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Welcome aboard to our 10th issue this year of *Uncommon Sense*! I am really pleased with this issue.

The **Self-Development** column explores two types of weaknesses and the balance of working on weaknesses vs. working on strengths. Give it a careful read.

The **The Elephant in the Room** column documents the reaction of the Durham Report by those who perpetuated the great Trump-Russia Hoax.

The **From Ara's Journal** column explores a concept I learned in the world of the martial arts -- the notion of a Zone of Sanctuary. I think you may get some inspiration therein.

The **World of Words** column scores yet again with a fun and funky word that's part of our English Lexicon. Make it part of your own lexicon.

OK, let's get started.

Ara Norwood



Self-Development

Two Types of Weaknesses

One of the men I mentor does work similar to me. He gives seminars. Although very capable in many aspects of people-development, he's kind of new to the field when it comes to delivering seminars.

Some people who speak for a living occasionally fall into the habit of uttering unnecessary filler words sprinkled throughout their presentation. Some prefer

"uh" which is not even a word, technically, but a verbal belch indicating the searching for their next word as they gather their thoughts. Others prefer saying "OK" at the end of many of their sentences. My mentee goes with the word "Right?" asked as a rhetorical question.

As his mentor, I have sat through many of his presentations, observing a lot of different things, including his penchant for the unnecessary uttering of the word "Right?" While I find it problematic, I was more focused on other aspects of his presentation. Not long ago I observed him lead a 90-minute presentation. And I kept track of his utterances of the word "Right?" – ignoring when he used the word legitimately, such as when he said something like, "That's right" to a comment made by an audience member. In that 90-minute presentation, he said "Right?" 162 distinct times. That averages out to 1.8 times every sixty seconds.

One week later, I observed again as he made the same 90-minute presentation, and again, I kept track of how often he said the unnecessary word. I was curious whether he would utter it more often than the previous week, less often, or roughly the same. That second time, he uttered it 271 times. That comes to more than 3 occurrences every sixty seconds. There were times where he uttered it as many as 5 times within about 7 seconds. Once he uttered it twice in a row for no apparent reason.

You would be forgiven for believing that as his mentor, I am going to address that with him in short order.

However, I might not.



Why not?

Because even though in this second presentation I saw a 60% increase in his use of the unnecessary term, I also saw a marked improvement in his presentation overall. Compared to his earlier presentation, he came off this time around as far more confident, far more articulate, and far more engaging. True, he did all of this with far more use of the unnecessary "Right?" in his oratory. But that problem, and it is a problem, falls into one of the two types of problems I tend to see in others (and in myself):

- 1) Some problems are of the "Fatal Flaw" variety.*
- 2) Some problems are of the "Rough Around The Edges" variety.

Fatal Flaw problems must be addressed swiftly and decisively.

Rough Around The Edges problems can be addressed. And at some point, they should be addressed.

But my mentoring will instead focus on the strengths I saw in his most recent presentation. It is something he needs to work on. Many might argue that what he needs to work on is his habit of saying "Right?" so frequently. Yes, he does. But our strengths are also something that should be – indeed, must be – worked on. He needs to get his strengths from the top 12% of what his peers do, to the top 8% of what his peers do. And once at the top 8%, he needs to work harder to get his strengths to the top 6 percent. That is a better use of his time than working on his rough-around-the-edges flaw of saying "Right?" so frequently. We'll get to that eventually. But for now, the priority needs to be on his developing and refining an outstanding strength.

Can this apply to you? Of course, but only if you allow it to.

*I am indebted to **Jack Zenger** for alerting me to these distinctions.

The Elephant in the Room Leftist Reactions To The Durham Report

So let's recap.

A cabal consisting of the **Hillary Clinton** campaign, an opposition research firm, a former British spy, the Democrat Party, the entire

mainstream media along with CNN and MSNBC, all of Hollywood, all of higher education, and Big Tech combined to peddle a lie to the American people. The lie



was that **Donald Trump** is a Russian spy who collaborated with Moscow to steal the 2016 election. All of that was a fairy tale. All of it was a lie. A hoax. A massive deception.

Some of the liars, such as Congressman **Adam Schiff**, even went so far as to claim that he had in his possession concrete proof that Trump was guilty of colluding with the Kremlin. But he never produced it because he never possessed it. He never possessed it because it never existed. He not only lied about President Trump, he lied about himself having something he did not have.

