

Uncommon Sense

Providing Clarity, Promoting Intelligence

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Dear David,

I hope this finds you well.

I am sitting in an internet cafe in Florence, Italy as I write this. The massive Duomo is just a few feet away. It is bizarre to be in a place where modern-day technology exists side-by-side with the wonders of the Renaissance. What would Michelangelo or Leonardo have thought?!

In this issue's **Self-Development** column, offer some observations about the important subject of friendship. I hope even one item found therein speaks to you and causes to you take action.

In the **Elephant in the Room** column, I try to make sense of a very peculiar phenomenon involving President Trump and his ongoing war with the media, particularly as it pertains to newspapers.

In the **From Ara's Journal** column, I offer a few modest observations about the Europe that I am currently traveling through.

And last, but certainly not least, the **World of Words** column will equip you with a very expressive gem of a word.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

10 Principles on Friendship

An important part of our ongoing development concerns the social/emotional dimension. And it is in this dimension that we come to the principle of friendship. Here are 10 thoughts about friendship that may prove instructive. See if any of this speaks to you.

1. The birth of a new friendship is somewhat mysterious. It involves being in the right place at the right time, and it involves both parties being ready and open for the possibility of a new kind of bonding. Both parties need to be open, desirous, and aware of the uniqueness of the other person. If only one of them has those qualities, only one of them is ready, and the friendship will not likely form. Thus, it pays to not be preoccupied, self-absorbed, or

aloof when encountering another human soul. That person just might possibly have become a close friend.

2. True friendships should feel natural. Like jigsaw puzzle pieces that were meant to fit together, real friendships are based on "fit," on commonality, on mutual interest. True friends should honestly like being around each other, and neither party, if the friendship is to last, should be perceived to be high-maintenance.
3. True friendship not only involves enjoying each others' company, but also demands a reasonable amount of mutual respect. If one takes the other party for granted, if the expressions of friendship become too one-way, the relationship is vulnerable to disintegration. Resentments can build. They won't retain the magic.
4. Some friendships are so strong, they were simply meant to be. These friendships can withstand periods of little or no communication that can sometimes last a year or two, and yet when communication is resumed, it is readily apparent that the magic is still there. Still, it is wise to revisit and reconnect with your friends as often as you both feel comfortable. Life is short, and therefore a life of fulfillment is punctuated by the regular reconnecting with a friend.
5. Friendship is good medicine; it is the antidote to the everyday sorrows of life, which all of us are subjected to.
6. When you take the time to acknowledge the birthday of your friend, you are doing something very important and very profound. You are telling that friend that he or she matters to you, that their very birth is a holiday worthy of robust celebration, that their very existence is a gift to you, and you wish to return that gift by reaching out to them in countless ways. It is a shame that more people fail to capitalize on this very obvious opportunity to enhance their friendships.
7. Friendship isn't all about tenderness and joy. Sometimes friendship requires candid confrontation, even bluntness. Just as we've all heard the slogan, "Friends don't let friends drive drunk," a true friend will not shy away from attempting to help their friend see the error of his or her ways when necessary. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once mused, "I do not wish to treat friendship daintily, but with roughest courage. When they are real, they are not glass threads or frost-work, but the solidest thing we know."
8. Certain friendships have a life-cycle that isn't meant to be forever. In such cases, there is wisdom in garnishing from the friendship all that is meant to be garnished, and there is even greater wisdom in recognizing when the friendship has run its course. Sometimes it will be you that determines the friendship must wind down, and other times it will be your friend that will make that determination. Either way, it is painful for both parties. But friendships cannot be forced. They demand the free and unfettered will of



both parties. When mutual commitments are absent, it is time to relinquish the friendship.

9. Every so often -- but not too often -- it would be appropriate to step back from the enjoyment you share with your friend, and let that friend know how much he or she has enriched your life, and how grateful you are for the gift of that friendship. These are singular moments of great consequence, and therefore they should be handled with care and used judiciously lest they lose their special quality. Such expressions, if proffered too often, compromise their impact and can make the other person feel awkward.
10. Finally, recognize that friendship takes work. Therefore, you should work at it. Ignoring our social/emotional life robs us of the opportunity to experience some of the most enjoyable moments we can possibly have. The making of pleasant memories is the consequent of friendship, and therefore it is ours to pursue.

The Elephant in the Room

Are Newspapers the Enemy of the People?

Roughly two weeks ago, on Thursday August 16th, the *Boston Globe* decided it would be a good idea to respond to President Trump's castigation of the mainstream media as Fake News. In fact, President Trump had gone so far as to describe the Press as "the enemy of the people." Marjorie Pritchard, the *Boston Globe's* deputy editorial page editor, came up with the idea that if she could persuade hundreds of editorial boards at newspapers all over the country to write their own denunciation of President Trump's rhetoric, she would have accomplished something significant. And if they did it in a coordinated effort, causing such widespread lambasting of the President to appear simultaneously on August 16th, she would have dealt a serious blow to Mr. Trump, so her thinking went.

