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Dear David,

 Ara Norwood

With 5 minutes to go before we close the month of February, I bring you my latest thoughts on a variety of issues. Go ahead: take the plunge. Read my thinking on your skill development, on the aftermath of the tragic Florida school shooting, and a few musings about how parents are seen by their children. You'll also get to add a nifty new word to your growing vocabulary.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood

Self-Development

Skill Refinement

All of us are in possession of some degree of skill in some area. It might involve being good with numbers, or being good with people. It might involve our abilities

as a musician, or a martial artist. Perhaps your skills like in the arena of dance, or public speaking, or memorization, or being organized. Maybe you are adept in the culinary arts, or you have a gift for humor and making people laugh. Some are skilled at reading people, or listening effectively. There are skilled nurses, skilled college professors, and skilled prosecuting attorneys.

However, it is a common human trait to acquire a certain level of skill in a given arena, and then to become satisfied that we have "arrived." We are skilled. We know it, and others know it. And so we become complacent with that level of skill. We stop the refining process.

I am encouraging you to consider your current skill level in whatever area of life you possess such skill, and challenge yourself to take it to the next level. In other words, if you are a skilled chess player, ask yourself what it would take to raise the bar, even just a bit.



Perhaps a very strong and skilled chess player needs to explore the effective use of the Benoni (the name of a very gutsy opening designed to give the player of the black pieces an advantage) or the use of nuanced attacks with the h-pawn versus the c-pawn. By delving in deep, by not being satisfied with one's current skill level, one can move the needle forward and reach new vistas never before imagined.

In my own case, I happened to be skilled at advising mid-range managers at taking their career to the next level. Apparently I am seen as a person of vast resources and a deep bag of tricks containing knowledge and strategy that can be used by others for their gain. An organization I am associated with has a key Vice President role that has been vacant for quite a few months. There are three directors who used to report into that VP slot, and now that the role is going to be filled, all three directors are vying for the role. Unbeknownst to them, all three of them have approached me in the past few days to seek my advice and my help on various aspects of their candidacy for that VP role. They all seek different kinds of advice from me, but the one thing they have in common is the presumption that I have some value to lend to them in the form of advice. And since I do not have any particular favorites or loyalties towards any of those three, I am not in danger of a conflict of interest. I am delighted to help all three of them to the best of my ability. I am happy I get to utilize my skill of advising budding executives. But I recognize that if I apply myself, I can get even better at dispensing such advice. I plan to work on that, escalating my skills in this area to make myself truly indispensable.

Wherever your skills lie, assume those skills are in the upper range of the midpoint of a given scale. Assume that there is much more ground that could be covered in bringing you to a world-class level. Then map out a plan for regular refinement of your particular skill, stick with that plan every week, and you will eventually astonish yourself with the outcomes.

And, you will be sought after for your skills.

The Elephant in the Room

The Left and School Shootings


I begin this by noting that I am not a member of the Republican Party, nor am I a member of the Democratic Party, nor am I a member of any political party. Further, I have no allegiance to any particular political party. With that in mind, I can continue.

It is fascinating how the Left responds to school shootings. After 17 innocent people at a Florida high school were gunned down on Valentine's Day by a sick, deranged 19-year old, the Left did their usual thing and instantly began politicizing the issue by blaming Republicans, as if it an Article of Faith of the Republican Party to shoot innocent people. Comedian Chelsea Handler, a woman of the Left, took only minutes after the tragedy hit the news wires [to lay the blame](#) of the mass shooting on Republicans, claiming that all Republicans now have blood on their hands.

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, a Democrat from New Jersey, [tweeted](#), "Republicans should pray for forgiveness," as if it was Republicans who set up conditions that created the shooting. And Congressman Gerry Connolly, a Democrat from Virginia, said in a statement, "How many more moments of silence must we hold before Republicans in Congress act?" Apparently Mr. Connolly believes that Republicans are the sole force in American life that have the power to stop a disturbed, unhinged, maniac from wreaking havoc on a school.

So think about this carefully. A twisted teenager who had no political leanings as far as we are aware, goes on a killing spree, and Leftists respond, not by blaming the killer, but by blaming Republicans, as if Republicans armed the killer and gave him instructions on how to shoot up a school. Leftists live in a world as *non compos mentis* as the killer himself. Republicans are just as shocked, saddened, and outraged at this tragedy as anyone else. It is very likely that the parents of some of the murdered were Republicans. Are Leftists going to suggest that those Republican parents are not really grieving for the loss of their child because such parents love their guns more than their own children?


