

# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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## Greetings!

People often ask me if I ever worry about running out of things to write about.

Not me. There is way too much going on the world for me to run out of things to bring to your attention. Plus, my interests are of a sizable lot.

How about you? Do things capture your awareness? Do you pay attention to what is going on around you? Are you insufferably curious?



If so, read on. This issue of *Uncommon Sense* is loaded with content that is very, very important. You may not read all of it in one sitting, but do make time to get to all of it soon. Stay curious!

Okay, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood

## Effective Coaching

When one thinks of coaching, one usually thinks of athletics. And admittedly, there are some amazingly gifted coaches in the athletic world, past and present, all with various styles and approaches. To take just one sport, basketball, think Phil Jackson, Bobby Knight, and John Wooden -- three very gifted coaches, with three profoundly different ways of coaching. Or if you prefer football, contemplate the varying styles of, say, Woody Hayes, Bear Bryant, or the recently fallen (and deceased) Joe Paterno.

It goes without saying that effective coaching isn't done in just one way.

I'd like to highlight a different type of coaching -- one that does not focus on athletes but does focus on the rest of us.

The coaching I am referring to could be thought of as business coaching, or if you prefer a more expansive approach, life coaching.

Coaching non-athletes is, like the athletic counterpart, about helping individuals (or teams) improve their performance. And it is really not all that difficult or all that mysterious to be an effective coach, though having broad experience and a measure of both wisdom and common sense, is essential.

Here are four principles to keep in mind if you wish to coach others effectively:



First, it is very important that you take an adequate amount of time to observe the person(s) you are coaching. It is ineffective to rush the process and cut corners in an effort to get things done quickly. You need to watch how the person performs in quite a few situations in order to get a sense of the patterns and the rhythm of their performance. You don't want to assume that one or two manifestations of a given characteristic constitutes a habit. Obviously, you want to capture your observations in any way possible. Video is best, but often impractical. Audio recording is next best (if there is anything auditory to capture.) Note-taking is also typical.

Second, it's important to take the person into a private area to begin the debrief process. Effective coaches begin this process by allowing the person being coached the opportunity to share their own perceptions of their performance. Hearing this from the person being coached can be very valuable to the coach. If nothing else, it gives the coach a measure of how self-aware the person is concerning his/her own performance. Further, many times the person being coached might disclose valuable information that had somehow escaped the attention of the coach. During this segment of the coaching process, the

coach should be listening as intently as possible.

Third, the coach should disclose what he/she observed. It is important not to disclose too much, for that can be overwhelming. I find it useful to look for the most significant problem area that has a chance to be corrected and discuss my observations of that one area. I don't want to give the person I am coaching too many problem areas to face up to. Even more importantly, however, I want to point out any strengths I noticed, especially if the strengths were particularly pronounced. The reason I do this is because many times a person is largely unaware of their own strengths. I thus hold a proverbial mirror up to them to educate them on their own virtues. This can often be transformative to the person being coached.

Fourth, when appropriate, once the private coaching session has concluded, I try to follow the person back out into the actual work environment and be a bit more up-close-and-personal. What I mean is that I try to offer real-time coaching while they are back in the trenches to remind them in the heat of battle some of the key lessons I covered with them in private just moments earlier. The private coaching session is somewhat theoretical, while the later coaching session is more hands-on and practical. This second approach often locks in the concepts discussed in the earlier session. The result is improved performance.

Finally, I should add that effective coaches tell the truth, even when the truth might be painful to hear. We coaches don't do anyone any good at all if we are afraid to state the truth in plain, blunt language. Granted, we can use some level of tact and diplomacy, but such should never mask the truth. No one can improve if we tiptoe around the hard issues.

## When Political Ads Sink to a New Low

Recently a political action group run by Democrats ran a television ad in an effort to persuade voters to reelect President Obama. The producers of this ad were unable to tout President Obama's accomplishments with job growth or other economic "wins" as there were none to speak of. They opted, instead, to smear his opponent, Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney.

The ad, run by a Super PAC that goes by the name of Priorities USA Action, featured a man by the name of Joe Soptik who basically blamed his wife's death to cancer on

Mitt Romney, since a firm Mr. Romney once ran closed the plant where Mr. Soptik worked, thus causing Mr. Soptik to forfeit his medical benefits. You can see the ad by clicking [here](#).