And the outcome was that roughly 350 newspapers of various circulations did, indeed, produce editorials on August 16th that essentially cried out in unison: "We are virtuous truth-tellers, and you, Mr. Trump, are a knave!"

Somehow I doubt they have rattled the President even in the slightest.

Here's the issue: The press ruthlessly attacks President Trump on a daily basis. They do this in concert with the rest of the mainstream media (i.e., CNN, MSNBC, NPR, ABC, NBC, CBS, and almost every other form of media out there, virtually all of which is Leftist in its orientation.) And, for all intents and purposes, they never give him credit for anything he does, even when what he does is spectacularly good for the country. They simply find a way to spin it in an effort to make Mr. Trump look bad, or they ignore it altogether.



Trump vs Media

President Trump, on the other hand, is hopelessly obsessed with his own reputation, expecting glowing reviews of everything he does. And to top it off, unlike previous presidents, Mr. Trump is very vocal about his disdain for the press. He simply isn't intimidated by the press, does not bend to earn their favor (as he knows he will never receive it) and has a combative, confrontational persona.

It is that mix -- a Press that is united in its incessant castigation of the President, combined with a President who is just as relentless in his denunciations of the Press, that has led us to this point.

If I were to advise the President, I would remind him of what one of his presidential predecessors said in an earlier era. President Abraham Lincoln said, in effect, "When a man speaks ill of you, behave in such a way that no one will believe him." Thus, I would urge Mr. Trump to, for the most part, ignore the Press, and only call attention to them every once in a while, and only when they print the most ludicrous, and easily refutable, barbs.

On the other hand, there is zero question that the Press no longer does the job that has historically fallen in their domain -- to report the news. The Press has, without equivocation, become activist and militant in their posture, no longer simply reporting the news, but instead, working as an organ for the Democrat Party to spin the news in a way that casts the President in the most unfavorable light possible. Their hatred for Donald Trump (which is actually symptomatic of their hatred of all things Conservative, as well as stemming from their humiliating loss in the 2016 Presidential Election where they "knew" that Hilary Clinton would win) renders them incapable of reporting the news in a fair manner.

Sometimes the Press simply fails to report valid news stories because they run the risk of making the President look good, a thing that they cannot, under any circumstances, countenance. Other times the Press tells outright lies, hence the charges of "fake news." (One example of this, among a plethora of examples, would be the claim that candidate Donald Trump said that all Mexicans are rapists; or that President Donald Trump claimed that White Supremacists in Charlottesville were "good people." Both of these examples are deliberate distortions of what he said.)

While I certainly have not read the editorials that were published on August 16th, I did find some of the headlines noteworthy, and will comment on them now:

- *The Arizona Republic* gave us this headline: "**Journalists, don't let Trump's attacks on media keep us from doing our job.**" My response: First off, you journalists seem to think your job is to attack President Trump with everything you write about him, rather than report the news. And yet you have the audacity to pout when the President punches back? Further, how is the President's calling you out somehow preventing you from continuing to replace real news with relentless attacks on the President? You mean to say that President Trump calls reporters "the enemy of the people," and you are fearful that all of a sudden, those same reporters will relinquish their agenda and start singing a different tune?

- *The San Diego Union-Tribune* intones, "**How we restore faith in journalism.**" I can tell you how to do that: leave your anti-Trump bias at home, and simply report the news. Doing that will restore the people's faith in journalism. And boy, do you folks need it restored!
- *The Denver Post* defended itself with this gem of a headline: "**We are simply standing up for what we believe in as journalists.**" I know. You believe in Leftism and you believe in bashing the President at every opportunity. But your personal beliefs are not to enter into the sphere of what you publish, unless you are writing an Opinion piece or an Editorial. Serious journalism is about reporting the news, not trying to indoctrinate the body politic with what you believe in.
- *The Journal Gazette*, which is an Indiana publication, worded their headline as follows: "**Watchdogs -- not attack dogs**" to which I respond: You are beginning to believe your own lies. And you have it precisely backwards: you are, in fact, attack dogs that are masquerading as watchdogs.
- *The Cape Cod Chronicle* gives us this zinger: "**Tarring one journalist or media outlet as an 'enemy of the people' tars us all, because we are all trying to do the same thing: report the facts.**" I have a question for the editor who wrote that delusional bit of rhetoric: If one journalist or media outlet wrote something against the President of the United States that was demonstrably false, would you still stand in solidarity with that journalist or media outlet on the grounds that you are all trying to do the same thing? If so, then you are an enemy of the people because you are willing to lie and call those lies "facts," because your agenda is of greater consequence to you than truth. If not, then your entire point is based on a false premise.
- *The Seward County Independent* out of Nebraska writes "**Trump's attacks on media unfair.**" But, of course, media attacks on Trump are supposedly fair, even when they are unfair, untrue, or unkind.
- *The Bismarck Tribune* declares, "**We aren't the 'enemy' when covering news.**" True enough. But you are the enemy when you provide biased, twisted, inaccurate, and distorted reporting laced with partisanship.
- *The Athens News* out of Ohio writes, "**In attacking journalists, Trump damages all Americans.**" Nothing like a bit of hyperbole to sell newspapers and justify one's bitter feelings. The fact is, Trump is attacking journalists who lie and distort the truth. And that in no way damages all Americans. It damages all dishonest reporters, and it should.
- *The Dallas Morning News* penned this headline: "**We the people hold our elected officials accountable**" to which I ask, And who holds you journalists accountable? Hmm?

