are the lessons?

One is that without Fox News, talk radio and conservative journals and websites, one gets an utterly skewed view of the world. If you want to know how the left wins so many elections despite the fact that many more Americans consider themselves conservative rather than liberal, the filtered news they receive is a major reason -- in America and even more so around the world. (I cover this in detail in my just-published book [\*Still the Best Hope\*](#).)

The other lesson may be even more important: Contempt for norms of decency -- a form of nihilism -- permeates the left generally and leftist activism (among gays and straights) on behalf of gays specifically. Compare, for example, the behavior of the Occupy movement with that of the Tea Party. Both are equally angry at what they deem injurious to society -- economic inequality for the Occupy movement, ever-expanding government and debt for the Tea Party -- but the latter acts so much more civilly and maturely than the former.

Whether it is the notorious art work "Piss Christ" (a crucifix submerged in "artist" Andres Serrano's urine), the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art's recent "graffiti art" exhibition, the ubiquitous public use of expletives, the defense of public nudity (the highest court in New York State ruled that there is no difference between women's and men's breasts, therefore women, like men, can go topless in public), the abolition of dress codes in schools, the left revels in giving the finger to religious and civil norms.

Why did these activists for gay causes feel they could act this way in the White House, the most prestigious and revered building in America? Aside from contempt for social norms, the reason is that those who see themselves as victims have impaired consciences. Nothing dulls the

conscience quite like regarding oneself and/or one's group as victims. The vast majority of violent criminals believe they are victims of society, poverty, racism, etc.; Islamic terrorists see themselves as victims of the West's alleged "war on Islam;" Germans in the 1930s saw themselves as victims of the Versailles Treaty; and in America today, no one sees themselves as victims as much as gay rights activists do.

What are they victims of? Society's desire to maintain the man-woman definition of marriage, and in Ronald Reagan's case, his alleged ignoring of the AIDS crisis. That explains why gay groups label everyone who supports retaining the man-woman definition of marriage as people filled with hate, and why these activist groups try to destroy the reputations and, where applicable, the businesses of such people. Along with the nihilism -- and immaturity -- that characterizes the activist left, a sense of victimization also explains this defamation of the White House. And it doesn't hurt to know that America's news media will not call you on it.

## Shameless Plug

### Norwood to Teach 16-Week Course

I've been invited by College of the Canyons to teach a semester-long course called eBusiness Strategy.

The course will begin on August 29th and will run for consecutive Wednesday evenings from 6:30 PM to 9:35

PM. The last day of this course will be December 12th.

Students will learn how to launch an actual web-based business.



I have taught this course 3 times

previously. Past student feedback has been uniformly positive. Here are a couple of specific testimonials:

*"Professor Norwood's strength is that he teaches with informed, educated, and experienced passion. I cannot emphasize how much I learned in this class. All of the questions I had walking into this class, which caused me*



*doubt about my online business, were answered, giving me the confidence to develop it and launch it! His curriculum is absolutely perfect!" Lori Miller, Fall 2010*

*"Professor Norwood has a great deal of strength that he can pull out from his arsenal. First, his ability to lighten up the class is amazing. His ability to make his students open up is flawless. He goes above and beyond expectations. It is as if you've gained a close friend that you can rely on for anything rather than another forgotten professor." Sean Nazar, Fall 2011*

If you would like to enroll in the class, go to [www.canyons.edu](http://www.canyons.edu). The official course name is Business 192.

## From Ara's Journal

There are many challenging topics out there. One of them is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a noble idea, but it is far easier to philosophize about it than it is to actually do it. For whatever it's worth, here are some of my thoughts about forgiveness.



Forgiveness is a good thing. It's a bridge builder. It's a healer.

All of us are guilty of various sins, infractions, mistakes, errors, transgressions or acts of betrayal. All of us are guilty of something. Therefore it seems to me that all of us are in need of forgiveness.

