

# Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 053

June 10, 2013

## Greetings!

I hope this finds you well.

It finds me well for the simple fact that today is my birthday. I am now 55 years of age. It's kind of amazing to think about.

I'm grateful to have made it another year. And I'm excited to be getting out another issue of *Uncommon Sense* which is meant to stimulate your mind and help things become more clear to you.

Nothing would please me more than to have you share this issue of *Uncommon Sense* on your favorite social media page (by clicking one of the buttons above), or by forwarding it to a friend, or by sending me a note and letting me know what you thought of the content of this issue.

OK, let's get started.

Warm regards,

Ara Norwood



## Self-Development

### Balanced Evaluation

I learned a very valuable and balanced approach to evaluating ideas some time ago that I wish to share with you. This comes to us courtesy of the Maltese doctor extraordinaire, Edward de Bono. What I learned from him, and what you will now learn from me, has proven very helpful in approaching the decision-process in a highly

effective and balanced manner.

Many of you know I teach part-time at the college level.

Imagine if I were to give my students an assignment, say, to write an essay on the topic of changing the institution of marriage to become a renewable, seven-year contract. Here's what would happen: all but 2 or 3 of the students would state their opinion on the matter in the first paragraph, and then spend the remainder of the essay validating that position.

But a very small number of students might not take that approach. They might, instead, explore.

Not enough of us explore the ramifications of the various ideas we come up against. Proposals are delivered to us, ideas are proffered, and suggestions are tossed about. We often make snap judgments based on gut feelings we may have, or some sort of bias that may sway our inclinations. But rarely do we ever actually explore.

De Bono gave a good method for doing so. It's called doing a PMI, and it gives us not only a balanced approach to evaluating proposals, but also helps us make better decisions.

The P stands for Pluses. The M stands for Minuses. And the I stands for Interesting.

Pluses are all the positives, the pros, and the reasons why the idea is a good one. It's easy to engage in this sort of analysis when we already are in favor of the idea. But it's critically important that we also engage in identifying and articulating the pluses when we don't feel so favorable.

Minuses are all the negatives, the cons, and reasons why the idea might be a poor one. Again, easy to articulate when you are already predisposed to denigrate the proposal, but critically important that those who like the idea not give short-shrift to the minuses.



Pluses and minuses are judgments. But the interesting (that final "I") is less judgmental. The interesting aspects of a proposal are those which you don't quite know how to categorize. You're not sure if it's a plus or a minus. But you believe it is noteworthy and worth setting aside for further reflection.

It doesn't take long to do a PMI. For any proposal that comes across your desk, simply take out a sheet of paper and do a quick and candid run through on all of the pluses, all of the minuses, and all of those elements that don't immediately strike you as either plus or minus but that are noteworthy enough to be placed in the interesting column.

Once you have such a list (and you may wish to involve others in the process) you will be able to see things you may have missed, and you will have a fuller, more balanced picture of what's before you. It's not that the PMI process prevents you from making decisions. It's that with the PMI technique, you make your decisions *after*, not *before*, exploration takes place.

You will make better decisions and enjoy better outcomes if you make the PMI technique a regular part of your arsenal.

## **The Elephant in the Room** **The New Unforgivable Slur**

I want to begin by going on record and saying I do not believe it is kind or gracious to use our words to personally insult individuals or groups. I have no problem with being critical of ideas (as you will soon see) but to belittle or mock an individual (or a group that individual represents) in a way that is personal and mean-spirited is just plain uncalled for in that it lacks public virtue.

Having said that, I am noticing, with increasing frequency, a trend that I find disturbing. It is the power that is wielded by a very small percentage of the U.S. population that is being used to batter and bruise (and sometimes even destroy) the lives of others within the general population. I am talking about the power wielded by gay rights groups.

Gays (and in this I include anyone who is a part of the special interest group known as LGBT) make up, perhaps 3-4% of the population of the United States according to

the [Williams Institute](#). Yet this very tiny group seems to have significant control of what can be said to whom, or the consequences of what our speech can or should be.



I illustrated this back in April 2011 with Issue #2 of *Uncommon Sense* when Kobe Bryant was fined \$100,000 for using the word *faggot* in the heat of the moment towards an NBA Referee. (The Ref, who was straight, wasn't the one outraged. It was the LGBT community that pressured the NBA to issue the highest fine possible against an individual athlete.)

The NBA just got into again. On June 1, 2013, Indiana Pacer center Roy Hibbert, during a press conference following Game 6 against the Miami Heat (which the Pacer's won) used the parenthetical phrase, "no homo" in the middle of a sentence. The full sentence was, "There was Game 3 here that I felt I let Paul down in terms of having his back when LeBron was scoring in the post or getting into the paint because they stretched me out so much - no homo - but I want to be there for him."

The phrase, "no homo" in this context means that the person has just said something that could possibly be twisted in such a way as to imply he/she is gay, and so they are attempting to nullify such an assumption by informing the reader or listener that they are, in fact, straight.

