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Happy Halloween. And happy birthday to my younger brother, Mike!

We are surrounded by problems. But the **Self-Development** column will reveal to you something important that we often overlook due to the distractions problems create. We overlook this thing at our peril.

In **The Elephant in the Room** column, we take a look at a recent debate between two candidates for the U.S. Senate and some very concerning matters that should have your attention.

The **From Ara's Journal** column discloses a recent harrowing experience that could have meant the difference between life and death -- and the fact that how one communicates often trumps even things like common sense, life, and, . . . death.

And, as usual, **The World of Words** column brings you yet another great word to add to your evolving vocabulary. I hope you use it.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



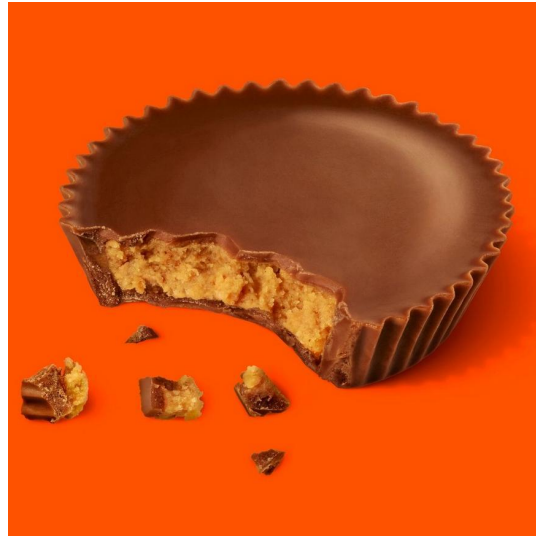
Self-Development

Problems vs. Opportunities

Problems are all around us. So are opportunities.

We tend to see the problems. We tend not to see the opportunities.

A problem is the presence of something undesirable. An opportunity is the absence of something desirable.



Peter Drucker, the great management theorist (and my mentor during my graduate school days) used to counsel us to starve problems and feed opportunities. Allow me to explain the how and the why.

There is no shortage of problems. We seem to encounter them every day. They demand our attention and we accommodate their demands by focusing on them. But when we do so, we are playing defense.

What do I mean?

Think of a football team. The defense has a big problem in front of them. That problem is called the offense. The offense is going to try to run plays that result in a touchdown and a win for the offense (and a loss for the defense). The offense knows what it is going to do, but the defense does not; the defense has to react to what the offense does. The defense is often a few steps behind. The offense initiates, and the defense reacts.

When problems plague us, we react. We have to take the time to put out the fire, a fire that is preventing us from initiating, from being proactive, from producing substantive results. We are playing defense.

But playing offense takes guts and discipline and resolve. Playing offense means carving out time to initiate. To think and then act. To launch something meaningful. To innovate. To invent. To create. To generate. To bring about.

Mini-Case Study: at the Reese's factory in Hershey, Pennsylvania, while many employees were dealing with problems (i.e., working on reducing waste, or slowing employee turnover, or fixing

machinery, or trying not to lose market share to competitors like Nestle and Mars), some individuals decided to pursue opportunities. They begin to re-imagine their flagship product, the Peanut Butter Cup. They reflected on its size and shape. They looked at the ribbed edges. They re-examined its ingredients. And they began to ask some unusual questions.

Milk chocolate. . . Hmm. . . What other types of chocolate could we use? Dark chocolate? White chocolate? Why not?

What if we made the size larger? Or smaller?

What if we mirrored some other candy, such as the very popular M&Ms?

What if we were to transform the peanut butter cup into a more traditional candy bar appearance?

Could we partner with other companies that are not competitors and produce whole new uses of the peanut butter cup idea in a co-branded effort -- ice cream, cookies, baked goods?

The result of this act of pursuing opportunities was an ongoing birthing of new products -- Reese's Pieces, Reese's Minis, Big Cup, Fast Break, Crispy Crunchy, Nutrageous, co-branded ice cream with Breyers, co-branded baked goods with Betty Crocker, co-branded cookies with Nabisco, seasonal products for Halloween, Easter, Valentine's Day, and Christmas, and the list goes on. Those innovators at Reese's were focused on opportunities, not problems.

All of us will have to solve problems. There is no way around that. But all of us can, should we choose, couple our problem solving with focusing on opportunities. If we simply do no more than *think* about opportunities, and *look* for them, they will manifest themselves. Then the hard work comes in relentlessly pursuing them.

Do that with regularity and you will be a person of rare accomplishment.

Starve problems.

Feed opportunities.

The Elephant in the Room

The Oz-Fetterman Debate

Last week, the Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania, **John Fetterman**, a Democrat, participated in a debate against Republican candidate **Mehmet Oz**. They are running for a seat in the U.S. Senate.



Mr. Fetterman had suffered a stroke in May earlier this year. Everyone from the Fetterman camp (including Mr. Fetterman himself, and including **Dr. Clifford Chen**, his personal physician) insisted he had a clean bill of health and had not suffered any significant damage from the stroke.

This proved to be a lie.

In fact, prior to the debate, Mr. Fetterman was interviewed on *NBC Nightly News* by journalist **Dasha Burns**. Ms. Burns later reported that before the interview itself, Fetterman seemed as if he was not comprehending their small talk. For her crime of telling the truth, she was roundly and savagely attacked by other media personalities, Hollywood elites, and Leftist-Dem politicians -- all of whom want Fetterman to be elected to the U.S. Senate no matter how incapacitated he is.

