

Bunker Mentality

Written by Suttty Suddeth
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What comes to mind when you hear the term “bunker mentality”? When I think of this state of mind, I think of a literal bunker with sandbags, thick walls, and guards to keep out all sorts of deadly and operationally disruptive things and people. I’m reminded of the time I visited the Normandy region of France and crawled down inside one of the bunkers occupied by the Germans on Sword Beach (one of five landing sites for the June 6, 1944 D-Day invasion of continental Europe).

I can only imagine what it must have been like to spend extended periods of time inside that cold concrete vault. I can only imagine what it must have been like to eventually be overrun by the largest assault ever to take place on the face of this Earth. The problem with bunkers is that you eventually are forced out by the need to resupply or by the Allied Forces with their naval bombardment, grenades, and flamethrowers. Hell, as long as we’re talking history, the Japanese had all of Mt. Suribachi as their bunker during February and March of 1945. There’s a reason why the flag raising on Mt. Suribachi is an enduring icon of the United States Marine Corps. Perhaps I’m digressing into World War II history for a reason. We’ll see.

Bunker mentality is defined as an attitude of extreme defensiveness and self-justification based on an often exaggerated sense of being under persistent attack from others. Fortunately, most of us haven’t been in a real bunker lately, but we may have traits of the mentality that comes along with time spent in a dank, dark hole.

One way to look at it is to pretend as if we’ve all won the lottery. Of course, I’m not talking about the real moolah lottery. If I were that delusional, I would expect just about every small business owner to tell me I’m #1 with their middle finger. No, what I’m referring to is what we often hear of lottery winners’ mentality in the aftermath of their windfall. They simply become, *more*.[□]

If you were a thoughtful, generous person before scratching that big scratcher, you’ll be even more fabulous. Conversely, if you were an a**hole before powerball, you’ll be even more of a powerball buster. I’ve noticed that being in our respective bunkers has brought more kindness

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out in some. That said, ask anyone who has had to deal with the public since March and they'll tell you they've seen some epic meltdowns.

As I watch the documentary everyone has been talking about, I realize that bunker mentality can be used to one's advantage. No, not *Tiger King*. I'm talking about *The Last Dance*. And thank goodness for

The Last Dance

getting released early since the sports world is slowly crawling out of its bunker. If you haven't watched all ten riveting hours of it, I'll just break it down for you real quick. The common theme, or one of the main ones, was if you give Michael Jordon the slightest slight, perceived or real, he will find a way to destroy and embarrass you. Agree or disagree with the mentality, it did create one of the greatest sports dynasties ever. A poignant reminder of bunker mentality's apparent cost, regardless of the results, can be seen at the end of one of the episodes from one of the greatest athletic icons ever.

And talk about the paranoia that bunker mentality can bring: What is all this "shelter in place" and "social distancing" distracting us from? Of course, there is a clear and present danger, but a cursory study of statistics will tell you statistics can be manipulated by the way one presents them. We'll likely find a vaccine for COVID-19, but we've had a vaccine for the flu for years. Still over 50K die each year from the flu and we've never shut down like this. Is that paranoid? Perhaps. Is it comparing apples to apples? Not sure, but it's still a question. Was it necessary to shut everything down like we did? With the media storm that was created, I feel in my heart that just from a liability and lawsuit standpoint, the answer is yes. Outside of that, perhaps we'll find out just how necessary it was someday.

As an aside, I've been grateful for more time with my daughter. Haven't had the opportunity for this much one on one since before preschool and really thought that time was as good as gone. Life sometimes has good surprises and silver linings in challenging times.

So, as we come out of our bunkers to rejoin the collective in a more physical manner, if we were lucky enough to have had a safe bunker, what "more" will you choose? It is a choice to treat others as we want to be treated—no doubt about that. Do you really want to "die on the hill" of berating the guy that has had to tell people he didn't know when the next TP shipment will be in for the millionth time? This nebulous virus is unquestionably redoubtable and has left us all shell-shocked and feeling like we were and still are under persistent attack. Doesn't matter if this is "real" or "perceived;" a feeling is an emotion and we ignore them at our own peril.