For this, Mr. Hibbert was fined \$75,000 for telling the world that he is *not* gay. Had he told the world that he was gay, he would have received unsparing praise and adulation, just as fellow NBA player Jason Collins recently received when he announced he was a gay NBA basketball player. (I profiled this story in Issue #51 of [Uncommon Sense](#).)

Note that Mr. Hibbert said nothing derogatory against homosexuality in general, or against any gay person in particular; he merely, albeit crassly, communicated that he is not gay by using the slang term *homo*. That confirmation cost him \$75,000.

There is a transformation taking place in America before our very eyes that is troubling. The deck is stacked very

much in favor of the "pro-homosexual" and very much against the "non-pro-homosexual." In other words, you don't have to necessarily be anti-gay to be publicly harmed in some way. The Roy Hibbert episode demonstrates that you merely have to say something that touches on homosexuality in a way that doesn't lavishly promote it and celebrate it to be censured. In addition to the \$75,000 fine, here is the text of Mr. Hibbert's forced apology (which someone else probably wrote for him):

*"I am apologizing for insensitive remarks made during the postgame press conference after our victory over Miami Saturday night. They were disrespectful and offensive and not a reflection of my personal views. I used a slang term that is not appropriate in any setting, private or public, and the language I used definitely has no place in a public forum, especially over live television. I apologize to those who I have offended, to our fans and to the Pacers' organization. I sincerely have deep regret over my choice of words last night."*

I wonder what the fallout would have been had Mr. Hibbert refused to issue this forced apology.

And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

## **From Ara's Journal** **The Coarsening of Humanity**

Anyone who studies history can quickly discern that cultures are fluid. Societies either evolve or devolve. The Dark Ages were a period of time that societies on a massive scale went backwards. Others would argue that during the Renaissance, people's curiosity was rekindled so that, Phoenix-like, they arose from the ash-heap of ignorance to embrace innovation and excellence. The ancient Greeks were a brilliant, thoughtful lot, while the Visigoths were quite primitive and Neanderthal-like in their approach to life. All of those groups either evolved or devolved into what they ultimately became known for. This simply demonstrates the mercurial nature of societies at large - they either trend in one direction or another. And thus it is with our own society.



I could be wrong - and, truth be told, I hope I am wrong - but I see signs that tell me we as a people are becoming

more coarse. I recently spent several hours with a friend observing his son's high school's graduation party, so I got a chance to observe a lot of recently graduated high school seniors. The manner in which many of them conducted themselves struck me as uncouth, impolite, even vulgar at times.

Foul language seems to be more and more commonplace with expletives being uttered as a normal part of everyday speech without any shame and seemingly without any awareness that there is a distinction between profanity and other, more standard, language.

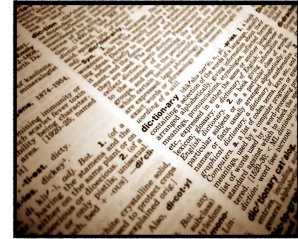
In various parts of the country, young thugs (I won't call them young men) have entertained themselves by playing a game called "Knockout". The idea behind this game involves the targeting of an innocent man who is a total stranger to the thugs, and then one of them is to walk up to the victim and attempt to knock him out with a single punch. If the victim fails to be knocked unconscious, all of the other thugs join in and beat the man until he loses consciousness. Some of the victims have been beaten to death. You can read about that sordid pathology by [clicking here](#). I see this as clear evidence we are moving backward, not forward.

Another example of the coarsening of humanity comes to us courtesy of Richmond High School. Located in northern California, this was the scene of [a 2009 gang rape](#) of a 16-year-old girl following the Homecoming dance. The thing that makes this case so lurid is that the atrocity went on for some 2½ hours right there on the campus, with perhaps some 20 people witnessing the attack - and not a one of them intervened to help or call the police. They simply watched. The victim in this case was brutalized by monsters posing as human beings, who even stooped to urinating on her following their robbing her of her virtue. One of them even took her cell phone and called her father and told him his daughter was talented at sex. She was unconscious for much of the ordeal.

We are clearly in a downward spiral. The secular Left is emboldened and religious-minded people seem intimidated by them. It is going to take enormous strength, courage, and boldness on the part of those who believe in decency to turn this around. And I'm not entirely sure there are enough decent people in our midst to pull this off.

# Animated

## Building Your Power of Expression



**Animated**, adj.

**Pronunciation:** 'anə,mātid

### **Meaning:**

Anytime something or someone is "brought to life" and takes on a spirited persona, that person (or thing) could be said to be animated. A person who is animated is colorful, vibrant, lively, and vivacious.

### **Usage:**

- *I really like that guy; we always have such animated conversations!*
- *No, I would not describe her as dull at all. If anything, she is animated.*
- *Just let him vent; this would not be the time for an animated exchange.*

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New subscribers, the Special Report "11 Ways to Beat the Odds" should have been sent out to you already. 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,**

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