



Humanists of Sarasota Bay, Inc.  
Sarasota, Florida

## HUSBAY NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2022

### Upgrading our Humanism: Building a Lifestyle of Embodied Values

BY [DREW BEKIUS](#) • 20 SEPTEMBER 2022

*This article is adapted from a session presented at the 81st Annual Conference of the American Humanist Association in July 2022.*

One evening nearly a decade ago, I found myself with friends in a Chicago bar having a few drinks after a long day's work. I looked across the dance floor from our table and there, my eyes connected with hers.

Now, at this point, it had been only about two and a half years since I left the church and my career as lead pastor of a suburban Chicago congregation, but it had been even less than that since admitting to myself that I had, in fact, become an atheist, and even less than that since my divorce from my high school sweetheart of sixteen years. Now here I was, trying to navigate this strange new world around me. Trying to figure out what it looks like to live life apart from faith. How does the real world function once God is gone and dogma removed? A big part of this was exploring my autonomy. Literally, for the first time in my life, trying to navigate what it looks like to simply live and enjoy my life without always feeling the need to delay my own desires.

And, in the vast array of all of life's layers and complexities, yes, this also included my dating life right there in that Chicago bar. I saw this

woman that I was interested in and the interest turned out to be mutual. We went back to her place and, well, I will let you fill in the blanks from there.

Fast forward, though, to the next morning and for the first, and what would turn out to be the only, time in my life I did what I'd seen illustrated in hundreds of films over the course of my cinema-viewing experiences. I did what I simply thought everyone in the real world did. I quickly collected the few things that I brought with me the night before and I discreetly slipped out the door without leaving so much as even a note behind.

Now, at the time I was blogging weekly about my deconversion experiences on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to my journey both into and out of faith. (Many of those stories would later make it into my book, *The Rise and Fall of Faith*.) Later that day this particular human from the evening before discovered my blog and left a comment that went something like this. She said, "I want to see you write a blog post about how easily you'll go home with someone only to disappear the next morning because you think you're too cool to be bothered to say goodbye like a decent human being." And this may have included a long list of expletives that were not the most complimentary.

Continued on page 3

Haiku Quintets: [dandana.us/fivepalms](http://dandana.us/fivepalms)

### JFK Is Dead

playing hearts at noon  
four guys on a dorm room bed  
before chemistry

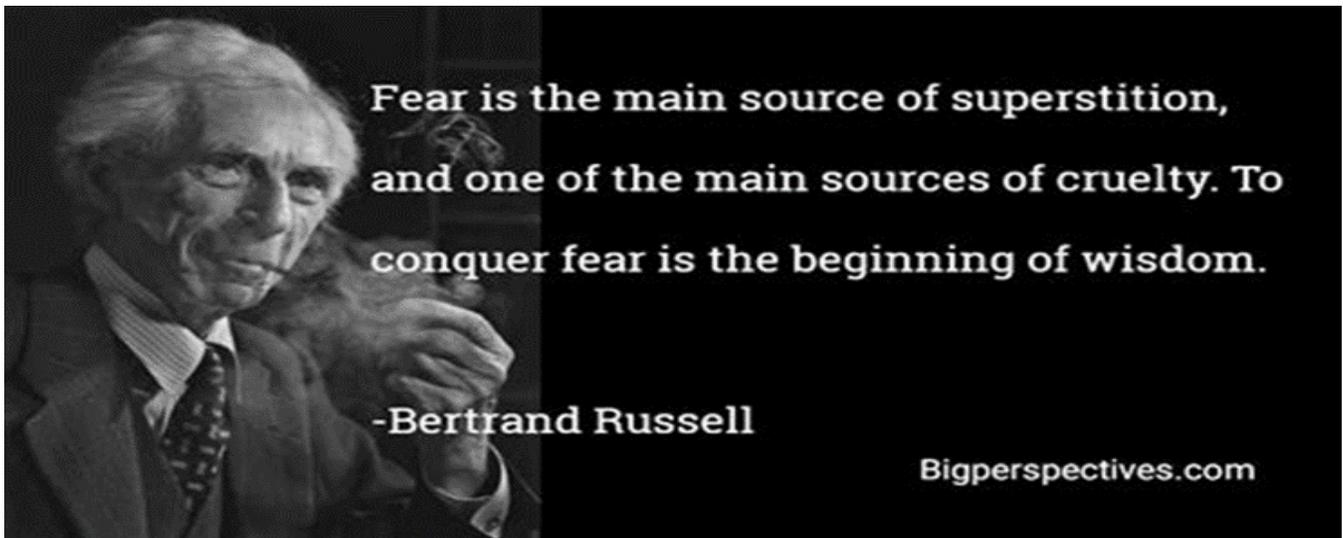
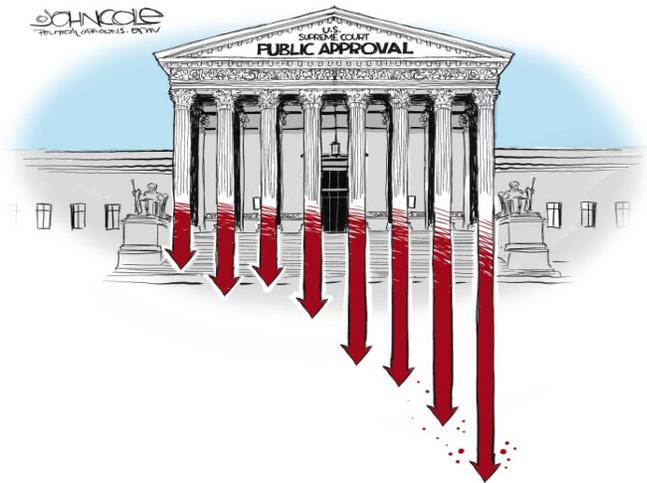
someone yelled out loud:  
"the president has been shot"  
"of what?" I wondered

