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Singular Fact Syndrome

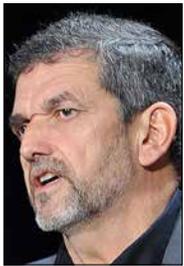
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Basing opinions and decisions on “a fact” has become in vogue. What we need is a better understanding of the value of an independent and unbiased gathering of all relevant facts on which to base opinions and decisions. People who have



Snell

a fact often admonish the person they are debating for not having a fact, and they claim the existence of one fact is enough. I call it Singular Fact Syndrome. Those with Singular Fact Syndrome indignantly and self-righteously hold their fact high in the air and say to people with an opposing view, “Don’t come into this discussion without a fact. Look here, I have my fact. I am better than you, because I have my fact with me. You have not come prepared. You lose.” (I may have exaggerated a bit there for dramatic effect.)

I have to give them an E for effort for recognizing the value of facts. However, is a fact better than nothing? It is a fact that many smokers do not die of cancer, but having that fact—and that fact alone—is useless and misleading. It’s a sure sign that the individual has Singular Fact Syndrome. Sadly, those who have Singular Fact Syndrome are in really bad shape, because they think they have it all going on and they don’t. My favorite Singular Fact Syndrome example was the person who told me they would not wear a seatbelt,

because they saw a story once about someone who drowned when their car went into water when they had their seatbelt on. This was a well-to-do, mature, highly educated individual. Anyone can have Singular Fact Syndrome.

We have a lot of people who take a position and deliberately look for a fact that supports their position. They may have to plow through a lot of facts that work against their case, but those with Singular Fact Syndrome are able to ignore facts that do not help their case. It’s a hideous disease.

If you want to be an effective, honest, and credible individual, you have to look at *all* the facts.

If you want to be an effective, honest, and credible individual, you have to look at *all* the facts associated with a particular point that you want to make. Many people do not have Singular Fact Syndrome. They see right through your singular fact argument. You look silly and possibly dishonest or manipulative to those who do not have Singular Fact Syndrome. We would all be better served if we were more conscious of when we do this and study effective, unbiased, comprehensive analysis and decision-making techniques. *