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Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Issue: # 104

September 30, 2015

Greetings!

If you give presentations (training seminars, sales presentations, brainstorming sessions) you will want to read this issue.

But there's more. In one word: abortion.

While the abortion debate continues to rage on, while Planned Parenthood is getting grilled by Congress, I bring the issue front and center (again) to this edition of *Uncommon Sense*.

I believe in balance. So even when I do not agree with someone, when they make a compelling argument, I am secure enough to give it a wider audience.

Such was the case during a recent online discussion with some people, most of whom are strangers to me, on the topic of abortion. Nicole Charron, whose first language is French, offered a stirring, if somewhat bleak, presentation on what it means to be a woman, and why, therefore, Planned Parenthood ought to be left alone. I've never met Nicole in person, and probably never will. And while I disagree with her ultimate conclusions about abortion, I found her statement about what it means to be a woman, and what women go through, eye-opening and compelling. I have a deeper appreciation for the women I know, . . . and those I do not. Thank you, Nicole.

OK, let's get started.



Self-Development

Setting Expectations in Presentations

All business professionals - and plenty of non-business professionals - have to make presentations from time to time. These presentations are a key communication medium for conveying information, selling products or services, managing operations, influencing and persuading others, conducting a training program, or innovating for new solutions to existing problems. Sometimes these presentations are supported by visual aids such as posters, flip charts, props, or software programs like Keynote, PowerPoint or Prezi. But when the audience reaches a certain size, say between 6 and 25 people, many presentations involve audience participation.

Many people in the audience, perhaps most, enjoy the opportunity to participate if it is done right. And while the methods of involving your audience are legion, one of the simplest and yet most effective methods involves the posing of questions and allowing the audience to chime in with their thoughts and opinions.



But there is a caveat.

How many times have you watched a person doing a presentation before an audience and the presenter asks a question intended to facilitate discussion, and all you hear is silence? The presenter may feel awkward, and then continue to speak, as if a question had never been posed. Or perhaps the presenter will answer the question, or pretend it was rhetorical and did not need to be answered.

What happened there was the presenter missed out on an opportunity in two ways. First, the presenter need not be intimidated by the silence. People in your audience often want to respond to a question, if the question is an interesting and compelling one. But often times the audience members are waiting to see if someone else will speak first, which then would make it OK for them to

follow suit. If after 3 seconds of silence, the presenter finds the lull too uncomfortable, he or she may begin to speak again, which robs the audience members who might have spoken up their opportunity. No presenter should allow momentary silence to intimidate them.

In fact, I often draw attention to the silence, and even poke fun at it. After 5 seconds of silence following a question I pose, I might offer this quip: "Notice how nervous everyone seems to be, unsure if they dare raise their hand and offer a comment. Well, lucky for you folks, I'm not at all uncomfortable with silence, so we'll just wait until one of you gets up the courage to share a thought. . ." And invariably, someone does.

The second opportunity missed by the presenter who encounters silence lies in the fact that he or she failed to prepare the audience about the norms being employed when questions are being offered to the audience. Seasoned presenters, speakers, trainers, sales agents, and consultants all understand that if the audience is forewarned about how the meeting is to go, and what the expectations are, and that they are encouraged to participate and share their own expertise as part of the learning that is to take place, that same audience will be more likely to make contributions. So they say up front, "Folks, while I am leading this discussion, I want to stress that I am not the only source of information today. Many of you will chime in and share your opinions and expertise which will lend to the overall learning of everyone here. So let me be clear: You all have permission to feel comfortable in being active participants in today's proceedings. We want your comments and input." Once that is said, the proper expectations have been put forth, and more people are likely than not to be responsive.

One final word of advice: Audiences are more likely to contribute to discussions when the questions that are asked have the following qualities:

- Clear: the questions we pose must not be ambiguous. They must be worded in a way that every single member in the audience understands precisely what it is we are asking. For example, a question such as:

What might be the rationale that customers, were they to be put off by unfavorable conditions in the

facilities we impose on them, could exhibit undesirable behaviors?

There are several problems with this question: it's long; it's convoluted; it's wordy. Chances are high that if anyone tries to answer it, they will be answering a question they don't even fully understand, and their motives may be to simply rescue the speaker from an embarrassing gaffe. This question could have simply been rendered:

What makes customers mad?

It's crisp. Concise. To the point. And clear. And it will get audience members to respond.

- Compelling: the questions we pose should be interesting, not bland; compelling, nor boring; engaging, not drab. They should be crafted so as to be about something people will want to converse on. Thus, the question:

What do you think are the main reasons why people turn to illegal drugs?

is a more compelling question than

What are some of the ways people use to cope with their existential angst?

- Relevant. I won't give examples here of relevant questions, as every scenario is different. But I will say that when it comes to posing questions to an audience, the questions should be on target with the subject matter, and with what is important to that audience.

