If you want to sound smart, don't use big words

So many times, people think that by using big words, they sound smarter. After all, people might need to go get a dictionary to look those words up. Yet, people who do this, often think they know exactly what a word means, when they don't. Take for example Chris Cillizza, a political commentator for CNN. Last night, on the Don Lemon show, Cillizza was discussing some of the latest news regarding Donald Trump and adult film actress Stormy Daniels. Cillizza thought that the salacious details wouldn't matter much to Trump supporters, because, as he put it, "Trump has never been a model of *moral turpitude*." Nobody corrected him even though what he said was actually the exact opposite of what he meant.

Cillizza was back on the air this morning, talking about the same subject, and repeated the phrase he had used last night, that Trump isn't a model of moral turpitude. This time, one of the other panelists questioned the word, but couldn't quite find the correct word to use instead.

What Cillizza meant to say is that Trump is not a model of *moral rectitude*.

Rectitude means righteousness, while turpitude means depravity. They sound similar, and that's what tripped Cillizza up. Sadly, nobody else seems to have understood that Cillizza was contradicting himself by using a big word that he clearly did not know.

Nobody can go back and correct the spoken word. However, you can and should fix written work. You can avoid sounding stupid just by getting someone to copy edit your work, and check that the big words you are using are being used correctly.

P.S. I did tweet Chris Cilizza the correction. I don't know if

he read it, or whether he cared.