

# Uncommon Sense

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Happy New Year!

We are ten days into 2022 and goal setting is on my mind. Check out the ***Self-Development*** column to get an ear-full.

Our nation is in trouble and ***The Elephant in the Room*** column explains it a bit. There is plenty of blame to go around, and some of that blame may surprise you.

John Sorenson died last month. Most of you won't know who he was, but I am one of the lucky ones who knew him well. I memorialize him in the ***From Ara's Journal*** column.

English remains a very important language but also a very elegant language. Build your own elegant command of English by reading carefully ***The World of Words*** column.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



## **Self-Development**

### The 4 Phases of Goal-Setting, Part 1

The human species tends to look at a new year as a restart – another chance to strive for greatness. The idea of a “New Year’s Resolution” comes from the notion of people picking themselves up from off the ground after a brutal year, dusting themselves off, and resolving again to try to make something of themselves.

If you look at 2022 as a type of reset, what will you commit to? Where will you take your life? What will you strive for?

Having studied goal-setting for many years, and having practiced the strategies that lead to goal-achievement, I’ve had my share of successes and failures. But I am now going to describe to you my very best thinking about goal-setting to achieve true greatness.

## Phase I – Focus

First and foremost, if you are going to set a significant goal – let's call it a "Grand Goal," – that you expect to accomplish in 2022, discipline yourself to focus on only one major goal (or two at the most).

Admittedly, this is tough medicine to swallow, even for me. Especially for me. A mentor once admonished me to be less of a "shotgun" and more of a "rifle." His message was: "Don't try to take on so many disparate projects and undertakings at once. Focus!" He understood my nature is to embrace variety. He understood I have an insatiable urge to try my hand at many things at once. But he was right: I need to focus.



And so do you. If you embrace a single Grand Goal that is massively important, and that is hugely consequential, the odds are in your favor that such singular focus will bear fruit.

But here's the thing to remember: you should select as your Grand Goal something that is not already a part of your routine. It should be something that won't happen on its own without you giving it special effort. In other words, if you are already going to the gym and lifting weights or doing cardio and have been doing so for some time, I would urge you not to set as your Grand Goal something involving weightlifting or fitness – because you are already working on that and you will undoubtedly make progress in that dimension of your life anyway.

I am confident, however, there is something in your life that is gnawing at you: either a problem to solve or an opportunity to seize. Therefore, ponder this important question: ***What is one thing that you could accomplish this year that, once accomplished, would have a profoundly positive impact on the quality of your life?***

Let me nudge your thinking just a bit.

Is it health-related? Could it involve weight-loss? Strength? The food you consume? Your own flexibility or lack thereof? The quality of your sleep? Your overall fitness from a cardio-vascular perspective?

Could it involve financial wealth, as in your own economic stability? Perhaps involving financial reserves? Or credit card debt reduction? Or your own credit score? Or how much income you currently generate? Or something involving investments? Or your retirement?

Might it fall in the realm of relationships somehow? Or perhaps tied to your career in some way? Could it be related to the spiritual? Or the intellectual?

Whatever the one Grand Goal you select, it should be stated in concrete, measurable terms. My colleagues at Franklin Covey suggest that it be stated in the following construct: "From X to Y By When" where X is the starting line, Y is the finish line, and By When is the deadline. To make it crystal clear, here are some examples of this construct:

- From 212 pounds to 175 pounds by December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- From bench press workouts at 135 pounds to 185 pounds by October 1<sup>st</sup>.
- From getting less than 6 hours of sleep most nights to getting a minimum of 8 hours of sleep at least 6 nights each week by December 1<sup>st</sup>.
- From running one mile in over 12 minutes to running 1 mile under 8 minutes by September 30<sup>th</sup>.

- From 2 days worth of cash reserves in my savings account to 3 months worth of cash reserves in my savings account by December 15<sup>th</sup>.
- From a credit card balance of \$21,091 to a credit card balance of zero by December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- From having no passages of The Gospel of St. John memorized to having 12 passages of The Gospel of St. John memorized by December 25<sup>th</sup>.
- From having zero podcasts produced to having 50 podcasts produced by December 31<sup>st</sup>.

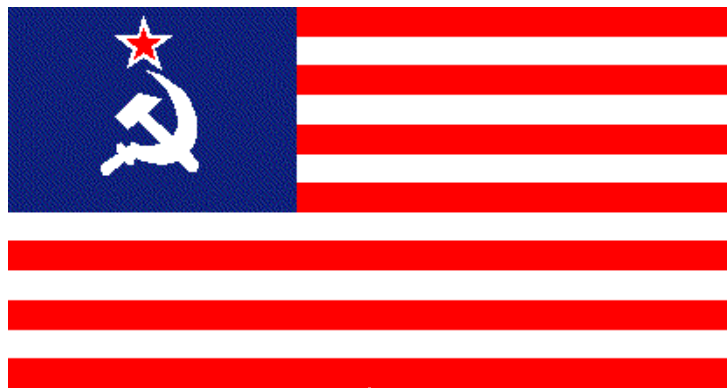
Whatever your Grand Goal consists of, if you can put it in those concrete terms, you will have a level of focus.