Thus, it takes careful preparation in the crafting of your questions. If they are prepared in advance, thoughtfully, and with the above characteristics in mind, your questions will be far more likely to foster good interaction with your audience, and your presentations will be both memorable and effective.

I know of several women who've had abortions.

Some are still unable to forgive themselves while others regret the incident, but do not regret their choice. I've met several women who gave up their child for adoption, most many decades ago, and they too still feel a hole in their hearts.

Some quietly celebrate that child's birthday every year. One woman who chose adoption buys a birthday present every year for her lost child and then donates the gift. She still does this though her child would be close to 40 years old by now. How sad.

No matter what they do, women will never forget and will often punish themselves for the rest of their lives. Whether they have an abortion, choose adoption, or keep the baby, this choice is

usually something they experience on their own. Even if the father is still in the picture, or has helped or supported in any way, the pain is still very much hers to bear.



We're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't.

The key is always to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Some say it's our duty to abstain, to keep our legs crossed until the time is right to have a child. Do you think men would just suck it up and wait? Wow, can you imagine the soar in prostitution? Internet porn is fast becoming the number one addiction in men with consequences on intimacy with the women in their lives. Yes, birth control is available, but, again, we're damned if we do and we're damned if we don't.

Any kind of hormone manipulation is bound to screw up a woman, either physically or mentally, or both, to varying extents. Blood clots leading to death or paralysis are not that uncommon. I.U.D.s are also an option but they too can cause severe discomfort. Would men shove a metal device up their penises to prevent pregnancy? Would they want to take a daily pill or have injections that will make them gain weight and change their personality, or cause acne, or loss

of hair, etc.? What women do to their bodies is unthinkable. Men would never do this.

I may come across as bitter about this. Maybe I am a little. It just pains me to see how men, and women, so quickly forget what our gender goes through to bear children, or not. A female has approximately 10 years of being worry free until she starts her period. After that, she has a huge responsibility. She's expected to do what every man will do (attend school, get a college degree, find a job, go to war, run a company, etc.) AND have PMS one week a month and bleed one more week per month. She learns how to insert a tampon, reads about the risks of toxic shock syndrome, and eventually becomes an expert at stuffing her handbag with all forms of paraphernalia from pain pills for cramping to every variety of feminine protection to match her levels of flow. She spends months to years trying every form of birth control and hopefully finds one that causes the fewest side-effects and doesn't turn her into a chubby acne-covered emotional mess.

She gets pregnant.

Her life changes from the moment she conceives and she may suffer a range of symptoms such as nausea, weight gain, mood swings, dizziness, and fatigue, while the man goes on as if nothing has happened. We forget that pregnancies, while wonderful, are still considered risky with many possible complications and potentially fatal risks at every stage such as eclampsia and strokes.

She gives birth.

More risks and complications. Think episiotomy. After the birth, she has to lose the baby weight as quickly as possible so people don't complain about her shape (I'm sorry to say that women are the worst at judging other women).

She has another child, she breastfeeds both, and feels embarrassed that her breasts have lost their shape. She compares herself to the beautiful young things advertised all over the media and feels inadequate. She considers breast reconstruction or implants to regain some of her appeal and confidence. She makes herself sick just to fit in her skinny jeans again and watches how the other new mothers around are coping and getting back into shape.

Then, just when her body starts to get back to "normal",

she's premenopausal (weight gain, hair loss, mood swings, mustache, loss of bone density, etc.) and then the night sweats come and she can't sleep anymore. She still has to get up every morning to look after her family, go to work, and make sure her spouse doesn't feel neglected.

This is quickly followed by hot flashes during the day when her body temperature shoots up and she's drenched from head to toe. Her face turns beet red, sweat is pouring down her body, and everyone notices. Meanwhile, her libido tanks, intercourse is painful, and this affects her relationship.

Basically, nature is trying to tell her that she's no longer useful to procreate and men should look to spend their seed where it'll matter. To alleviate her symptoms she considers H.R.T., but the side effects, again, in addition to the higher risk of breast cancer, are a concern.

We're used to this. This is what we do. We don't complain (ok, sometimes we bitch) and we just get on with it. So when the few rights we have are challenged time and time again, women, some women, rise up and get angry.

Can you blame them? How different would laws be if men had all of these issues to contend with? Honestly, it's not easy for us, but this is the price we pay for the incredible privilege of growing a new human inside our bodies. I'd do it again, and again, and again, and even increase the symptoms and discomforts, just to be able to feel that baby kicking inside me and to feel that rush when the baby latches on to feed. I'm sad that men will never know this.

So, next time you see a very young girl, imagine the great responsibility and risks that she has ahead of her. Next time you see an older woman, imagine all the symptoms she has that make her life a misery sometimes, symptoms that are constant reminders that her identity is changing. But she just gets on with it. Women are built for this.

Child-bearing is a remarkable journey that is unique to our gender and the choices associated with this journey should likewise be unique to us.