At the debate against Dr. Oz, Fetterman's opening words were "Hi. Goodnight everybody." He said it in a tone that suggested he believed he was saying his final words of the night, not his opening words. That may have been the most cogent thing he said all night. It all went downhill from there, with one inarticulate rambling after another. To see a video of the highlights (or lowlights) [click here](#). At one point, the moderator raised the following issue: "You have made two conflicting statements regarding fracking. In a 2018 interview, you said 'I don't support fracking at all. I never have.' But earlier this month, you told an interviewer, 'I support fracking. I support the energy independence that we should have here in the United States.' So Mr. Fetterman, please explain your changing position. Sixty Seconds."

Fetterman's response: "Uh, uh, uh, I've always supported fracking. And I always believe that independence with our energy is, is critical,

that we can't be held, you know, ransom to somebody like Russia. You know, I've always believed that energy independence is critical, and I've always believed that, and I do support fracking. . ."

The moderator then said, "I want to clarify something. You're saying tonight that you support fracking, that you've always supported fracking. But there is that 2018 interview that you said, 'I don't support fracking at all.' So how do you square the two?"

Fetterman adopted the proverbial deer in the headlights look, and sputtered: "I, I, I do support fracking, and [long pause] I don't, I don't, [long pause] I support fracking, and I stand, and I do support fracking."

And the lies continued, even after the debate. From the Fetterman camp, **Joe Calvello**, a Fetterman campaign spokesman, said, "He did remarkably well tonight. . . John won countless exchanges, counter-punched aggressively, and pushed back on Oz's cruelty and attacks."

How does he say that with a straight face?

Lying is a way of life, for the Left. Keep that in mind when you go to the polls in November.

* * * * *

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

From Ara's Journal

Rough Courage

"I do not wish to treat friendships daintily, but with roughest courage. When they are real, they are not glass threads or frost-work, but the solidest things we know."

Ralph Waldo Emerson



I walked into the house of my friend, as I had been instructed to. But she appeared to not be home. I walked to the kitchen sink and washed my hands. Then I walked over to the couch and sat down,

assuming she would be walking in the front door any moment so we could watch a sporting event on TV we had planned to watch.

It was at that moment that I gradually became aware of a type of humming sound. It sounded like some sort of motor that was droning on, like perhaps that of a fan, or some other electronic device. It struck me as a bit unusual. I stood up and walked around the house to investigate. I came to realize the sound was coming from the far end of the kitchen. Was it a blower attached to the stove or oven?

As I moved closer to the source of the sound, I came to realize it was coming from the garage, just off the kitchen. I opened the door that separated the kitchen from the garage and was shocked to see that the large garage door was closed, and my friend's vehicle was in the garage with the engine running, and my friend sitting in the driver's seat! She must have been in there with the engine running for at least 3 to 6 minutes or so, with deadly carbon monoxide filling the enclosed garage.

My first impulse was to think she was in the act of committing suicide.

It looked as if she was reading something in her vehicle, perhaps something on her phone, or perhaps a piece of mail. Frantic, I shouted, "What the heck are you doing?! Turn off your car! Now!"

My outburst was born of fear, as I know it only takes somewhere between 1 to 3 minutes for carbon monoxide to overpower a person. It is odorless so you cannot smell it. It is colorless so you cannot see it. And the first thing it attacks is your brain, rendering your cognitive abilities powerless to think clearly and take defensive measures to protect yourself. Over 400 people die each year in the U.S. from carbon monoxide poisoning, and more than 50,000 end up in the ER each year from it.

But my aggressive mannerism was not well-received. My friend acted defiantly and defensively, insisting that she is not suicidal and insisting that I am not always the smartest man in the room. I couldn't seem to get her to look at the bigger picture that it does not matter whether she was suicidal or not and it doesn't matter if I have a personality defect; what matters is she was doing something that was bound to harm her, possibly even kill her, regardless of her mindset and regardless of her intentions.

What I deduced from this is that some people cannot learn from their mistakes, no matter how dangerous or foolhardy the mistakes are, if they are approached with "rough courage." For some people, style

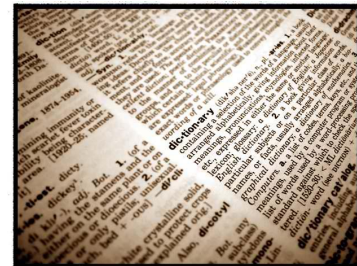
trumps substance. To this moment, she has made it clear that this is simply a matter of a difference of opinion, as she imagines she was perfectly safe sitting in a car inside an enclosed garage with the engine running -- because she did not intend to commit suicide. Had I been gentle, and spoke in a calm and relaxed voice, she might have been more receptive to the deadly danger she had put herself in.

But Emerson is right. Rough courage is called for at times. And it's never more warranted than in a life-and-death situation.

The World of Words

Fanciful

Building Your Power of Expression



Fanciful, adj.

Pronunciation: fansəfəl

Meaning: Anytime you come across a person who is in possession of unrealistic expectations -- usually too optimistic -- that person could be said to have a fanciful outlook. The word can also be applied to those who have a vivid imagination to the point of *over-imagination*.

Usage:

- *He was entertaining us with a fanciful account of the travels of Columbus.*
- *The Moon Maiden is one of a number of fanciful lunar inhabitants.*
- *The explanation she gave was not merely fanciful, it was beyond the pale.*

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