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Issue #271

November 14, 2022

It's time to get down to business with this latest installment of *Uncommon Sense*.

Trust is such an important matter in any relationship, and I use the **Self-Development** column to clarify a few things about trust.

In **The Elephant in the Room** column, I offer a few humble thoughts about the recent 2022 Mid-Term Election.

The **From Ara's Journal** column finds me musing about success and failure, particularly with respect to one of the most famous entertainers who ever lived. And all of you know who that is.

Bringing up the rear, **The World of Words** column nails it with an elegant word that will cause people to raise eyebrows when you use it? Why? Because they will see you as a sophisticated wordsmith.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



**Self-Development**

3 Realms of Trust

There are some people I, more or less, trust. Which is to say I have no reason not to trust them. They have demonstrated trustworthiness -- rendering them worthy of my trust.



In fact, there are a few people I trust so deeply, I would trust them with my life, with the life of my children, with my most personal information.

Michael Sears is one of them. President of [Sears Wealth Management](#), Mike is my financial and retirement planner (as well as my friend). Granted, he has competence in his craft. But he has something even more valuable to me than that: he has character. He doesn't lie. He doesn't mask the truth. He is plain-spoken, and an authentically decent and virtuous fellow.

I once had to go to Venezuela for business reasons. I was going to be in Caracas, which, at the time, was the most dangerous city in the western hemisphere and probably in the entire world. Mindful of the risks, and the very real possibility I may not return alive, I paid a visit to Mike Sears the day before I departed for Caracas. I handed him a sealed envelope containing all of my passwords, PIN numbers, combinations, and any other data or codes pertaining to my cell phones, my social media accounts, and every other private entity. There is only one reason I did that: I have unequivocal trust in Michael Sears.

There are other people I do not trust.

But let me explain what I mean so there is no misunderstanding.

If I say I do not trust a person, all I mean by that statement is that I have not yet established trust for that person. It does *not* mean the person is untrustworthy. It means I don't know enough about the person *at this moment in time* to know if they can be trusted. The jury is out. That person has not yet *established* trust with me. I am talking about an absence of trust, not the presence of distrust. The person has not done anything wrong.

However, if a person has violated my trust, it is no longer a matter of my saying I do not *trust* him or her. Instead, I would frame it as follows: I *distrust* that person. That is a much stronger statement than saying I do *not trust* that person.

If this eludes you, let me offer an analogy. Consider these 3 sentences:

- I love her.
- I do not love her.
- I hate her.

The first sentence is a positive affirmation or declaration that I love the woman in question. That is akin to saying "I trust you." Very affirmative that there is trust present.

The second sentence doesn't mean I hate her. It just means I don't love her -- at least, not at this time. There is an absence of love. But there is not a presence of disdain or hate.

But the third sentence is just as affirmative as is the first sentence; it, however, involves a negative emotion as opposed to a positive emotion. I not only do not have strong positive feelings for her, but I actually entertain decidedly negative feelings for her. There's no neutrality here.

But there is a kind of neutrality in saying "I don't love her" just as there is when one says "I don't trust this person." Trust simply has yet to be established.

So how does one evolve from not being trusted (yet) to being a person of great trustworthiness?

Consider these possibilities:

- When you look people in the eye, and talk straight (rather than look away and talk in gobbledygook) you tend to build trust. People perceive you to be a straight-shooter.
- When you provide transparency wherever possible, people come to see you as someone who has nothing to hide, and when you cannot, in good conscience, be transparent (due to legal reasons or due to keeping confidences or promises you made to others) you are at least transparent about why you cannot, at this time, be as transparent as you would like.
- Make commitments and then keep those very commitments. And while not belaboring the point, make it clear when you deliver results that you are delivering results based on an earlier commitment. Spell it out.
- Develop expertise in certain areas and give assurances to those you interface with that you do possess such expertise. Don't brag about it, but it doesn't hurt to assure people you know how to land a plane because you have done it countless times, or you

know how to solve math problems because you majored in math, or you know how to treat a broken bone because you happen to be an R.N.