some students brought their  
own transistor radios  
to class, turned down low

he tried to teach, but  
waved, "turn up your radios"  
Cronkite: "he is dead"

prof openly sobbed  
only then this moment in  
history sunk in

Setting: Freshman year, Donnelly Hall, University of Missouri, 22 November 1963



Fear is the main source of superstition,  
and one of the main sources of cruelty. To  
conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.

-Bertrand Russell

Bigperspectives.com

**Humanism** is a progressive philosophy of life that, *without theism or other supernatural beliefs*, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good. To learn more go [here](#).

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It hit me hard. I felt terrible, honestly, absolutely dreadful. In that moment I realized two things. First, I realized it had become a truly educational moment for me that this isn't how you treat people in the real world, at least not if you want to navigate that real world as a decent human being. Second, it served as a focal point for me to ask the question: how do I exercise my autonomy without treating those around me like garbage? Where do these two values—personal freedom and respect for others—meet in the middle and give way to one another?

We're talking about the work of embodying those values, of taking the general concept and actually living it out in real time, making it tactile and tangible: embodying it. It's one thing to embrace a list of fuzzy concepts. It's quite another thing, though, to infuse them with the hard choices of how we actually build our lives.

I've been preaching values for the last twenty years, first as that evangelical minister I referenced earlier who found himself, increasingly, on the more progressive side of things. But then, after I left church world along with my

former faith, as I started finding greater grounding in my own newfound humanism, I eventually started helping folks work through and more fully embody their humanism in the way that they live their daily lives, asking questions, like:

What does it really mean to live compassionately?

What does it really mean to balance critical-thinking with a little good humanist humility?

What does it look like to embody our autonomy, without carelessly running over everyone around us?

Quite simply, what does it look like to live ethically?

I'm interested less in uploading new information or teaching something previously unknown. It's more about helping us collectively apply the knowledge, passions, and values that we each already embrace. I would encourage, challenge, equip, each of us to be more conscious, aware, mindful of the extent to which we are actually living out the values we claim to hold. Are we actually living out our humanism?



## Special Interest Groups

Here is a list of Special Interest Groups (If you have an idea for one, please let us know).

### **SIG Names**

**Current Affairs (CAF):**

**Life's Experiences (LEX):**

**Non-Fiction Review (NFR):**

**Creativity (CRE):**

**Roundtable (RT):**

**Science Technology & Medicine (STM):** What have you learned, and would like to share

**Open Forum (OF):**

### **Focus of the Group**

Events discussed during the current news cycle

Your memorable experiences to share with the group

Reviews of non-fiction books, magazine articles, films and TV

Includes short stories, poetry, blogs; in other words fiction writing (including reviews) as opposed to non-fiction review.

A discussion of a topic selected by the SIG hosts

What have you learned, and would like to share

This SIG will happen on dates when no one has stepped up to do a presentation on any of our previously existing categories.

