



STUDY GUIDE

STICKS AND STONES

KEY TERMS: well-adjusted sensitive adages
 hate-speech inoculation offend

NOTE-TAKING COLUMN: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video. Include definitions and key terms.	CUE COLUMN: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>What does Mr. Shillue contend prepared him to be, "...a well-adjusted, happy adult?"</p> <p>According to Mr. Shillue, what is the greatest 'sin' in middle and high school?</p> <p>What was the eventual effect of repeating the 'sticks and stones' philosophy?</p>	<p>How did Mr. Shillue deal with his 'rougher and meaner' childhood world?</p> <p>In what way was the 'sticks and stones' philosophy transformative for Mr. Shillue?</p>

DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- How does Mr. Shillue's 'rougher and meaner' childhood world compare with the childhood world of today? How did Mr. Shillue's 'rougher and meaner' childhood world shape his perspective as an adult?
- Mr. Shillue shares with us that, "When I was a kid, you could say we were less sensitive about a lot of things." What does he mean by this? Why was this the case? Why do you think that kids in current times tend to be so much more sensitive in comparison to Mr. Shillue's childhood time? Should they be? Why or why not?
- In the video we learn that Mr. Shillue views, "...the rough and tumble of childhood, and the process of learning to deal with bullying and being insulted, as a process of inoculation... I can't imagine my college-aged self living in fear of "microaggressions." Yet, today there are full-time campus administrators whose job involves scrubbing the campus curriculum and social life of anything that might offend anyone." Do you think that current young people being sheltered from being harassed or offended are being helped more or hurt more in the long run? Why? How do you think that learning to deal with the unpleasant aspects of social interaction in school equates to 'the real world'?
- Mr. Shillue states, "They're [teachers are] much more likely to warn against the ever present danger of "hate speech" or "triggers" or hurting people's feelings. This is done in the name of teaching children to respect each other. It begins innocently enough by trying to eradicate teasing, but it continues into middle and high school, where there is no greater sin than offending someone's personal or cultural sensitivity." Why do you think that referencing someone's personal makeup or culture has become such a big deal, especially in educational environments? Should it be such a big deal? Why or why not? Can't people tease each other in good nature without disrespecting those that they are teasing? How does the 'sticks and stones' philosophy apply here? How should it apply?
- Mr. Shillue asks, "People look back on that [generally accepted stereotypes in media] and some feel ashamed that teasing was an expected part of childhood, and stereotypes were commonplace in our culture, but was growing up in that environment worse than the hyper sensitive culture we live in now?" How would you answer Mr. Shillue's question? Why?
- Mr. Shillue also asks, "Did this rougher and meaner world better prepare me to be a well-adjusted, happy adult? I say yes." Why do you think he responds this way and places a positive value judgment on having to deal with teasing and stereotypes? What exactly was it about his less sensitive world that made him well-adjusted and happy?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: Sticks and Stones

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Sticks and Stones: On the Power of Words,” then answer the questions that follow.

- In the article, the author states, “Words have no special sovereignty over humans.” What does she mean by that? She goes on to further explain, “You alone are accountable for their interpretation by what you choose with your free will.” If people have the power to attach meaning to words (and concepts, by extension) or not, why do you think that so many people choose to be offended, or at least pretend to be offended?
- How was the author verbally harassed, and how did she handle it? How did the ‘sticks and stones’ philosophy come into play?
- In Mr. Shillue’s childhood time, if someone demonstrated being hurt by a personal or cultural slight, that person was often told to ‘lighten up.’ Why would that admonition be criticized today? Should it be? Why or why not?



QUIZ

STICKS AND STONES

1. **By comparison, the world of Tom Shillue's youth was _____ than the world that kids grow up in today.**
 - a. rougher and meaner
 - b. nicer and safer
 - c. not any different
 - d. more exotic and unknown

2. **What is the practical application for the adage "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me?"**
 - a. Know a very good doctor.
 - b. Nothing in life will be painful.
 - c. You have no control over your feelings
 - d. You can actually choose whether or not to be hurt.

3. **Teachers are now much more likely to warn against the ever present danger of _____.**
 - a. hurting people's feelings
 - b. hate speech
 - c. triggers
 - d. All of the above.

4. **Why were great books, like "The Great Gatsby", banned in schools?**
 - a. Too much profane language.
 - b. The reading level was too advanced.
 - c. Not enough white male characters.
 - d. Fear of offending.

5. **Today there are full-time campus administrators whose job involves scrubbing the campus curriculum and social life of anything that might offend anyone.**
 - a. True
 - b. False



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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http://www.huffingtonpost.com/vaishali/sticks-and-stones-my-vers_b_619538.html

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Author, "Wisdom Rising"

Sticks and Stones: On the Power of Words

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Whatever happened to our immunity to verbal weaponry? In our youth, armed with the mantra "sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," off we went into the real world. But we soon returned shaken and crying when someone called us a name.

