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Wonderful to have your attention for another dose of *Uncommon Sense*.

Ever wonder what makes for a great leader? I've given this question a lot of thought. I share my views succinctly in the **Self-Development** column.

Although you may not be aware of it, America itself is under attack from within. I describe one particular insidious trend taking place in the **Elephant in the Room** column.

Failure is something we all face, even though we don't like to admit it. I share some thoughts on dealing with failure, including an example of a very recent personal failure, in the **From Ara's Journal** column.

The ability to express oneself elegantly is a passion of mine. And **The World of Words** column serves up a wonderful smorgasbord of words for your oral pallet on a regular basis. This issue provides a particularly wonderful delicacy in that regard.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

The 7 Deadly Sins of Leadership

As important as management is, leadership is every bit as important. Management is critical because it finds a way to get things done. Leadership is critical because it charts the decided-upon course and articulates a vision. There is plenty of content out there about management, and even more about leadership. Let me cut through the fog and provide a sense of the essence of what constitutes smart and effective leadership. I use a negative construct called **The 7 Deadly Sins of Leadership**. Avoid these sins – in other words, do their opposite – and you will very likely be an effective leader.

The First Deadly Sin: A

Failure to Think. The vast majority of people do not take the time to tap into their God-given gray matter and utilize the gifts their brains are capable of churning out. Thinking is a discrete process, just as physical exercise is, and just as eating a meal is. It is something one



does. Great leaders actually take the time to stop what it is they are doing and engage in deliberate thinking. They slow down and go deep inside and allow themselves to reflect, to ponder, to ruminate. What do they think about? Direction. Goals. Vision. Outcomes. Aspirations. Opportunities. Achievements.

The Second Deadly Sin: A Failure to Question. Far too many of us are sheep. We are told to wear a mask, and we obey, placidly, without further thought. (After all, the authorities said so, therefore it must be the right thing to do.) We often operate on automatic pilot, doing tasks like an automaton, going through the motions, not turning to the single most potent intellectual tool in our toolkit – questions. Granted, not all questions are equal (and some questions are actually pernicious, while other questions are not really questions at all, but statements masquerading as questions.) Leaders, however, use the power of thinking as a springboard to the conceiving of relevant questions, important questions, severe questions, critical questions, and even questions that result in breakthroughs.

The Third Deadly Sin: A Failure to Craft a Compelling Vision. A vision is a desired future state. Think of it as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, or as a grand objective worthy of your greatest effort. Putting a man on the moon and bringing him back safely to earth is an example of a daunting vision articulated by a former U.S. President in the early '60s. That vision galvanized an industry, and to a large extent, a nation. Leaders use their thought process and their ability to formulate pertinent questions to enable them to craft a vision that awakens and arouses followers to sign on and work to bring that vision to fruition.

The Fourth Deadly Sin: A Failure to Initiate Change. Leaders are change-agents. They reject the status quo. They forge new pathways. This is an outgrowth of their having crafted a compelling vision. Once the vision is clearly defined leaders must then initiate the necessary changes to bring about that vision. Therefore, time-honored processes sometimes have to be jettisoned in favor of new approaches that are conducive to that new vision and direction.

The Fifth Deadly Sin: A Failure to Maintain Staying-Power. Great leaders understand instinctively that efforts to derail their initiatives will arise. The inevitability is that critics will gather and will seek to sabotage both the leader and his/her vision. Many otherwise promising leaders allowed themselves to be derailed by the nay-sayers and the many distractions that arose to thwart their best efforts. But truly great leaders have an indomitable spirit that prevents them from being subverted. Such leaders are thick-skinned and tough as nails and they refuse to allow obstacles to divert their energies away from their objectives.

The Sixth Deadly Sin: A Failure to Exhibit Integrity. Integrity is one of those elusive characteristics that befuddles many a leader. Integrity is very difficult to maintain on a consistent basis. It demands much from us in the way of discipline and self-awareness. When one has integrity, one has congruence between what they *say* and what they *are*. Maintaining such congruence consistently is very difficult. But because great leaders are authentic, they find a way to demonstrate integrity.

The Seventh Deadly Sin: A Failure to Leave a Legacy. Great leaders understand that they may not outlive their vision or their objectives. Therefore, great leaders take the time to build a cadre of up-and-coming leaders to continue the work after the leader fades from the scene. They mentor a rising generation of leaders to continue in their stead. And it is often the next-generation leader that makes the ultimate difference between success and failure. Thus, Moses had Joshua to lead the Hebrew people into the Promised Land. And Joseph Smith had Brigham Young to lead the Latter-day Saints into their Promised Land in the Rocky Mountains of Utah. Steve Jobs had Tim Cook groomed to lead Apple after his untimely death. And FDR had Harry Truman finish the work of bringing victory to the Allied Forces as World War II came to an end.

Keep these 7 Deadly Sins in mind as you assume the role of a leader. Avoiding them will open paths for you and bring you much success.