Check our website for specific information by clicking [HERE](#).

## Monthly Meetings

All lectures begin at 3pm with a social gathering and lecture at 3:30. Time for non-lecture events are noted. Lectures are held at the Center for Arts and Humanity, 1226 N. Tamiami Trail, 34236.

November 14	Brian Dunning, Skeptoid Podcast, Miracles of Science
December 5	Zac Anderson, Political Columnist, Sarasota Herald Tribune
January 9	New Year Party, (7pm)
January 23	Annual Meeting
February 11	Noel W. Smith Darwin Day Luncheon
March 6	Sarah Wertheimer, Embracing our Differences Project
April 10	Annual Carl Sagan Picnic (4pm), Turtle Beach Pavilion
May 1	TBD

Chat & Chew

Meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at Perkins restaurant at Fruitville and Cattlemen at 12noon.



A virgin can conceive. A dead body can walk again. Your leprosy can be cured. The blind can see. Nonsense. It's not moral to lie to children. It's not moral to lie to ignorant, uneducated people and tell them that if they only would believe nonsense, they can be saved. It's immoral.

— Christopher Hitchens —

AZ QUOTES

## President's Message

We all survived hurricane Ian, though for some members it was internet and power out for days and, in some cases weeks, and trees down and damage to property. Judy and I were fortunate to have no damage to our home. We had tons of debris and a couple of trees go down. Had no power outage and internet and TV back relatively soon. We were lucky.

The most significant thing to me was the futility of all the praying which, I guess, provided some solace to those who prayed. In the end, their God didn't save their homes and some cases their lives. Hurricanes don't give a hoot about prayers, I'm sure.

I found that the science of a hurricane was very helpful, watching the weather reports, and thankful that we had no warm harbor at this end of Sarasota County. Now we drive by rows upon rows of debris

piled high along the road, waiting to be picked up.

I also found out that many people, primarily friends and relatives, were concerned about us. We received emails, calls and text messages with expressions of concern from folks living in Florida and other states. Some were Christians and, of course, humanists and atheists. I don't recall any expressions of "We will pray for you". I guess they know about us! In times like this, my belief in the goodness of humans gets an uplift—until I get back to the news. (I'm a realistic optimist.)

*Darwin Award this Month: Remember the guy who raced into a pond full of gators to catch a frisbee? This one is about an ice fisher who dropped his smartphone down his ice hole, jumping in to get it and removing himself from the gene pool.*

## Why the U.S. is heading toward Nonbelief

*James Haught*

The U.S. is heading toward nonbelief. The Secular Age is snowballing in America, as in other Western democracies. Year after year, reports show church membership and attendance slip-slidin' away.

Church leaders agonize over this ominous erosion. Endlessly, they call for more prayer, more proselytizing and other tactics to entice believers. They ask why the relentless loss is happening.

Sociologists too analyze the cultural shift and offer various explanations. Many concur that Western life is becoming more prosperous and secure, so people no longer feel an urge to pray for divine help. That makes sense.

While experts search for answers, I want to employ Occam's Razor, the philosophical axiom that says the simplest, most straightforward explanation is the best. Tens of millions of Americans have turned away from supernatural religion for an obvious reason, in my view: They see that it's untrue. Intelligent, educated, modern people perceive that magical dogmas are a bunch of hooey — just fairy tales with no factual reality. Gods and devils, heavens and hells, angels and demons, miracles and messiahs, prophecies and divine visitations, visions and other such stuff, are fiction.

Researchers generally accept the Flynn Effect, which says average IQs have been continuously rising over the past many decades. Better-educated Americans are smarter than they were in the 1960s. They can detect nonsense more easily. Further, researchers

find that doubters have higher IQ than believers do. As the West grows more intelligent, the brightest reject supernatural claims.

Ever since Ancient Greece, brave thinkers have doubted holy hokum. Among the wildest was the late comedian George Carlin, who proclaimed: *When it comes to bullshit, big-time, major league bullshit, you have to stand in awe of the all-time champion of false promises and exaggerated claims: religion. No contest. Religion easily has the greatest bullshit story ever told. Think about it. Religion has actually convinced people that there's an invisible man living in the sky who watches everything you do, every minute of every day. And the invisible man has a special list of 10 things he does not want you to do. And if you do any of these 10 things, he has a special place, full of fire and smoke and burning and torture and anguish, where he will send you to live and suffer and burn and choke and scream and cry forever and ever 'til the end of time!*

*But He loves you. He loves you, and He needs money! He always needs money! He's all-powerful, all-perfect, all-knowing, and all-wise, somehow just can't handle money! Religion takes in billions of dollars, they pay no taxes, and they always need a little more. Now, you talk about a good bullshit story. Holy Shit! ... There is no God. None, not one, no God, never was.*

Right before our eyes, supernatural faith is dying in America. Using Occam's Razor, we can conclude that it is happening because magical dogmas no longer are believable.