Maybe the real problem is we never actually believed we possessed that enlightened linguistic state of Teflon-like strength. Personally, I have a more Buddhist stance on this issue: words are inherently neutral. Words have no special sovereignty over humans. The sole basis for this power to exalt or devastate is the authority we project upon them. We give words the power to insult, the power to injure, and only we can [end that tyranny and take our power back](#).

Very few people have answered this call. Lenny Bruce and more recently Russell Brand mastered freedom over the articulated arsenal. While [Brand appeared on Jimmy Fallon's](#) late night talk show, Jimmy expressed a mild emotional response (I call it a vapor lock) over something Brand had just shared. Russell Brand, completely at ease, gently repeated over and over again, as if administering a vocalized homeopathic remedy, "Jimmy they are only words, they are only words." Thank you Russell Brand. Finally! Someone who is willing to stand up and publicly point out the obvious: words are abstract ideas that take on the form and shape you give them. No one jumps into your mind and poisons your response. You alone are accountable for their interpretation by what you choose with your free will.

Recently I had my own up-close-and-personal opportunity to join the Bruce and Brand "words will never hurt me" line dance. My manager had scheduled a [radio interview](#), something I do quite frequently. It started out in the usually way: The producer called at the designated time and asked me to hold for the host. From the start it was not a normal interview. The first thing that struck me as odd was the host was very difficult to understand. Most commercial radio professionals speak lucidly and articulate well. Not so with this man. I was challenged to clearly understand exactly what he was saying. The interview starts with a few questions about some unusual products on my website. This is followed by another perfectly reasonable question. As I start to answer, he interrupts me. I have no clue what he is asking me, as it all sounds like one garbled mess. I ask him to repeat himself. He does. I still have no idea what the radio host is saying. I ask him to repeat himself again. He does; I am still completely lost. I am also rather

embarrassed to keep asking him to repeat the question, so I decide to answer the original question he asked before the interruption.

The radio show host stops me again to ask another question. Okay, I get it now! This guy is a shock jock, and he has been baiting me with lewd suggestions about the use of these products. My first impulse is to simply hang up and get on with my busy day. Then I thought, "No, this guy thinks he has some ordinary person on the line who believes that words have the ability to oppress. Clearly he has gone to my website, seen that I am a spiritual teacher, and figured if he could rattle my cage, I would blurt out a few highly charged sound bites he could replay for his own entertainment. I'm going to have some fun with this guy." He may have been to my website, but he clearly hasn't read any of my books or articles, especially those on the power of words.

When he finally figured out he could not upset my cool and calm demeanor with his obscene rantings, he moved on to Plan B. He started tossing out the F-bombs. When he stops, I reply with, "Well sir, that is one of the most enjoyable and pleasurable activities two loving people can engage in, and I want to thank you for wishing me such a richly successful experience of intimate happiness. And may I take this opportunity to wish you the same."

Now the guy is really stuttering. He is losing ground fast. This is not a good situation if you are a shock jock. He has completely lost control of the interview and is grasping for anything he can verbally sling my way to upset the balance of power. As it happens in the most desperate of conversational circumstances, he calls me the dreaded "C" word. Too bad he could not see the beatific smile it brought to my face. I simply chuckled and said, "As you well know, that is a very important part of the female anatomy, and I am delighted to be one."

By this time he was in professional agony, twisting wildly in the wind of my unfettered feedback. I, on the other hand, had grown pretty bored with the whole process. I thought, "If this is the very best this man can do, I'm done. The evolved thing to do would be to take him out of his own self-created misery." So I thanked him for his time, sexual blessings and female anatomical acknowledgment. And with that I hung up the phone.

My business partner was in the room at the time. Hearing only my side of the conversation, he was all smiles, having figured out shortly into the game what was going on. "I suspect that he won't be calling back, and your interview will never see the light of day. It never looks good for the guest to shock the shock jock." I nodded in agreement and had a vision of the poor man, head buried in his hands crying, "But boss, I tried! I just couldn't insult the woman no matter what I did." And the show's producer attempting to comfort the unraveled host with inspirational words, "Don't worry buddy, I'm sure you will traumatize the next spiritual teacher we have on. Everything's going to be okay."

Words can only harm you if you capitulate to the assault. You existed before other people with bad manners and questionable choices of words, and you will exist after.

Everyone has free will, and we are fortunate to live in a country that protects free speech. This means you will never be able to control what other people say or when they say it. Instead of vainly attempting to constrain what other people can or cannot say, doesn't it simply make more sense to free your mind instead? If the same phrase were spoken in a language you did not understand, would it still bother you?

So precisely what is the "N" word? The "N" word is Neutrality. All words are the "N" word; all words are neutral. I suspect that was not the neutral "N" word response you were expecting. Furthermore, I suspect it would benefit us all if we would now take the time to realize our fondest childhood wish and finally declare with conviction, "Words will never hurt me."