The Elephant in the Room

A Dagger To The Heart of America

Astute observers of the American scene know that the contagion of the soul known as Leftism has seeped into many quarters (perhaps most quarters) of American life. Big business is thoroughly Leftist. The mainstream media is drowning in Leftism. The social media giants (Twitter, Facebook, Google, YouTube, etc.,) are evangelistic in their Leftism. Even the United States Armed Forces are starting to choke on Leftist dogma (which does not bode well for the future defense of our country).



But there is one arena in our western society that is particularly militant in their embrace of Leftism – high school and colleges. And of the two, the high schools are more troubling because the maturity level of the students in high schools, ages 14 through 18, is such that they have unformed minds. These minds are seen as easy targets by radicalized Leftist activists who pose as teachers but who are actually there to brainwash the students to become committed Leftists, not educated citizens.

Five recent cases come to mind, but there are probably hundreds if not thousands of such cases.

Kristin Pitzen taught at a high school in Orange County, located adjacent to Los Angeles County. She recently boasted online of removing the American flag from her classroom. The reason she removed it was because, in her own words, it made her [feel "uncomfortable."](#) Yet, because she is a lesbian, she had no problem putting the Gay Pride flag up in her classroom since she is more at home with that. And she encouraged her students to face that flag when they recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Thus, she is not really a teacher so much as she is a propagandist for the LGBTQIA+ community. She gets paid tax-payor dollars to brainwash our children.

Another California high school teacher, this one up in the Sacramento area, who goes by the name of **Gabriel Gipe**, is so far Left that he is Pro-Antifa (meaning Pro-Violence and Pro-Anarchy). Further, he is Pro-Communist and considers the greatest mass murderer in all of recorded history (Mao Zedong) to be his hero. He even decorates his classroom with

posters of Mao. Mr. Gipe [actually admitted](#) what his nefarious motives consist of, claiming "I have 180 days to turn [my students] into revolutionaries." Again, he is not there to educate his students; he admits what we all suspected: he is there to brainwash them into anti-American radicals like himself.

This next example involves a Junior High School teacher named **John M.**

Wallis. Although he was hired to teach theatre, he somehow came to the conclusion that the theatre curriculum should include content around human sexuality and also around Mr. Wallis' [own personal sexual proclivities](#). Mr. Wallis is gay. And like Ms. Kristin Pitzen, he displayed a Gay Pride flag in his classroom, but no mention of an American flag. So why would a theatre instructor come to believe that the academic topic of theatre should be about his own gay exploits, let alone about gay sex in the first place? Answer: Mr. Wallis is not actually a teacher. He is an LGBTQIA+ activist who is there to hoodwink students into seeing the supposed glories of gay sex while steering them away from venerating the country that gives him a chance to build a career.

Alexander Hamilton High School, located in Los Angeles, had at least one classroom where history was supposedly taught contain the following flags: a Palestinian flag, a Transgender flag, a Black Lives Matter flag, a Gay Pride flag, but no mention of an American flag. The flags were displayed by a **teacher who remains unnamed**, presumably because the school district doesn't want to hurt that teacher's feelings. In other words, they wish to protect the teacher. In other words, on some level, they support the teacher. In addition to the flags, this unnamed teacher had displayed various posters, one of which read "F*ck Amerikkka" (note the "KKK" reference), and another which read "F*ck the Police." Gabriel Gipe would have been proud. Clearly this teacher (or perhaps teachers) who was responsible for such [blatant propaganda](#) is not there to teach history, but to push an agenda that rages against the United States of America. Without question, this teacher loathes America. As of this writing, we do not know if school officials plan to reprimand the teacher(s) involved or to give the teacher a special award for bravery. But, thankfully, we do know they claim they intend to remove the posters.

Finally, we come to **Gail Grobey** who teaches English at a high school in the Portland, Oregon area. Ms. Grobey believes the American flag represents "violence and menace and intolerance." Thus, being the paragon of tolerance that she is, she summarily removed the American flag from her classroom and she defies school district authorities to do anything about it: "I'll say this personally: I've spent 23 years in this district and you can't tell me what to do." Right. At 23 years, she has earned the right to call the shots. She can [do whatever she wants](#), just ask her. Had she only been in the district for, say, 21 years, she would have no recourse. But 23 years. . . . She went on to say something very revealing: "I know my kids, and I know what's best for them." (Hating America is what is best for them, according to Ms. Grobey.) She went on: "I know what to do to help them feel comfortable." So she imagines it is her job, not to actually teach them English, but to help them feel comfortable. That represents the Leftist world-view on teaching.

Again, these five episodes are not unique. They are commonplace in today's anti-American climate sponsored by the Left.

Before I conclude, allow me to note that the links I have provided for all five of these stories came from Fox News. That fact will undoubtedly bother some readers. What won't bother those readers is that the mainstream media will not cover such stories as a general rule. I leave it to the reader to ponder the significance of that.

