

# How Sensitivity Killed Common Sense

If you were to name one quality which has come to be highly sought after and demanded in today's world, what would it be?

For my money, I would say that sensitivity fits the bill. As such, a white person who chooses to wear [hoop earrings](#) or style his hair in [dreadlocks](#) is guilty of being insensitive. College professors who dare to question the feelings of students or deny them [safe spaces](#) are blasted with a similar accusation. And anyone who [dares suggest](#) that scientific fact reveals that men and women are indeed different is almost certainly devoid of all feeling and understanding.

But this embracing of sensitivity seems to have come at the expense of another quality which has been revered for centuries. That quality is common sense.

Seeing that we seem to have lost an understanding of what common sense actually is, it might be helpful to define what an individual with good ol' common sense looks like. Founding statesman, inventor, and printer Benjamin Franklin did just that in a 1734 essay entitled [A Man of Sense](#).

Using a dialogue between two imaginary individuals named Socrates and Crito, Franklin begins by outlining several things which do not make a man of sense. Surprisingly, these include:

1. One who is a master of languages.
2. One who is a master logician.
3. One who is a skilled orator or rhetorician.
4. One who is a skilled scientist, mathematician, or philosopher.

Franklin goes on to imply that a man of sense may indeed have

some or all of these characteristics. However, the man of sense will also have one other major quality, namely, both head and heart knowledge of virtuous living:

*“It seems to follow then, that the vicious Man, tho’ Master of many Sciences, must needs be an ignorant and foolish Man; for being, as he is vicious, of consequence unhappy, either he has acquired only the useless Sciences, or having acquired such as might be useful, he knows not how to make them contribute to his Happiness; and tho’ he may have every other Science, he is ignorant that the Science of Virtue is of more worth, and of more consequence to his Happiness than all the rest put together. And since he is ignorant of what principally concerns him, tho’ it has been told him a thousand Times from Parents, Press, and Pulpit, the Vicious Man however learned, cannot be a Man of Sense, but is a Fool, a Dunce, and a Blockhead.”*

Today’s world seems to have gotten Franklin’s advice backwards, for pursuit of virtue has generally been thrown to the wind, while pursuit of knowledge in every subject is highly prized. We should seriously ask ourselves if this is why we have also seen the decline of common sense. Have we, by emphasizing one at the expense of the other, tilted the balance and caused society to flail wildly off the course of straightforward, common sense thinking?

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