

# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 032

July 26, 2012

## Greetings!

I am reminded -- and wish to remind you -- of the fact that optimists are the builders, the leaders, the ones who change the world.

It's the pessimists who are whiny and noisy and who accomplish zilch.

Some proudly claim they are realists, and seem to show disdain for the sunny disposition of the optimists. But my experience tells me that so-called realists are merely pessimists in sophist's clothing.



So in spite of all the lousy things that take place in this world of ours, and largely because of the many wonderful things that also take place, I stand firmly with the optimists.

If you or someone you know is in need of a little optimism, please forward this issue of *Uncommon Sense* to them, or better yet, post it to your favorite social networking arena (Facebook, Twitter, etc) as the links are just above.

Okay, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

## A Note on Networking

Some things just take a while. Certain types of bamboo trees get planted and show no signs of growth for quite some time. But then, all of a sudden, the bamboo plant could grow as much as one to four inches a day - in fact, some species of bamboo are known to grow at an

astounding rate of two to three feet in 24 hours! Ten days later, they may grow to around 60 feet tall.



Likewise, when you plant a fruit tree, such as an orange tree, you may have to wait as long as 15 years for that tree to bear fruit. Still, orange growers know that the 15-year wait is worth it.

I am discovering that some of the same phenomena from nature applies to our human relationships. Just as a long period of time must pass with no sign of the desired fruit before the tree finally shows forth its harvest, there are times that we might form some sort of connection, association, friendship, or acquaintanceship with a person and many years may go by that seem ordinary, pedestrian, and unremarkable. Then all of a sudden, Wham! Things come together and life gets exciting.

I had known NM for a number of years in a setting that involved both church attendance and some scholarly endeavors. And yet, after about ten years or so, he began hiring me to do some presentations for his firm, and later still, I helped him launch a start up company. Another individual, KH, came across my path some 25 years ago. I watched him enjoy enormous success in several different walks of life, and I watched him fail a few times. We enjoyed a cordial professional relationship but never did any real serious work together. And yet, here we are, a quarter-century later, and we are on the cusp of forming an alliance that could prove to be quite lucrative to both of us. I couldn't imagine this having happened even a year ago. CD is another case in point: I met him more than 12 years ago in a work environment that was not ideal for me. And I left that environment fairly quickly, not thinking I'd cross paths with him ever again. That would have been a colossal mistake! We've not only done some engaging work since that time, but I've come to respect and actually like this guy, who has influenced me in many, many ways for the better. I could go on, but I think you get the idea.

Now of course, things could have played out differently. NM, KH, and CD may have gone in directions that didn't include me, and I would have been none the wiser. But if I

had not cultivated those relationships on some level, it is a certainty that opportunities would have been lost.

This leads me to the power of networking. Networking is about building relationships. It's about getting out there and developing connections with other people. I am amazed at the quality of the relationships I have at this time, and I feel very lucky. But I am also keenly aware of the fact that there are many men and women out there whom I have never developed solid relationships with - and even more I don't even know at this time. I have no way of knowing what sort of alliances might or will take place in the future, but it's very important that I not be a recluse. I need to meet people constantly and be prepared to help and serve them, just as I hope they will be there for me when the time comes. We might need each other for information, expertise, perspective, friendship, introductions to others, advice, or to form a professional alliance and do some meaningful work together that is profitable for all.

So take it from me: I urge you to make it a life-long practice to nurture and cultivate relationships with a wide variety of people. Give up your shyness. Doing so can open doors many years later in ways that you never dreamed possible. Such fortunate dynamics are the result of a confluence of luck, timing, need, imagination, and synergy, but none of that can happen if you're not making networking a regular part of your M.O.

## Some Thoughts on Profanity

I consider language a gift from God. Imagine if we humans were not in possession of this thing called language.

As such, language can be adopted in a range that spans one end of a spectrum (elegant, artful language) to the other end of that same spectrum (profanity, vulgarity, filth, etc.) I strive for precision, variety, elegance, and intelligence, in the use of language. Not that I feel we need to strive to employ what some would call "scholarly" language, which is used (and understood) only by an Oxford Don. But I do believe that language should be used in an elevated way.

