

TOASTMASTER

**Stage Fright –
Why Now?**

Make a
Goal ... and
**Score
Big!**

Goal



Special Issue:

**Communicating
With Medical
Providers**





Navigating Your Destiny

When I was in the third grade in 1979, my teacher asked us to write down what we thought the world would be like in the year 2000. I wrote that in the year 2000 robots would be our co-workers, we would live on the Moon, and space ships would be the primary mode of transportation. Children have vivid imaginations! None of those predictions have come true – yet. It was fun to dream about the future.

What are your Toastmasters dreams for your future? Every accomplishment we achieve first starts as a dream. Our dream then becomes a goal. With diligence, effort, the support of others and belief in ourselves, our goals become a reality.

We are now at the midpoint of our Toastmasters program year. Are you progressing with the goals and dreams you set for yourself at the start of the Toastmasters year on July 1? Did you set goals for yourself? If so, how are you doing? If not, it is never too late to create and adjust your plans.

What are your dreams this year? I'll tell you mine. As your President, my dream is that you achieve your own personal goals and dreams, whatever they may be. My other dream is that every single club, area, division and district achieves Distinguished status or better. My personal dream is to earn another Competent Communicator award.

As you contemplate your dreams, consider these words by Thomas Banyacya, Sr., elder of the Arizona Hopi Nation:

*There is a river flowing now very fast,
it is so great and swift.
That there are those who will be afraid,
they will try to hold onto the shore.
They will feel they are being pulled apart,
and will suffer greatly.*

*Understand that the river knows its destination,
the elders say we must let go of the shore.
Push off into the middle of the river;
Keep our eyes open and our heads above water.*

*And I say; see who is in there with you,
Hold fast to them and celebrate!*

Push off into the river of your destiny. Your Toastmasters friends are at your side. Your journey of dream-making and dream-achieving begins now!

Gary Schmidt, DTM
International President

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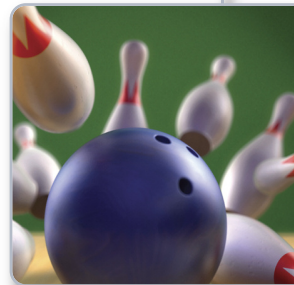


Make a Goal... and Score Big!

Goal-setting leads to success by fostering focus and discipline.

By Sushma Subramanian

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Stage Fright – Why Now?

How one professional speaker tamed a nasty attack of the jitters.

By Karen L. Twichell, ACS

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The Toastmasters Vision:

Toastmasters International empowers people to achieve their full potential and realize their dreams. Through our member clubs, people throughout the world can improve their communication and leadership skills, and find the courage to change.

The Toastmasters Mission:

Toastmasters International is the leading movement devoted to making effective oral communication a worldwide reality.

Through its member clubs, Toastmasters International helps men and women learn the arts of speaking, listening and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind.

It is basic to this mission that Toastmasters International continually expand its worldwide network of clubs thereby offering ever-greater numbers of people the opportunity to benefit from its programs.

Do you have something to say? Write it in 200 words or less, sign it with your name, address and club affiliation and send it to letters@toastmasters.org.

Finding a Voice – and Visibility

Thank you for publishing the article “Breaking Down Stereotypes” by Corin Ramos (October). As an Asian woman in the Midwestern corporate world, and an Information Technology programmer working with a majority of men, I really struggled to find my voice for several years. I was told by a manager that my promotion was turned down because of my low visibility. Joining Toastmasters was the best decision I ever made. It has helped me to communicate better, be confident and find the inner me.

Not only did I benefit from this article, I will share it with my co-workers.

**Nien-Tzu (Nancy) King, ACB, ALB • WelDon Toast Club
Weldon Spring, Missouri**

Acting More Assertively

Although I came to the United States when I was nine years old (50 years ago) and speak English without an accent, “Breaking Down Stereotypes” (October) brought back memories of experiences I had as an adult. I worked for a Japanese hotel for nine years and then took a position with Oakwood Worldwide [a housing provider] as a sales manager. After about a year, my manager took me aside to tell me I was too passive – or perceived as passive – not to my clients but to my co-workers.