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It is published monthly and delivered by email to our members. If you have anything you would like published herein, please send it to: rlasalle390@gmail.com

## The Love Prescription: Seven Days to More Intimacy, Connection, and Joy (The Seven Days Series)

Reviewed by [Karen R. Koenig](#)

**“There isn’t a marriage or romantic partnership out there that won’t benefit from this book.”**

Whether you’re looking to fix specific problems or get the most out of your marriage or romantic relationship, couples therapists John and Julie Gottman will get you moving in the right direction. Authors of numerous books on love, their approach to couples therapy is based on years of clinical practice, decades of scientific research at the Gottman Institute and Love Lab, and their personal experiences in their 35-year marriage.

*The Love Prescription* encapsulates the evidence-based theories and ideas behind the Gottman Method of Couples Therapy, broken down into a seven-day action plan based on a simple notion: “Tiny little doses, every day, is what it takes to make a healthy relationship.”

They explain that “Good relationships strengthen everything—boost your mood; give you a solid bedrock from which to tackle your day, your goals, your dreams; bring down the amount of stress hormones in your body; and counteract all those things that can shorten our lives or make them less vibrant: loneliness, depression, disease.” And they remind us that “love is the important thing—the thing that makes everything else more possible.”

Because the authors have been researching what makes relationships succeed or fail for more decades than many readers have been alive, they liberally cite research from the Love Lab and Gottman Institute to support their recommendations. Using evidence-based predictions based on their studies—across various ages, cultures, races, and genders—they describe which personality traits and transactional styles are most likely to make for smooth sailing in relationships and which are most likely to tank them.

Viewing love as an ongoing practice, the Gottman’s teach partners how to change their relationship habits by focusing on one positive, simple, mundane behavior each day for seven days. Day 1, *Make Contact*, can be as simple as smiling, looking your partner in the eye when talking to them, or sitting next to

them on the couch to watch TV. Day 2, *Ask a Big Question*, is about rolling back the clock to when you were dating and couldn’t wait to learn more about what this wondrous person was thinking, feeling, and doing.

Day 3, *Say Thank You*, focuses on going out of your way to show appreciation for your partner, whether they’ve gone out to pick up a grocery item you forgot or simply held the door open for you. Day 4, *Give a Real Compliment*, emphasizes expressing what you admire and adore about your partner—from the way they miraculously never seem to lose their cool with the kids to how easy they made it seem when they turned a hobby into a lucrative career.

Day 5, *Ask for What You Need*, explains why it’s crucial not to expect a partner to be a mind-reader, but instead to tell them your wishes even when doing so makes you feel scared and vulnerable.

Day 6, *Reach Out and Touch*, encourages readers to be more physical, which does not necessarily mean sexual, including holding hands, foot rubs, and pats on the back. Day 7, *Declare a Date Night*, advises us to think of date nights not as “requirements but as investments” to guaranteed to revitalize and nourish partnerships. Each chapter ends with practice exercises, and the book provides space for journaling if the reader is so inclined.

The authors use case studies and clinical examples from their therapy practices to make strategies come alive and underscore how “fleeting moments” can turn around flailing or failing romances more quickly than expected. They also openly share the tribulations and triumphs of their long marriage as concrete examples of how using their practices creates the relationship both partners want.

This book has many strengths. The main one is the simplicity and brevity of its action plan: changing one habit each day for one week. As long as no abuse is going on in the relationship and both partners are on board, it’s a place to begin—even if this cycle needs to be repeated—and a way to kick-start an upward spiral of love, respect, and caring connection. Following the evidence-based practices laid out by the Gottmans makes a lot of sense either as an adjunct to individual or couples counseling or as a last-ditch effort before entering more in-depth therapeutic work. There isn’t a marriage or romantic partnership out there that won’t benefit from this book.

# NOTHING FAILS LIKE PRAYER