When it comes to profanity, I have made the decision to avoid such words, for I find them at the lowest end of the

language continuum. But even if we limit our discussion to profanity, I find that profanity itself can be placed on a continuum all its own.



On the highest (or "least bad") end of that continuum would be what I call "private swearing,"

where you are in your car alone and something happens that causes you to use an expletive, perhaps under your breath, perhaps out loud, but no one hears it except you.

Next would involve examples where a person you are speaking with uses foul language a number of times over the course of a conversation, but where the person acknowledges that they have uttered a foul word and, in their own way, sort of apologizes for doing so. I might add that the use of expletives is not gratuitous.

Next would be the gratuitous (i.e., totally unnecessary) use of expletives, where the speaker seems to like hearing the repeated use of their favorite curse word in all its variations, even when its use is totally out of context from what is being said. Of course, at this level, the person doesn't apologize and probably has no shame or sense that such language is both inappropriate and unnecessary. Many who do stand-up comedy seem to feel that public cursing must be part of their act. Certain public figures, such as Bill Maher, feel very much at home with public cursing, profanity, and vulgarity.

The step below that would be something that borders on human violence. I am referring to the swearing at another person. Calling someone a foul word is simply wrong on just about every level I can think of. It shows the callousness of the person using such language and makes them look like a Neanderthal. Such language is the language of the ghetto and the person's verbal acumen is that of the slums.

Taking it one step lower, if that were possible, is the swearing at someone who stands in a position of authority over you. For instance, it is one thing for a Staff Sergeant to swear at a Private, or even at another Staff Sergeant. But if that Staff Sergeant were to swear at a Lieutenant Colonel, that would be both bad form and also career suicide. Likewise, if a man who is a defendant in a legal trial were to swear at a person on the witness stand while court is in session, that would be bad. But if that same man were to swear at the Judge, he not only has done something unseemly, but he is a moron as well, for the Judge has rank and authority he does not have. Swearing at the pastor of your congregation would be equally problematic.

Swearing at one's parent is on that same level - and more so. One of the Ten Commandments is to honor your father and mother. God didn't say it was a command to love your father and mother, but to honor (or respect) them. When children cuss out their father or mother with foul language, they are doing violence to the social order of things, and are turning cultural norms on their head. No parent in their right mind should ever reward such treatment with the usual perks and favors that a parent bestows on their children.

Of course, it goes without saying that if I had ever said to my father some of the things I hear other teenagers these days say to their parents, I wouldn't be alive to write this article. It seems to me that a certain coarsening has taken place in the rising generation, and this coarsening has been aided and abetted by an adult permissiveness that seems to be more interested in showing compassion and understanding than in maintaining standards of decency.

I think society is going to end up paying a heavy price for such miscalculation.

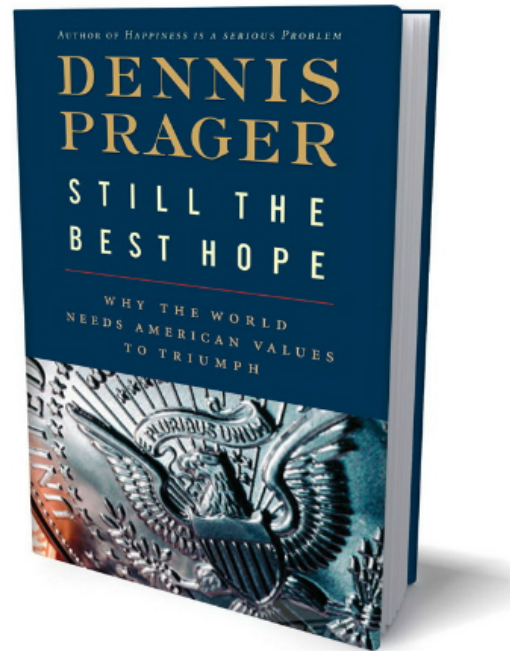
## Shameless Plug

### **Norwood to Publish Review of *Still The Best Hope***

I've been invited by The Claremont Review of Books to write a review of Dennis Prager's groundbreaking new book *Still The Best Hope: Why The World Needs American Values To Triumph*.