The concept of forgiveness seems to be laid out on a continuum, from low to high, as follows:

- The refusal to forgive under any circumstances.
- The refusal to forgive until and unless the guilty party makes proper amends or restitution, perhaps through the showing of authentic remorse and asking for our forgiveness.
- A sort of middle-ground, a kind of neutrality, where the offended party is neither obsessed with outrage and thoughts of revenge, nor is the offended party void of some feelings of contempt for the offender. When asked, the offended party would say he wrote off the offender and wishes to have nothing to do with him, but at the same time the offended party

does not seem to be losing much sleep over the infraction.

- A desire to forgive the offender, but waiting for some indication of contrition on the part of the offender.
- A willingness to forgive and forget regardless of the disposition of the offending party.

I come from a religious faith community that teaches us that while God will forgive whom He will forgive, it is required of us to forgive all who have offended us, and that if we do not, there remains in us the greater sin. That's hard doctrine.

Many years ago an incident occurred involving my eldest child and a middle school teacher. The teacher made a decision that in my judgment was irrational, foolish, and had profoundly negative outcomes for my son. Although I never fully spelled out for this teacher how I felt, inside I seethed and felt nothing but hatred for her. That hatred didn't occupy my every waking hour, but whenever I thought of that teacher, my knee-jerk response was a feeling of deep contempt. Fast-forward a decade later, when my youngest daughter was assigned to be in this teacher's class. My feelings of rage surfaced and I immediately marched over to the school and confronted the Vice Principal. I told her that under no circumstances would I allow my daughter to be taught by that teacher and I demanded my daughter be reassigned to another teacher immediately. The Vice Principal asked me why I was making that demand. I bellowed out "Because I hate her!" I am sure my mannerisms came across as unbecoming and didn't reflect well on me. But the Vice Principal, while not asking for further details, made the change I demanded. I felt very justified, almost to the point of being smug. Not my finest moment.

Here is the lesson of unforgiveness: the offended party appears small and inhumane. There is an element of inflexibility and inadaptability in the person who cannot forgive. The unforgiving seem to paint themselves in a corner.

Many times it's easier to forgive and just "let go" of past offenses when the offending party is not central to our lives. The middle school teacher is truly on the periphery of my life, and I have recently given up my hatred of her. It



just didn't seem to make sense to continue to harbor such ill-will towards her - even though I still maintain that what she did some 14 years ago was wrong on every level. So I've let it go. But what about offenses that come from people that are a regular part of our lives such as neighbors, friends, work associates, or family members? That's much more difficult. I don't pretend to have the answers. All I know is that forgiveness, while noble, can't be forced. I do not pretend to know what enables one to forgive, but I do know that it is better to forgive than not to.

Do I at this moment have ill-feelings toward individuals who have offended me? Yes, I do. Hopefully forgiveness and reconciliation will come soon, for experience has taught me that there is a mellowness and a healing in the act of forgiving that is unlike anything else one can experience. Its sweetness must be hoped for and sought.

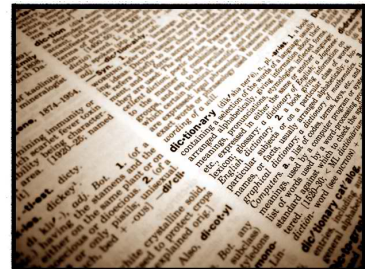
And just as importantly, I must remain mindful of those persons I have offended, and I must seek their forgiveness.

## The World of Words

### Building Your Power of Expression

**Stultifying**, adj.

**Pronunciation:** 'stʌltə,fi NG



**Meaning:** The word is synonymous with words like crippling, impeding, frustrating, hindering, or thwarting. So the word is used when one wishes to convey the notion of rendering something ineffectual, especially by degrading or frustrating means.

**Usage:**

- *I find this meanial work incredibly stultifying.*
- *They have this policy that only allows a new version to be released every 18 months. For the technology industry, where product cycles routinely last only a few months, that's stultifying.*
- *But even in this slightly stultifying atmosphere, moments of hope could be found.*

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Subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" is now complete and has been sent out. If you have not received it, please communicate that to me via email ([ara@aranorwood.com](mailto: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](http://www.aranorwood.com)

**Sincerely,**

Ara Norwood  
Leadership Development Systems