But having that focus is just the beginning. To really drive your goals to completion, you will have to add an element of leverage to the equation, a topic we will explore in the next issue of *Uncommon Sense*. In the meantime, I urge you to give careful consideration to what you might set as your Grand Goal for 2022. In a few weeks from now I will walk you through the important next step of leverage. Stay tuned.

## The Elephant in the Room *Systemically Racist or Systemically Leftist?*

*"A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself from within."*

Will Durant



Labels are interesting

things. We use labels as a sort of short-hand to quickly and efficiently categorize things and to help us make sense of the world around us. Mislabeling something can often lead to disastrous consequences. To take one micro-issue as an illustration, in the world of pharmacology, mislabeling a medication can bring great harm, even death.

In terms of Western Civilization, which is a macro-issue, there are labels that can be employed to characterize the great battles that have taken place and that are now taking place between opposing ideologies. This is nothing new. Clashes between world-views are as old as time, with various schisms vying for dominance.

The Founding Fathers of the United States had their own world-view which they formulated and shaped during the latter-half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. These Founders represented a Who's Who of sorts – a Dream Team of vision and virtue – consisting of quite a few personalities, most notably Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton. It's hard to imagine a comparable collection of brilliance, wisdom, and capability in any other walk of life. These Six Great Men pooled their collective brilliance to produce a new nation-state that has become a beacon of hope and a bastion of liberty and self-governance, not to mention a land of opportunity that has produced the most powerful and the most wealthy nation the world has ever known. America is a great country comprised, generally, of good people.

However, America is now under attack from within. The contagion that is systematically unraveling the very foundations of America, and ripping it from its moorings, has a

label. Actually, it has many labels. Some would dub this contagion Secular Humanism. Others, mainly its own proponents, would call it Progressivism, because they truly fancy themselves as forward-thinking progressives. And although there are various other labels they go by, (the "woke," for example, because, in spite of their sloppy use of English with that term, they imagine they are enlightened in some way), I prefer the labels Left, Leftists, and Leftism.

I should also point out that this contagion I am calling Leftism is like a virus or a wildfire in that it appears to be both uncontained and uncontainable. Leftism has seeped into just about every corner of Western Society – for instance, the mainstream media (including the Press and most of cable news); our education system (including universities, colleges, high schools, and elementary schools); our entertainment centers (Hollywood is almost exclusively Left-wing, and militantly so); sports (ESPN is more concerned with being politically correct than being focused on sports for the enjoyment of sports); big business; the legal profession; many churches; Big Tech (Twitter, Google, Facebook, and other similar entities are thoroughly Leftist to the point that they can effectively silence conservative thought entirely and throw elections in their favor effectively); the Armed Forces; and politics (the Democrat Party, once a respectable and reasonable party, has essentially been commandeered by Leftism in a hostile takeover); and the list goes on.

What happens to a great nation when its media, educators, lawyers, business leaders, clergy, military, social media influencers, sports entities, late night talk show hosts, and one of its two major political parties abandon their core values and embrace new values that are antithetical to their original mission? The host nation essentially is taken over by a parasite that devours and consumes the host, eventually making it unrecognizable before total collapse, anarchy, and ruin take hold, bringing misery to untold millions.

The Left, which takes great pleasure in projecting their own foul stench onto their opponents, loves to repeat the mindless mantra that America is systemically racist, a colossal irony given that the vast majority of racism in America today (as well as yesterday) comes from the Left. But a more accurate way of describing America as it is at the present time would not be to say it is systemically racist. It would be to say it is systemically Leftist.

And, ironically, we can place much of the blame for that truism at the feet of the Right, for it is the Right that has turned a blind eye to the insidious nature of the Left. The Right has either been profoundly weak and impotent in countering Leftist incursions into the body politic, or the Right has been abysmally naive in their collective stupor in failing to understand what is happening before their very eyes. (Please note: there are exceptions, as there are bold and brave men and women that are standing up to the Left and confronting them effectively, including people like Mollie Hemingway, Dennis Prager, Victor Davis Hanson, Tucker Carlson, Larry Arn, Heather Higgins, Newt Gingrich, Ann Coulter, Lisa Boothe, Charlie Kirk, and Kimberly Strassel, to name a few.) But such warriors often do little more than shine a light on what his happening and offering some basic descriptions of the madness being employed by the Left. Very few people are actively confronting the Left directly, or intellectually "carpet bombing" their publications, and decisively confronting and humiliating Leftist perpetrators.