The ad is noteworthy for two things, the first being that Mr. Romney is portrayed in the ad as being guilty in some way of the late Ranae Soptik's death. In other words, this comes dangerously close to accusing Mr. Romney of murder - truly a first in presidential politics. (Romney had already been accused of the crime of tax evasion by Senator Harry Reid, a democrat, who provided absolutely no evidence of the charge.) The second noteworthy aspect of the ad is the sheer volume of misleading and distorted facts the add contains. For instance:

- **Claim:** The ad attributes the closing of the plant where Mr. Soptik worked as being the responsibility of Mitt Romney. **Fact:** Mr. Romney was no longer in a decision-making capacity at Bain Capital when the decision to shut down the plant was reached, as he was then running the Salt Lake Olympics.
- **Claim:** The ad also blames the plant's closing on Bain Capital's decision to close it for selfish reasons, not for sound business reasons. **Fact:** many U.S. steel fabricators at that time were also closed due to various economic factors (i.e., rising costs, cheap steel products from Asia, etc.) Bain wasn't at all involved in other similar plants closing, therefore, Bain's decision to close the plant was based on the realities of the market conditions, and were not driven by a desire to harm anyone or get rich at the expense of others.
- **Claim:** The ad has Joe Soptik stating that when the plant closed, "my family lost their health care." **Fact:** Mrs. Soptik had her own insurance plan that was still in effect for about a year or two after the closing of the plant through her own employer.
- **Claim:** In the ad, Joe Soptik claims that shortly after the plant closed, "my wife became ill." **Fact:** The plant closed in 2001. Ranae Soptik did not become ill until 2006, a good five years following the plant closure.

The ad brought a firestorm of criticism against both the

Super PAC that ran the ad, as well as the Obama Administration. What I find fascinating is the unwillingness of Leftists to honestly face the implications of the ad. For instance, the Chair of the Democratic National Committee, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, would not only refuse to acknowledge the inappropriateness of the ad, she would not even acknowledge that the ad was run by Democrats, stating, "It's not a Democratic Ad, it's a Priorities USA Super PAC Ad."

When Wasserman-Schultz was asked, "Do you deny that they are Democrats?" she responded with unusual levels of obfuscation: "I have no idea of the political affiliation of folks who are associated with that Super PAC."



Even when it was pointed out that the group's senior strategist, Bill Burton, served in the White House under President Obama in 2008, she continued the mantra: "That is a Super PAC ad that is not affiliated with our campaign or with the party."

When asked what she personally thought of the ad, she said this: "What I think of the ad is that there's no question that the ad raises facts, such as that Mitt Romney, when he was CEO of Bain Capital, bankrupted companies, laid off workers, cut their benefits, and made millions of dollars in profit, and that ad points out that there are consequences to making decisions like that that impacted people's lives in a significant way." You can see that segment of the interview by [clicking here](#).

Similarly, when George Stephanopoulos asked her if it was proper for Harry Reid to claim on the Senate floor that Mitt Romney hasn't paid taxes for ten years, she would not give a straight answer to that question. Mr. Stephanopoulos tried three times, but to no avail. You can see that interview by [clicking here](#).

## Shameless Plug

A new movie has come out that has people talking. The movie is called **2016: Obama's America**. The movie was produced by Gerald Molen (producer of Schindler's List).

Although the movie has limited screenings, ticket sales are enormous. [Click here](#) for information on the movie and where it's playing.

## From Ara's Journal

In the last issue of *Uncommon Sense*, I mulled over the atheist question hurled at believers in God on why there is unjust suffering. While I gave a couple of ideas on how to interact with such a challenge, I failed to make the following point:



I would urge the atheist to embrace some measure of humility at the realization that we simply do not know very much about why unjust suffering takes place.

If there is a God (as I'm quite confident there is) He may well explain it all to us some day.

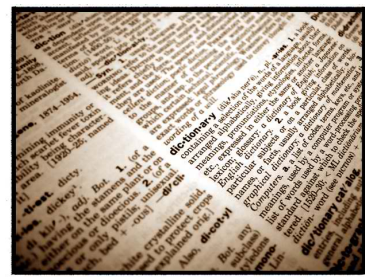
The fact that we cannot readily answer the question of unjust suffering with any finality no more invalidates the existence of God than does the fact that a given person who cannot readily answer a complex math problem (ex. *find a square which remains a square if it decreased by 5 or increased by 5*) invalidates mathematics.

Further, I wonder how atheists explain things like:

- the seemingly organized solar system in which our planet resides
- the fact that our planet is precisely the right amount of distance from our sun to sustain human life
- the structure and function of the human body, be it the eye, the skeletal system, or the ability of the human body to heal itself
- the existence of consciousness among humans
- the fact that miracles do seem to take place more often than one might think

Finally, I would remind the atheist of a wise saying by the very perceptive Milton Steinberg: "*The believer in God has to account for unjust suffering; the atheist, however, has to account for everything else.*"

## The World of Words



**Incendiary, adj.**

**Pronunciation:** in'sendē,erē

**Meaning:** An incendiary device is one that causes fires. Thus, an incendiary remark, or an incendiary ad, or an incendiary personality is one that incites conflict, causes things to erupt, and generally stirs up trouble.

**Usage:**

- *Let's look for additional candidates, as this so-called final candidate is of a far too incendiary make-up to fit in well with our culture.*
- *You are out of line: your incendiary, mean-spirited demeanor has a divisive quality that is not welcome here.*
- *Hitler (and others of his ilk) was of an incendiary and ill-tempered disposition.*

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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  
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