I consider this a singular honor and am looking forward to submitting my review soon. I will let you know when it comes out.

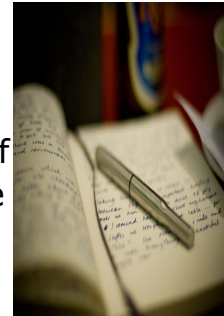
For those of you who have not yet purchased a copy, you can do so on Amazon by [clicking here](#).



## From Ara's Journal

### **In Memoriam: Stephen R. Covey**

Stephen R. Covey died last week at age 79 due to complications of serious injuries suffered from a biking accident. For those of you who are not familiar with him, he is the author of the best-selling business book of all time, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Covey was a profound thought-leader in the field of leadership and effectiveness. He was also a class act.



I knew the man. In fact, he was my very first boss following college graduation. When I left the confines of the university in December 1985, I had already determined that I would work for him, and him alone. So I persisted by going into his small corporate building several times a week, and finally convincing his staff that it would be less of a headache to have me on their payroll than to endure the relentless visits I would be imposing on them until they finally hired me.

So they hired me. And for the next two years or so, I was given responsibilities that stretched me in ways that I will never forget. I experienced my first successful tele-sales job with Covey. I wrote my very first training program with Covey. I opened their first San Francisco office and experienced my first foray into building and managing a team. Covey even sent me out on several occasions to keynote a meeting or conference where he had been invited

to be the speaker but could not make it due to scheduling conflicts. That would never have happened in recent years.

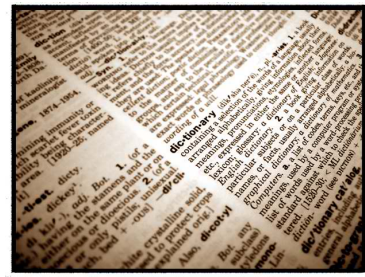
What Covey was doing, though I didn't realize it at the time, was investing in someone who worked for him whom he didn't know well but wanted to see succeed - not just while employed by him, but throughout life. I hope I do not disappoint him.

One of the most memorable lessons I ever learned came from a one-on-one with Covey. We were in his home, sitting in his living room, and he made sure we were not disturbed. He gave me his full and undivided attention, as if I was all that mattered to him at that moment. He was about to send me out to launch operations in San Francisco, and he knew I was apprehensive about it, as I truly didn't know what I was doing.

I remember him telling me that my going to San Francisco did involve some risk, both for me personally, and for his small consulting firm. But, said Covey (whom Brian Tracy once accurately described as "an American Socrates"), the greatest risks in life are not really about the risks I was getting ready to face. Instead, he assured me, it is much riskier to live a risk-free life - a life void of challenges, a life absent of any real tests or strains. Covey told me I would do fine in San Francisco, and I believed him. He was very empowering.

One final thought about this magnificent mentor: I have never met another person whose public life was so congruent with his private life. The man lived a life of integrity to a degree that would have made Gandhi proud. We all have values and theories we espouse but often fail to live up to. Covey was, without question, one of the most congruent and aligned individuals I've ever encountered, and I will always consider myself fortunate to have had the brief moments in my past to encounter someone as real and authentic as Stephen R. Covey.

**The World of Words**



Cathartic, adj.

**Pronunciation:** kə'thärtik

**Meaning:** Something that is cathartic provides psychological relief through the open expression of strong emotions. One can speak of the act of crying as providing cathartic release.

**Usage:**

- *It was quite cathartic to walk along the beach with you first thing Sunday morning.*
- *Engaging in any physical activity, be it ballroom dance, kempo, or swimming, can have a cathartic effect on the mind and emotions.*
- *Talking through a problem with her has proven to be very cathartic.*

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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).

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