John Durham, Special Counsel for the Justice Department, launched a thorough investigation of the allegations of Trump-Russia Collusion. Here is a summary of what Durham concluded after 4 years of painstaking investigation:

- “Our investigation ... revealed that senior FBI personnel displayed a serious lack of analytical rigor towards the information that they received, especially ... from politically affiliated persons and entities. ... In particular, there was significant reliance on investigative leads provided or funded (directly or indirectly) by Trump’s political opponents. The Department did not adequately examine or question these materials and the motivations of those providing them...”
- “FBI personnel ... acknowledge[d] — both then and in hindsight — that they did not genuinely believe there was probable cause to believe that the [Trump campaign] was knowingly engaged in clandestine intelligence activities on behalf of a foreign power, or knowingly helping another person in such activities.”
- The launch of the Trump-Russia investigation was deeply flawed and that an “objective and honest assessment” of the evidence

“should have caused the FBI to question not only the predication for Crossfire Hurricane, but also to reflect on whether the FBI was being manipulated for political or other purposes,” but “unfortunately, it did not.”

- The special counsel concluded “the matter was opened as a full investigation without ever having spoken to the persons who provided the information,” and the FBI launched its Trump-Russia investigation without “any significant review of its own intelligence databases” and without “collection and examination of any relevant intelligence from other U.S. intelligence entities.” The investigation was also started without conducting any interviews of “witnesses essential to understand the raw information” the FBI had received, as well as without using “any of the standard analytical tools typically employed by the FBI in evaluating raw intelligence.”
- “The speed and manner in which the FBI opened and investigated Crossfire Hurricane during the presidential election season based on raw, unanalyzed, and uncorroborated intelligence also reflected a noticeable departure from how it approached prior matters involving possible attempted foreign election interference plans aimed at the Clinton campaign,” Durham wrote. In one instance, according to the report, FBI headquarters and Justice Department officials “required defensive briefings to be provided to Clinton and other officials or candidates who appeared to be the targets of foreign interference.”
- In another, the FBI “elected to end an investigation after one of its longtime and valuable confidential human sources went beyond what was authorized and made an improper and possibly illegal financial contribution to the Clinton campaign on behalf of a foreign entity as a precursor to a much larger donation being contemplated.” And in a third example related to investigating the Clinton Foundation, both senior FBI and DOJ officials “placed restrictions on how those matters were to be handled such that essentially no investigative activities occurred for months leading up to the election.”
- The Durham report stated this damning conclusion: “Our investigation determined that the Crossfire Hurricane investigators did not and could not corroborate any of the substantive allegations contained in the Steele reporting,” Durham wrote. “Nor was Steele able to produce corroboration for

any of the reported allegations, even after being offered \$1 million or more by the FBI for such corroboration.”

- Durham’s report assessed “neither U.S. law enforcement nor the intelligence community appears to have possessed any actual evidence of collusion in their holdings at the commencement of the Crossfire Hurricane investigation,” and the FBI then “discounted or willfully ignored material information that did not support the narrative of a collusive relationship between Trump and Russia.” The special counsel noted the claims in British ex-spy **Christopher Steele’s** dossier “would eventually fall apart, but not before it had been continuously adopted by the FBI as supportive of its underlying theory regarding collusion.”

This report, of which I have only shared a very small sampling, is utterly and unequivocally devastating to the FBI, the Hillary Clinton campaign, the Democrat Party, Adam Schiff, MSNBC, CNN, and the rest of the mainstream media, including *The Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, both outlets receiving Pulitzer Prizes for their reporting of utter, total fake news.

Allow me to be a bit autobiographical for just a moment. While I am fascinated with micro-issues, I am even more fascinated with macro-issues. The hoax itself is a micro-issue. The Durham report exposing the hoax is also a micro-issue. The Left-wing, Fake News Mainstream Media’s reaction to the Durham Report, or in other words, the media’s reaction and the politician’s reaction to getting caught in a lie is a macro-issue because it says something about how society, writ large, interacts with the truth, either courageously and with integrity, or dishonestly and deceptively. Said another way, when a great reckoning, such as the Durham Report, exposes the treacherous nature of so many of our key institutions, those same institutions have an opportunity to do the right thing, or perpetuate the dishonest thing. That’s a macro-issue.