The newspapers that participated in such a silly display of journalistic groupthink did nothing to enhance their credibility. All they did is participate in a self-congratulatory exercise in self-justification of substituting bias for real news reporting.

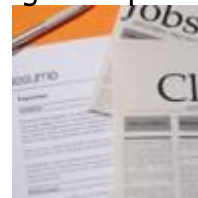
And that, my friends, is the latest elephant in the room.

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"I purchased Norwood's résumé guide last month and it's amazing! He goes through the processes step-by-step and you end up with not only a résumé that will get you that interview, but the skills necessary to be confident so you succeed in your interviews resulting in you receiving job offers (yes, offers)." -- D Smith, Santa Clarita, California

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format needed to attract an employer. Furthermore, your booklet helped me recognize certain skills and work experience that I would have never considered important until you got me thinking about it. Thanks for a great product!" -- R. Espana, Valencia, California

From Ara's Journal

Europe

I write this while journeying through Europe. My first visit here took place when I was about 7 years of age. I also spent the better part of a year in Florence when I was about 12, and that was followed by a bold adventure where I went to Scandinavia, alone, when I was merely 15. I have been here so many times, both for business and for recreation, that I've lost count. If I am not mistaken, I have set foot on the soil of almost every European country, the lone exceptions being Scotland, Albania, and Finland.



Europe is always fascinating on so many levels. The architecture, the monuments, the rivers, the bridges, the people, the landmarks, the history, the diversity of cuisine, all of these things and more beckons me to return. And over time, my exposure to Europe has enabled me to possess some familiarity with the "pulse" of the various countries. To my senses, Italy is so very different in temperament than, say, France; it is as if the Italians have a completely distinct "mind" than what one would encounter with a Frenchman. Likewise, Germany is so distinct from Great Britain. Andorra is so distinct from Poland, which, in turn, is so unmistakably different from Norway.

One thing I've noticed on this visit is that people seem to be very fond of cigarettes. I am now persuaded that it is the rare European adult who does not smoke. This stands in such stark contrast to the United States, where cigarettes have become stigmatized in many circles.

Another thing I noticed: I did not see a lot of people smiling. That surprised me. People walking alone on the streets of Rome, or Barcelona, or Naples, or Nice seem to rarely smile. I'm not sure if I should read too much into that.

An Italian driver my party had hired, a woman by the name of Flavia, got pulled over by the police outside of Rome. She actually had to follow the police to the police station parking lot to receive her citation. Once there, Flavia bounded out of the vehicle and began a classic Italian argument with the flair that only Italians can produce. I was surprised the two policemen did not order her back into her vehicle (as would have certainly been the case with U.S. law enforcement.) Instead, they listened to her and tried, in vain, to calm her down. She was having none of it, and continued, with arms flailing, to give the two officers a piece of her mind. I

was worried they would reward her with pepper spray and handcuffs. They instead rewarded her with a citation.

Europeans seem, generally, to be a rather unassuming and welcoming people. When our drivers would drop us off in a certain part of a given town, they would wander over to a nearby cafe and plop down in a chair near some other Europeans of that town, and just enjoy an espresso and conversation with them. They didn't know each other personally. But they were welcoming and accommodating to a fellow countryman. It didn't appear awkward or intrusive, from what I observed. I wish it was more like that in our country.

A lot of people I encountered knew my language, and many people were willing to help with directions, the locations of bus stops, and recommendations for good restaurants. And thanks to the Google Translate app, I was able to get my point across in their language when they did not know mine.

I mentioned spending a year in Florence. This was 42 years ago. I remember it vividly. Being back in Florence gave me a chance to revisit the home I lived in, the places I frequented, the streets I traversed. They were all still there, as if frozen in time. And it was a heartwarming thing to revisit my past, my history, an earlier stage in my life.

Such memories are treasures, for they shine a light on the path I have trod, and they remind me that my life has been eventful, consequential, and filled with warm memories.



The Florence home where I lived 42 years ago.

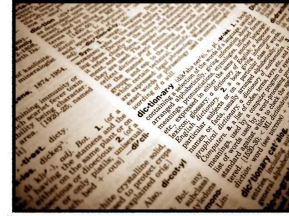
The World of Words

Contagion

Building Your Power of Expression

Contagion, n.

Pronunciation: kəntājən



Meaning: Although the origins of this word referred to the transfer of disease from person to person, I prefer the figurative usage of this word, and use it in the sense of the spreading of a harmful idea or a pernicious practice.

Usage:

- *White Supremacy is just as much a societal contagion as is the racism that comes from some segments of the Black Lives Matter movement.*
- *It is becoming harder and harder to avoid the conclusion that Leftism is a contagion of profound consequence.*
- *The contagion of conceit seems to plague a large segment of the graduates of that particular university.*

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