- Be impeccably honest, especially when it is not comfortable or convenient to do so. This is especially true when you yourself have erred in judgment or screwed up somehow. Come clean. Own it. And don't make excuses. Just tell the truth. But it also has play when you are speaking hard truths to another person. I remember seeing a television commercial a long time ago. I do not recall what product the commercial was promoting, but it was done in black and white using very grainy film to convey the idea that this was very old footage. It showed a person portraying Abraham Lincoln and another person portraying his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Mary asks President Lincoln if she looks good in the dress she was wearing. He stammers and hesitates because she looks atrocious, and he is caught in the quandary between being honest and not hurting her feelings. He eventually spews out some verbal mish-mash which did not ring as credible, and she storms off in disgust. I admit, it can be tricky business to speak the truth when doing so might crush the spirit of the other person. But there is a pallet, a range of word choice, when conveying hard truths. That tightrope can be traversed. But truth must come first if you wish to be trustworthy.

Work to be someone who can be trusted, who is trustworthy. And recognize the differences between trusting someone, not trusting someone (yet), and distrusting someone.

## **The Elephant in the Room**

### The Aftermath of the 2022 Mid-Term Election

When I was in high school, I was involved in a number of things, one of which was wrestling. I attended Los Altos High School in Northern California (not to be confused with a school of the same exact name in



Hacienda Heights, located in Southern California).

I was never a great wrestler, and Los Altos High was not a wrestling powerhouse (as we were in Football and especially in Track & Field). But I was a reasonably good wrestler who was dependable, who won more than I lost, who attended wrestling camps in the summer, and who, thanks to AAU, competed in the off-season.

Once I was up against a guy named Bobby Arata from Peterson High School. Arata was a superb wrestler. I think I recall he won the state championship our senior year. One would understandably think I had no chance against him, and, admittedly, I lost to him the one time we competed against each other.

But he didn't pin me as many expected he would. Nor did he beat me by a lopsided margin, such as 12 to 3, as many others assumed would be the outcome. Instead, Bobby Arata won by a score of 3-2. He won, but barely. It may have been my finest performance as a wrestler, even though I lost. I was a takedown away from defeating a soon-to-be state champion. So impressed were some coaches, that I was heavily recruited to join the wrestling team at Foothill College the next year (which I wisely turned down -- I knew my limits).

Why am I writing about this isolated memory from my past in a column about the 2022 Mid-Term Election? Because it contains many parallels to the recent election, an election that, even now, as I type this, still has a number of undecided races.

Although I do not belong to a political party, I firmly believed there would be a Red Wave, meaning the Republicans would gain an unprecedented number of new seats in Congress. I wasn't the only one who believed this. Many Democrats and Republicans alike were certain this would happen. Although there was a Red Wave in Florida, no Red Wave materialized elsewhere. I was wrong in my prediction.

Even so, just as Bobby Arata barely defeated me, he still emerged the winner. And as pertaining to the House (not the Senate) Republicans, overall, did seem to emerge winners, albeit barely. Republicans will almost certainly take the House, and that will spell doom for President Biden's agenda (or, more accurately stated, the agenda of those who are pulling the strings of the Biden Presidency).

Just a few more thoughts:

- I must admit I am dumbfounded by the governor's race in New York. The incumbent governor, a radicalized Leftist named Kathy Hochul, does not think violent crime is a problem in her state.

She is out of touch. Crime is completely out of control in New York, especially in the Big Apple. She only won 13 counties (out of 62) but still garnered enough votes to win. Lee Zeldin, her Republican opponent, was fixated on crime and determined to bring real solutions to New York's crime problem. Yet black voters in places like Harlem, who themselves are the victims of much of the mayhem, voted for Kathy Hochul, even though doing so was not in their own self-interest. Black voters basically said, "It's OK that our neighborhoods are being terrorized daily and that our streets are dangerous, and that our family members are being attacked and beaten and raped and killed with impunity. We want to vote for someone who will maintain the status quo." I find that incredible. . .