Here is how a few of those guilty of perpetuating a lie on the American people responded to the Durham Report:

New York Times: “Mr. Durham’s 306-page report revealed little substantial new information about the inquiry, known as Crossfire Hurricane, and it failed to produce the kinds of blockbuster revelations accusing the bureau of politically motivated misconduct that former President Donald J. Trump and his allies suggested Mr. Durham would uncover.”

The Associated Press: "The report, the culmination of a four-year investigation into possible misconduct by U.S. government officials, contained withering criticism of the FBI but few significant revelations."

MSNBC: "Durham's whole thing is predicated on [SIC] it's like a rabbit hole conspiracy that suggests that the Trump-Barr paranoia infected his ability to stand back and evaluate whether the probe yielded guilty convictions of people who would have had nothing to do with any of these questions he looked at. It is a view from so far down the rabbit hole that what needs some oversight is what Mr. Durham did for four years that repelled his longtime prosecutorial partner, Nora Dannehy, and other high-level DOJ prosecutors."

Adam Schiff: "When Republicans lacked the courage to stand up to the most unethical president in history, they consoled themselves by attacking those who did ... And so their response ... is, 'Let's go after Adam Schiff.' Let's go back to the person they most view as standing up for the rule of law, standing up against Trump, leading the first impeachment, participating in the January 6 committee. That's what this is about. I'm not backing down. The Durham investigation was an investigation Donald Trump demanded, investigating the investigators. Durham four years trying to prove this deep state conspiracy theory that Trump kept telling his base was going to be proven ... The whole thing of course, was a big bust."

Finally, allow me to highlight what should really be a mere footnote, but it is still somewhat instructive. Only one Left-Wing pundit had even a modicum of courage to speak in words that approached the truth. **Jake Tapper**, a CNN anchor, upon hearing the details of the Durham Report, understated it this way: The Durham Report was "devastating to the FBI and to a degree, it does exonerate Donald Trump."

This did not sit well with former MSNBC host **Keith Olberman**, who said, "Jake Tapper needs to resign!" Mr. Olberman, a Left-Wing Lapdog, has been taught to never give so much as an inch in the cause of spouting Leftist propaganda. Truth does not matter to Keith Olberman; winning does. At all costs. Thus, Tapper must be crushed, as he betrayed his team.

My macro conclusion: Although the Durham Report was devastating to the FBI, the Clinton Campaign, the Democrat Party, the Mainstream Media, Big Tech, etc., it essentially had no effect on them whatsoever. They, collectively, are the least introspective, the least

self-aware, of any people or entity within the body politic. Without a shred of evidence, they will go on maintaining a lie that holds their interest -- that Trump colluded with Russia and that they themselves are champions of Democracy.

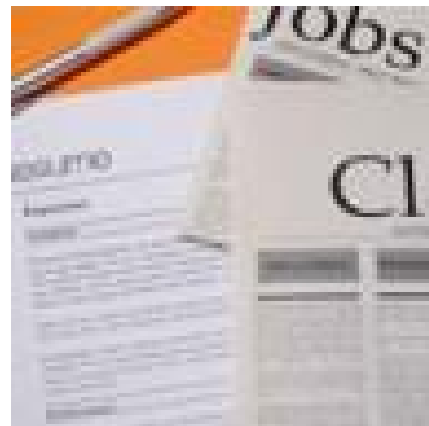
Nothing could be further from the one thing that does not hold their interest – the truth.

* * * * *

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

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From Ara's Journal

Zones of Sanctuary

Life has many difficult and dark moments in it. Sometimes we paint ourselves into a corner and feel as though there is no way out. Sometimes we make terrible decisions that put us in a very deep hole. Sometimes bad luck envelopes us and we feel we are held fast by steel bands with no way out of our predicament.



But in our darkest hours there are doors we could go through, if we could but see them. And we can't see them because our mind is so worked up by the plight we are in. What to do?

Enter a zone of sanctuary.

What do I mean?

There are zones of sanctuary that can bring peace to our minds and ideas that can point the way. These zones of sanctuary ease our mind, but they do more than that. They put us in a state of mind that makes us susceptible to solutions that may come to us in no other way.

