

# THE BYSTANDER —★—

## What is “TDS?”

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What does “TDS” mean, and why am I seeing it used so frequently in the comment sections of the *Martinsburg Journal*?

Turning to Google to answer my question, I noted multiple entries for the acronym TDS. There is “TDS Telecom,” the provider of high-speed internet, a “TDS Tax Service,” a business called “Travel Document Systems,” a “TDS Concrete,” and a “TDS Health Pharmacy.” Other listings popped up for “TDS Brochure Distributors,” “TDS Properties” and a “TDS Public Affairs.”

I could continue, as there were so very many results to my search for TDS. But none of them seemed to fit the context of the comments I’d seen, much less the articles they were in response to. And when I saw Wikipedia define TDS as “Trump Derangement Syndrome,” the first thing I thought was--- that’s an incredibly disrespectful adjective to use to describe a President of the United States, whether you like him or not.

But of course, I already knew what TDS meant the first time I saw it.

The original author of “derangement syndrome” (although he originally called it “Bush Derangement Syndrome”) was neoconservative syndicated columnist and Fox News contributor, the late Charles Krauthammer. He defined it in 2003 as “the acute onset of paranoia in otherwise normal people in reaction to the policies, the presidency – nay – the very existence of George W. Bush.” Since then, other writers have re-tooled it, substituting the name of the current president.

Charles Krauthammer was also a psychiatrist.

Many of us would at least respect his education and experience, and take into consideration what he might consider “deranged,” even though the proper medical term is “delusional,” or perhaps “mental disorder: displacement syndrome.” Those are diagnostic terms used for certain types

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of coping mechanisms and dissociative disorders, “where the mind substitutes either a new aim or a new object for goals felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable.”

But it is most important to note that if Dr. Krauthammer did think that “deranged” describes those who disagree with this president, he would be contradicting himself. Krauthammer was actually a *Never Trumper*, saying, “I could never vote for Donald Trump.”

Since 2016, hundreds of psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health practitioners have made public statements saying that it is Trump who is deranged, using professional descriptions such as “narcissistic, pathological, unable to think clearly, or behaving in a way that is dangerous.”

Disregarding the guidance of the American Psychological Association’s “Goldwater Rule” (which states that it is unethical for psychiatrists to give a professional opinion about public figures whom they have not examined in person) they have instead relied on what they call the “duty to warn,” similar to how nurses, physicians and social workers are required to report suspected child abuse even if they themselves did not directly witness it.

However, it appears that the TDS accusers choose whom to quote strictly by the political party of the diagnostician; in this case, the Republican Dr. Krauthammer. But they may not realize that the author of their favorite phrase is himself quoted in one of his own articles as saying, “I used to think Trump was an 11-year-old, an undeveloped schoolyard bully. I was off by about 10 years. His needs are more primitive, an infantile hunger for approval and praise, a craving that can never be satisfied. He lives in a cocoon of solipsism where the world outside himself has value — indeed exists — only insofar as it sustains and inflates him.”

Krauthammer also wrote about the presidents’ style of leadership, “it’s that he can’t help himself. His governing rule in life is to strike back when attacked, disrespected or even slighted. To understand Trump, you have to grasp the General Theory: He judges every action, every pronouncement,

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every person by a single criterion — whether or not it/he is “nice” to Trump.”

But the most diagnostic-sounding phrase he used in describing the behavior of our elected leader was to write that “Trump’s hypersensitivity and unedited, untempered Pavlovian responses are, shall we say, unusual in both ferocity and predictability.”

Those statements, made by a psychiatrist who (I assume) was not in the position to personally examine Mr. Trump before penning an assessment, sound especially ominous when you realize the power of the president, no matter who it is. Today, with that power, the executive of the Oval Office is creating what has been called a “malignant normality” through constant abusive ridicule and attacks on those both foreign and domestic.

I’m sure there are plenty of pejoratives that could be used to make fun of citizens who want to debate the serious issues that democracy has saddled us with. But if the Republican base prefers to attack those who disagree with them, by using a phrase coined by someone who disagreed with *them*, I guess that’s their right. It just sounds like Friendly Fire to me---wounding yourself with your own ammo while attempting to attack your enemy.

It’s not the most strategic way to prove your ability to win an argument, should you ever choose to actually have one.