- Minnesota. . . All I can say is Minnesota strikes me as irredeemable. Like New York, they had a Republican candidate for Governor who was a law-and-order man and who won all but 13 counties (out of 87), running against a radicalized Leftist-Dem who loves chaos and criminality. And yet, even though the vast majority of the state leans Republican, the big metropolitan areas that include Minneapolis, Rochester, Duluth, etc, produced more votes and those votes went for more of the same -- Democratic "leadership" that tolerates chaos and anarchy. The citizens of those communities deserve what they will continue to get: destruction, crime, looting, mayhem, disorder, fear.
- Don't even get me started on the Pennsylvania race involving Oz and Fetterman. I can only assume Fetterman won because a massive number of Democrat voters mailed in their votes prior to the debate.

My key takeaway with the three bullet points above? Human nature can sometimes be very mysterious. People often vote in ways that ensures their continued suffering. Careful thinking seems to be in very short supply in some quarters.

Still, like Bobby Arata, Republicans will probably squeak by in winning Congress and that means President Biden and his handlers will be very limited in some fundamental ways over the next two years.

Let's hope we get it right in 2024 and the Red Wave belatedly materializes.

\* \* \* \* \*

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

## From Ara's Journal

### Was Michael Jackson a Success?

Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard have released another book in their Killing Series. It's called [Killing The Legends](#). It is subtitled "The Lethal Danger of Celebrity." The book describes the tragic endings to John Lennon, Elvis Presley, and Muhammad Ali.



I haven't read the book yet, but I suspect it is pretty good. I say that because I have read previous books in the "Killing" series, including *Killing Reagan*, *Killing the Mob*, *Killing the SS*, *Killing the Killers*, and *Killing the Rising Sun*. All of those books I mentioned were real page-turners.

In this latest book, O'Reilly and Dugard seem to believe that when you attain celebrity status as did Lennon, Presley, and Ali, bad things happen. Most people cannot handle the celebrity status. Their lives spiral out of control.

So I started pondering Michael Jackson, who died in 2009 at the age of 50. I remember when the Jackson 5 first became famous. I was in 5th grade at the time, and I was the same age as Michael Jackson, so he would have been around 10 years old or thereabouts. For the next 40 years he received [a huge number of awards](#) and other recognitions -- I counted over 400.

Michael Jackson's total career pre-tax earnings was worth about \$4.2 billion according to Forbes, and even 7 years after his death, his estate was worth about \$825 million. Two years after that, his estate was still worth about \$400 million.

Sounds like he was successful. Right?

Maybe.

While no one can dispute his immense stage talent, he did seem to have a strange fixation with children. Whether or not allegations of sexual misconduct are true, Michael Jackson certainly could not relate to or bond with peers of his own age range, preferring more of a Peter Pan environment with children, particularly young boys. I remember seeing him on Oprah Winfrey's television show. He clearly

seemed odd and couldn't really look at the camera, or the audience, instead turning his head away to the side just before a commercial break, unable to look anyone in the eye due to extreme bashfulness.

And then, of course, are the tragic events surrounding his death, where he overdosed on propofol, a strong sedative. Evidently Michael Jackson was hooked on the stuff, along with other drugs he needed for various ailments.

It's truly hard to answer a question like "Was Michael Jackson successful?" with a straight yes or no. While it is hard to dispute that he was one of the the most successful entertainers in history, and certainly one of the wealthiest and most recognized, it is also hard to ignore the aspects of his life that seemed out of control -- a thirst for lots of medications, massive amounts of debt, and a strange and peculiar social disorder involving children.

It's hard to want to embrace such a life; the tradeoffs are enormous, and in Jackson's case, those tradeoffs included an untimely death.

## The World of Words

### Discomfiture

#### Building Your Power of Expression

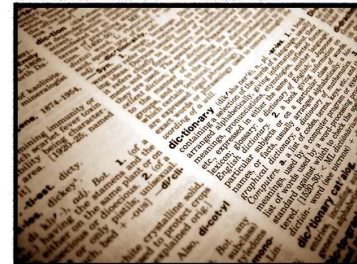
**Discomfiture**, n.

**Pronunciation:** dis-kuhm-fi-cher

**Meaning:** Discomfiture refers to a feeling of discomfort, unease, awkwardness, or even embarrassment.

#### Usage:

- *Many political consultants are secretly enjoying his discomfiture.*
- *To my discomfiture he began whistling loudly.*
- *Sensing his discomfiture, I changed the subject.*





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