

Totally like whatever, you know?

by Taylor Mali

In case you hadn't realized,
it has somehow become uncool
to sound like you know what you're talking about?
Or believe strongly in what you're ... like... saying?

Invisible question marks and parenthetical
(you know's or you know what I am saying')
have been attaching themselves to the ends of our sentences?
Even when those sentences aren't, like, questions?

Declarative sentences—so---called
because they used to, you know?, DECLARE things to be true, okay,
as opposed to other things are, like, totally, you know, not—
they have been infected by this tragically cool and
totally hip interrogative tone?
As if I am saying, don't think I'm a nerd
just because I've noticed this okay;
I have nothing personally invested in my own opinions,
I'm just inviting you to join me in my band wagon of my own uncertainty?
What has happened to our conviction?
Where are the limbs out on which we once walked?
Have they been, like, chopped down
with the rest of the rain forest? Ya know?
Or do we have, like, nothing to say?
Has society just become so filled with these conflicting feelings of nehh
That we've just gotten to the point that we're
the most aggressively inarticulate generation

to come along since . . . you know, a long time ago!

So I implore you, I entreat you, and I challenge you:

To speak with conviction.

To say what you believe in a manner that bespeaks
the determination with which you believe it.

Because contrary to the wisdom of the bumper sticker,
it is not enough these days to simply QUESTION AUTHORITY.

You got to speak with it, too.