Don't worry, we're smart. We got this. All we ask is that the powers-that-be not make it any harder than it already is and refrain from imposing their own beliefs on rights that women fought so hard to get, rights that are legal and protected by the Constitution and rights that saved millions

of lives.

Planned Parenthood changed the landscape for women, and families. It is a beacon of support and understanding that was dangerously absent for prior generations of child-bearers. An attack on Planned Parenthood is deemed to be an attack on a woman's right to make choices about her unique healthcare needs.

The Abortion Question

My Heartfelt Reply to Nicole Charron

by Ara Norwood

I have to admit, I was deeply moved by the statement written by Nicole Charron. While I found it compelling, and while it caused feelings of deep sympathy and newfound sensitivity to what it must be like to be a woman, it did not cause me to switch sides on the abortion question for reasons I will now attempt to explain.



I abhor abortion.

I happen to find myself in circumstances where I am raising a little boy, my grandson. He just turned 2 over the summer, and there is no "father" in the picture. I am, for all intents and purposes, his father-figure. I love this boy with an insatiable love that is indescribable. Every day I cannot wait to see him, play with him, interact with him, etc. He is a beautiful, lovely, fun, brilliant little guy.

I find it horrific to image what it would be like for him to be inside the womb of his mother, and, at 7 months or 5 months or 3 months after conception, to have his fragile little body stretched beyond capacity, and then dismembered by a medical device provided courtesy of Planned Parenthood. I shudder to envision what that horrific experience would have been like for that nascent little mind of his. Certainly he would not be in possession of "knowledge" as we usually define the term. But would he have felt pain? Would he have experienced fear? Would he have known trauma or horror or shock? It's difficult to say. But I err on the side that he most likely would have. Would the "end" to his life have come quickly? I presume so. But there have been documented instances of aborted

babies coming out of the womb alive, and then been killed outside of the womb - an act I consider both inhumane and barbaric.

So with all of the above in mind, I ask myself, is it "right" to abort? Does my conscience tell me abortion has no moral component? Do my instincts tell me that the mother's wishes are the sole determinant in the matter? I cannot speak for others, but my soul recoils at the notion, and I find myself saying an emphatic "No" to all three questions.

I often think of something that was taught by Jesus Christ. Even if I did not consider him to be the Son of God (which I do) and if I considered him to be merely a great moral teacher, I would have to admit that his teaching in Matthew 7:12 that we "Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you" would give me pause. As I think about that teaching, which contains a lot of wisdom, I ask myself, "Would the advocates and the activists of a 'woman's right to choose' still choose, at least philosophically, abortion if they themselves were the ones to be on the receiving end of abortion?" Somehow I think they'd have a different take.

Finally, I want to make a comment about the loaded language used by both sides of "Pro-Choice" and "Pro-Life." I consider myself both "Pro-Choice" and "Pro-Life." If you find that contradictory or if you think the two positions are mutually exclusive, hear me out. I ask: Why is the assumption of someone who is Pro-Choice always Pro-Abortion? Why cannot someone be Pro-Choice and CHOOSE an alternative to abortion - such as carry the baby to term and then raise that baby, or carry the baby to term and then give that baby up for adoption? Why does that have to be an impenetrable wall between the two positions?

I think the language we use in the abortion debate is unhealthy, and the dichotomy of "Pro-Life" and "Pro-Choice" does not contribute to much else than acrimony. Of course women (and men) should have the freedom to make choices.

I would just hope that we, as a people, would make wise and moral choices, both in terms of our sexual activity, and in terms of what we do if a pregnancy occurs.

Our choice to abort should not be something that is based

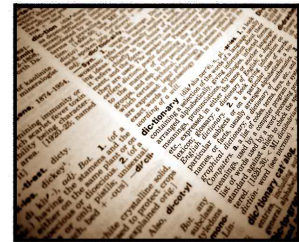
on what is merely convenient for us. We would be a better people if we gave thought to what we are considering doing to another, albeit unborn, human life.

Being in my late 50s, I find it demanding and inconvenient to be starting over and raising another child when my youngest children are now in their 20s. But in spite of the inconveniences, in spite of all of the things that I have to give up in this endeavor of raising another child, in spite of the "hit" I now take on my own personal productivity, the thought of this boy having been aborted is a chilling, horrific one.

The World of Words

Boorish

Building Your Power of Expression



Boorish, adj.

Pronunciation: 'bo̩riSH

Meaning: Anything or any one who is rough around the edges, or coarse, or in possession of poor manners, is boorish.

Usage:

- *I could never marry someone so boorish and uncouth.*
- *The manners of Attila were so boorish and unsavory, that no one could stand to be around him for long.*
- *Being boorish is not going to win you any friends, or any dates.*

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).

For more information on my work, follow me on Twitter ("Ara

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Sincerely,

Ara Norwood
Leadership Development Systems