Yes, and they already have done precisely that, with a straight face. A Leftist pastor in Australia [politicized the tragedy](#) by posting a large sign outside his Anglican Church that read, "When will they love their kids more than their guns?" He was addressing Republicans, and he actually believes that Republicans have no problem with dead children -- even their own dead children, so long as they can keep their beloved guns. This pastor is a sick, misinformed psychopath.

To further show how Leftists politicize such tragedies, one only need to review the [CNN Town Hall event](#) which was held one week after the tragedy. CNN staged this Kangaroo Court, not as an forum for  CNN Town Hall serious policy discussion, nor even as an event to try to make sense of the tragedy, but to set up a platform to shame Republicans and score political points. CNN as an institution has made it apparent that they revel in Leftism, not news, and that they loathe -- utterly despise -- conservatives. Thus, CNN was not there to try to come up with solutions on how to stop gun violence, but to find away to destroy Republicans. Present at this event were many students from the school where the shooting took place, along with their parents (and the parents of the deceased), teachers from the school, Florida Democrat Senator Bill Nelson, and Florida Democrat Congressman Ted Deutch. Those were the good guys. The

villains, as CNN made certain the audience would view them, included Florida Republican Senator Marco Rubio, and Dana Loesch, a spokeswoman from the National Rifle Association.

One of the students who addressed Senator Rubio, Cameron Kasky, began by making the following statement: "Senator Rubio, it's hard to look at you and not look down a barrel of an AR-16, and not look at Nikolas Cruz. . ." Is Mr. Kasky, who is probably 16 or 17 years of age, really trying to understand how our political leaders can help us find solutions by saying such things? The young man is telling a U.S. Senator that he is guilty of murder, and that he is to be equated with the shooter who murdered 17 people. The crowd loved it. But that was nothing compared to how Ms. Loesch of the NRA was treated. One would have thought that she had committed the shootings herself. People shouted "Murderer!" at her. Ms. Loesch indicated that some people rushed the stage shouting, "Burn her!" Sounds like the Salem Witch Trials all over again.

When it comes to solutions to school shootings, here are the issues and the options:

- We could decide to disarm everyone who owns a gun. That would result in law-abiding citizens becoming unarmed and defenseless. It would also make them vulnerable to being gunned down by criminals who do not play by the rule of law, and will remain armed through subversive means.
- We could pass stricter gun legislation, making it more difficult for certain people to obtain guns, especially semi-automatic rifles. However, if someone wants a semi-automatic gun badly enough, they will find a way to obtain one -- either on the black market, or through theft, or by having someone else buy it for them.
- We could ban certain guns entirely, but then people would simply buy other guns that are not banned, and if someone wants to shoot up a school, they could use a shotgun or a handgun to do it.
- We could initiate stricter background checks with longer wait times, but that would only slow down a person from obtaining a gun, not prevent a person from obtaining one.
- We could allow a certain number of qualified teachers to carry a concealed firearm, so that if another school shooting occurs, those armed teachers could respond quickly and  hopefully return fire on the perpetrator. The Left [opposes that idea](#), primarily because it is the one idea that has the best chance of working. But if you allow a small cadre of qualified teachers to carry a concealed weapon, you change a soft (defenseless) target into a hard target, and since criminals would not know which teachers possessed firearms, the school would now be a dangerous gamble for the would-be mass shooter, and the incidents of mass shootings would plummet. Lives would be saved.

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

Check out [my website](#) for tools to help you with your career, your presentations, and other matters.

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* * * * *

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considered important until you got me thinking about it. Thanks for a great product!" -- R. Espana, Valencia, California

From Ara's Journal

The Many Faces of a Parent

It's fascinating to consider how we look at our parents. And how we, as parents, are looked at by our children. If we come across to our children as uptight, tense, or cranky, they imagine that's how we are all the time with everyone. If they see us as goofy, silly, or weird, that's how they imagine we are in all settings. And if we saw our parents as strict, inflexible, or unyielding, we imagine they are just as unreasonable everywhere they go, not realizing that their parental persona is limited to the domain of the home.

 Journal Writing

I wonder if the time ever comes that our children grow up enough to perceive the many personas of their parents in various contexts. I wonder if they should. I wonder if that would strengthen the relationship, or diminish it.

Food for thought.

The World of Words

Equanimity

Building Your Power of Expression



Dictionary

Equanimity, n.

Pronunciation: ,ekwə'nimədē

Meaning: We all face moments of stress, pressure, and tension. Some people fall apart at such times. Others face such difficult moments with calm, composure, and evenness of temper. When we see a person facing the trials of life in a composed manner, we could say that person is in possession of the quality of equanimity.

Usage:

- *She accepted both the good and the bad with equanimity.*
- *Gentleness, equanimity, and benevolence were native to him.*
- *His cheerful temper, his equanimity, his kindness to those whose views differed from his own, won him universal respect.*

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