There are many zones of sanctuary that take us just out of reach of those things that bring harm to us, sparing us unnecessary wounds but also bringing to us a noble and even spiritual perspective when we need it most.

Here are six zones of sanctuary that have buoyed me on many occasions:

Prayer: Not just routine prayer. Deep, yearning prayer. This is a kind of prayer where you are alone. Perhaps on your knees. Certainly in a state of mind where you are asking God for guidance and sustenance. This is a kind of prayer where you are filled with desire to commune with the Almighty. In this form of prayer, there are not "airs" or posturing; you are as real as you know how to be. This kind of prayer takes place in sacred space – perhaps on a mountain top, or a prairie, or a forest, or out under the stars away from city lights. This kind of prayer is an ordeal that leaves you feeling warmth and hope. This kind of prayer is, sadly, all too rare.

Fasting: The ability to subjugate one's appetites to a higher purpose is an exercise in spiritual discipline. I do not pretend to understand why fasting with a purpose brings one joy rather than agony, but it does. Try fasting for 24 hours (or two meals) and do so with a precise purpose in mind, and you will very likely find that it is a unique zone of sanctuary for you. You will have accomplished something, and good things will be coming your way.

Books That Inspire: The written word is such a gift, and to expose your mind and heart to those very few epic and seminal works that truly strike you as other-worldly is a worthwhile venture. For some, that might include the works of Shakespeare. For others, it might involve some of the great works of poetry by giants such as Robert Frost, William Butler Yeats, Emily Dickinson, or John Keats. For me, I turn to a collection my faith-tradition calls The Standard Works, which includes The Holy Bible, The Book of Mormon, The Doctrine & Covenants, and The Pear of Great Price. These books I consider to be holy writ, and they supply a never-ending payload of divine insight.

General Conference: Every first weekend in April and October, I attend a 2-day conference hosted by my Church. In a series of 2-hour sessions totaling 10 hours in all, I get to hear from the most senior leaders that run my Church, men and women of enormous moral character and deep virtue. I consider many of these leaders to be prophets of God, along the same caliber of ancient prophets such as Moses, John the Baptist, Isaiah, and Elijah. Hearing their inspired counsel recharges my batteries and is a zone of sanctuary for me, scrubbing off the caked-on worldliness like chipping off barnacles from the hull of a ship.

Personal Revelation: There is a God who watches over us and who holds a paternal regard for us, His children. As such, I believe it is possible to receive direction, guidance, and inspiration from Him. This doesn't happen every day for me. But it does happen. In fact, it's happened twice very recently for me. Answers have come when I least suspected it. Solutions to troubling quandaries have manifested themselves at just the right time. Puzzles have been solved. Paths have been illuminated. By simply believing it is possible to receive such guidance and then striving to be worthy of it does much to open up divine channels.

The House of God: For me, this would be one of the holy temples. The very grounds of these temples are a zone of sanctuary, where the earth is kissed by heaven itself. Walking into the temple, one cannot help but experience a sense of peace so palpable, it is unlike any other I have experienced. The holy rituals, the divine instruction, the solemnity, the sense of the sacred, all of these things combine to recalibrate my recognition of the obligations I have to do good in the world, and to seek loftier planes.

These are six Zones of Sanctuary for me. What are your own Zones of Sanctuary? If you know, visit them often. If you do not know, seek them out, look for them, formulate them, and let them manifest themselves to you.

The World of Words

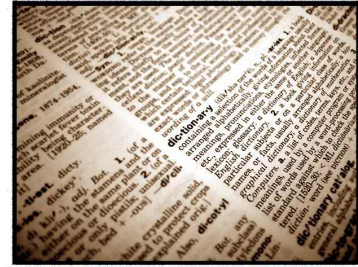
Kerfuffle

Building Your Power of Expression

Kerfuffle, n.

Pronunciation: kərˈfɛfəl

Meaning: A commotion or fuss, especially one caused by conflicting views.



Usage:

- *Truth be told, we had, shall we say, a bit of a kerfuffle, and so the deal is now off.*
- *We have never had so much as a kerfuffle, not even a slight disagreement, so compatible are we both.*
- *Unfortunately, there was a kerfuffle over the chairmanship.*

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