Finally, what should be done? Here are some suggestions:

- Parents need to remain informed on what is happening in the classroom and if they see things taking place that bother them, they need to speak up firmly and loudly to school administrators.

- If schools take no action against Leftist radicals who clearly are there to brainwash their students to hate America, parents need to pull their kids from the school immediately and home school them if possible, or find a better school.
- Patriotic American citizens need to get on school boards so they have power to put an abrupt stop to the anarchy and madness that is sweeping through our schools.
- Patriotic Americans need to become teachers to crowd out the radicals who would be more than happy to take their places in the classroom. The pay may not be great but preventing the rising generation to grow up hating Capitalism, Patriotism, Entrepreneurship, Liberty, God, America, and you (the parents), would be well worth it.

* * * * *

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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From Ara's Journal

Dealing With the Bitterness of Failure

All of us fail. Some of our failures are small and inconsequential. Others can sometimes be cataclysmic. Usually, they are somewhere in between.

Many of our failures are due to our own bad choices. Some of our failures come about by pure chance, or perhaps the bad choices of other people, and we are not culpable in the least.



But it is how we respond to failure that makes all the difference. If we study our failures and try to understand the various factors that brought them about, we can often avert failure in the future.

Here is a recent failure of mine that really bugs me.

I am currently following a very consistent weightlifting program. Once Golds Gym reopened about 8 months ago, I returned to resume my workouts, confident that I would not be able to bench press anything close to the 165 pounds I had been working out with when the gym had closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. I actually surprised myself when I discovered I was able to handle 150 pounds; I had assumed I would have struggled with 135 pounds.

I concocted a workout plan. I would start out by only doing 3 reps at 150 pounds. At the first workout, I would only do 3 sets of 3 reps. Then at the next workout I would push it to 4 sets of 3 reps, then 5 sets of 3 reps at the third workout. After that I would commit to pumping out 4 reps for the next 3 workouts, going with 3 sets, then 4 sets, and then 5 sets. If I succeeded, I would commit to doing 5 reps at the next 3 workouts, again, repeating the pattern of 3 sets, 4 sets, and 5 sets. My standard was such that once I managed to churn out 5 sets of 5 reps at 150 pounds, I would graduate to an Olympic barbell of 155 pounds, and I would repeat the process – starting at 3 sets of 3 and, over the course of 9 workouts (which would take me about 4 weeks) to 5 sets of 5 before graduating to 160 pounds.

Today I am workout out with 185 pounds. At age 63, I marvel that I am able to perform at this level, especially given that I have a wrist that suffers from very painful tendonitis. Last week on Tuesday, I managed to do 4 sets of 4 reps at 185 pounds. I arrived at the gym this past Saturday with the expectation that I would pull off 5 sets of 4 reps at 185. But when I put up my first rep, I barely succeeded. I knew right away that I could not succeed in pushing up even one more rep. Since bench press can be dangerous if you don't have a spotter, that was it for me. I did 1 set of 1 rep, a far cry from the goal of 5 sets of 4 reps.

Utter, total failure!

I was very disappointed. But I had to look hard at the possible causes. And I realized that I had gone to bed the night before very late, and had gotten up that next morning (the day of the failed workout) very early. So I was sleep deprived. Also, I took a late afternoon nap that lasted only 30 minutes before I was awoken abruptly by my alarm clock to head to the gym before it closed. I felt groggy and out of it. I was yawning repeatedly the entire time I was at the gym. I suspect I had no business being at the gym in that condition. I suspect I had abused myself, sleep-wise, and simply could not perform.

Thus, I am hopeful that when I return to the gym tomorrow, well-rested, I will get back on track.

I am well aware that the nature of the failure I have described is not, in the grand scheme of things, that big of a deal. Failing at one's job, or failing in a relationship, or failing to live with integrity are all far more significant.

But when we do fail, it is imperative that we face up to it, that we not bury our head in the sand, and that we fully acknowledge where and how we contributed to such a failure. Only then are we in a position to rectify the problem.

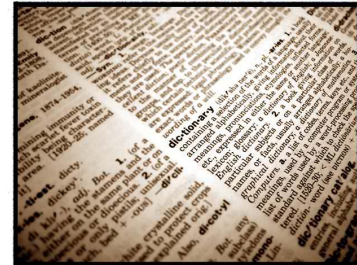
The World of Words

Accoutrements

Building Your Power of Expression

Accoutrements, n.

Pronunciation: əkoo'dərmənts, əkootrəmənts



Meaning: Additional items of dress or equipment, or other items carried or worn by a person or used for a particular activity.

Usage:

- *The accoutrements of the temple worshipper in ancient Israel included an apron, a breastplate, and a special robe adorned with symbols.*
 - *Batman wore a utility belt holding his "batarang" and a dizzying array of accoutrements.*
 - *Today's eye surgeon utilizes a wide array of medical instruments and other accoutrements, including an Ophthalmoscope, a Slit Lamp, and a Phoropter.*
-

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