Still, elections have consequences, and therefore We The People who vote the way we do also have a large share of the blame for the dangers that are looming ahead. In the next issue of *Uncommon Sense*, I will be cataloging a number of telling examples of how the votes cast by We The People are often the source of our own undoing. Stay tuned.

\* \* \* \* \*

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



## Shameless Plug

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Mike Sears is a man I've known personally for the past 40-years. He is indispensable in terms of the value he brings to me in the areas of personal finance, wealth building, and retirement planning. As a Registered Investment Advisor, I know of almost no one with his skills, and I categorically know of no one with his integrity.

Also, most people who send out publications such as *Uncommon Sense* only promote other people's products or services when

there is something in it for them. There's usually some sort of agreement between the two parties (an affiliate arrangement, or a partnership of some kind) and money changes hands for such promotion. I certify that I have absolutely no financial interest in Mike's business (other than that I am a proud client of his) and I receive nothing back for promoting his 30-minute broadcasts that come out each Thursday. In fact, he doesn't even know I am doing this.

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## From Ara's Journal

### In Memoriam: John Sorenson (1924-2021)

I became aware of John Sorenson when I was an undergraduate student at Brigham Young University in 1984. I didn't know him, really, and I had never taken any classes from him; after all, he taught Anthropology, a field I knew absolutely nothing about. But over time, I gradually came to understand that John Sorenson was one of the most erudite, learned, and gifted scholars and thought-leaders in the Mormon intellectual community. He ended up being a mentor to me, and a quasi-father figure. He died last month at the age of 97.



I was a regular guest in his home, whenever I made a trip to Utah – with one regrettable exception: my most recent trip to Utah was last year in June. John was not doing well at all due to the ravages of age, although his mind was still as sharp as it ever was. Even so, circumstances and delayed communications resulted in a last-minute invitation to come by for a visit, yet I was already in the Salt Lake Airport about to board a plane for my return flight home. That remains a sorrowful missed opportunity for me.

I was often surprised by John's graciousness in sending me a note from time to time, or forwarding something to me he thought I might appreciate. I well remember the occasion of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party which took place in April 2014. I was lucky enough to be invited, and I think I traveled the farthest to be there, as everyone else outside of his immediate family were local members of the Mormon scholarly community. It was a memorable event, with luminaries such as Jack Welch, Richard Lloyd Anderson, Louis Midgley, John Gee, Matthew Roper, and others in attendance. But being able to shake hands with John Sorenson was a singular honor.

I have one particular memory that stands out to me involving John. About two decades ago I brought my then 15-year-old son with me to John's home in Provo. My son, who was going through a very difficult time in his life, followed me, reluctantly, into John's home, not knowing what to expect. John quickly assessed the situation and understood instinctively that the conversation should be about the power of the Book of Mormon as a redemptive work, but also about the many impressive evidences that point to the Book of Mormon as an authentic, ancient document. While John was leading this discussion, his wife, Kathryn, observed the 3 of us in the living room and assumed my son must be bored out of his mind (which was not the case). She asked my son if he would like to come into the family room and watch television instead. John immediately spoke up: "Don't rescue him, sweetheart." She backed off. And thank God she did, because my son, now in his mid-30s, still remembers that meeting with John, and still treasures it.

John taught me the importance of rigorous thinking, and the limitations of our own intellectual capacities. He taught me the need for depth and originality, but also the necessity of humility and the tentative and shifting sands of scholarship. John was a man of towering intellect and disciplined, careful thought. He didn't care what people thought of him or his work, but he cared very much about the quality of his work. He was very careful about never disparaging the leaders of the Church, some of whom disapproved of his limited geography model of the Book of Mormon. The only thing I got him to say about that was, "Well, there were some of the General Authorities who, for whatever reason, could not countenance my understanding of the limited nature of Book of Mormon geography. But I outlived them."

I will never forget John Sorenson for his bringing me into his circle, and tutoring me in the ways of scholarship. And while I will never measure up to his standards, he undoubtedly molded me into someone I never could have been otherwise. He will be deeply missed, but always remembered with fondness and profound gratitude.

Bless you, John Sorenson, until we meet again. . .

## The World of Words

### Imbued

#### Building Your Power of Expression

**Imbued**, v.

**Pronunciation:**    imbyoō d



**Meaning:** To imbue something or someone is to infuse or permeate the thing (or person) with any number of possibilities: power, prestige, inspiration, judgment -- the list is endless.

**Usage:**

- *The entire performance was imbued with majestic flair.*
- *Once I received that second promotion, I truly felt imbued with a new sense of self-respect and confidence.*
- *Imbued with new-found valor, he rode into town on the requisite white horse, his armor glimmering in the sunlight.*

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