I clearly remember that moment when I said to myself, “Wow, I’m really working for an American company.” My manager suggested I take some acting classes (we were near Hollywood, after all), but I found Toastmasters instead. I am a charter member of the Calabasas Toastmasters club, which was chartered in

1993. I still enjoy every meeting. My transformation was gradual but my manager and colleagues noticed the change. Now my manager recommends Toastmasters to new employees or tells them to contact me about it.

Thank you, Corin, for your wonderful contribution.

**Nancy Hatsumi Walsh, ACS • Calabasas Toastmasters
Calabasas, California**

Hear This: Tone Down the Cheerleading!

I am in total agreement with Florence Ferreira’s reaction to the cheerleader technique of many American speakers and moderators (“Know Thy Culture,” October). Although born and reared in the United States, I too have been turned off by the need of presenters (yes, even Toastmasters) to introduce their messages by shouting, “Are we having fun?” and, if the response is not enthusiastic enough, “I don’t hear you!”

American culture demands show biz in everything we do, and that usually equates to energy, speed and volume. Perhaps Toastmasters training should include the information that audience enthusiasm builds naturally after (and not before) the speaker presents a well-designed and delivered speech. The expectation is on the speaker, not the audience.

Jen Fredericks • Morristown Toastmasters • Morristown, New Jersey

Find a Club Gavel Wherever You Travel

Paul Sterman’s article “Broadening Your Horizons” (October) struck a chord with me. As a Toastmaster in tiny Switzerland, it’s not difficult to find yourself in another country

when you take a trip. Whenever I travel, I go online and see if there’s a Toastmasters meeting in my destination city during my stay. I’ve visited a good half-dozen clubs in London, one in Brussels and another in Amsterdam. I often provide an evaluation and always take a try at Table Topics. I’ve actually taken a local friend to a meeting, and he ended up joining!

I call this the “Inter-Club Experience.” Combined with division and district conferences, it is a great way to expand your business network and make new friends.

Jack Vincent, CC, CL • Zug Club • Zug, Switzerland

The Best Birthday Gift

I was born on the fifth of August in 1924. Eleven weeks later Toastmasters was born, so we are approximately the same age.

On the 14th of April in 2003, four weeks short of my 79th birthday, I did my Ice Breaker. This past October, having reached the ripe old age of 85, I celebrated Toastmasters’ 85th birthday by also reaching the Advanced Communicator Silver level.

I joined Toastmasters because I really wanted to learn how to put together and present a structured speech. Toastmasters has succeeded in transforming me from a shy, self-effacing introvert into a reasonably confident communicator. So much so that in 2008, I won the club and area Humorous Speech competition and was runner-up in the division contest.

Thank you, Toastmasters. You have turned my life around.

**Lorelei Sandri, ACS • Kincumber Toastmasters
Umina Beach, New South Wales, Australia**

Healthy Talk

How Toastmasters offers strong medicine.

✦ On April 24, 2009, I served as Toastmaster of my district's Table Topics Speech Contest. Four days later, I was in the hospital having surgery.

Fortunately, the two didn't have anything to do with each other. I didn't break a leg tripping on a microphone cord, or suffer a late-night run-in with a contestant who hated the Table Topics question. In fact, the contest itself went quite smoothly. My surgery had to do with cancer prevention. Although I had already dealt with breast cancer years ago, genetic testing indicated that I had a higher-than-normal risk of ovarian cancer. The operation I was having would reduce that risk to nearly zero.

Taking part in the district contest and conference in the middle of dealing with medical issues made me realize something: Your Toastmasters skills can be of enormous benefit and comfort when you're sick, injured or dealing with a medical crisis. After all, what more critical time could there be for good listening and speaking skills than when you're sitting in a doctor's office or a hospital room, discussing what could literally be a matter of life and death? The problem is many people allow the weight of the situation to make things worse. Even routine medical visits and examinations give some people a measurable increase in blood pressure – what's known as “white-coat hypertension.”

In a recent six-month period, I had surgery twice (the second one was to have a pacemaker implanted) and had to undergo other tests and procedures that included X-rays, a nuclear stress test, an angiogram and physical therapy for lower-back

pain. Instead of disappearing into a fog of medical confusion, frustration and self-pity, I took charge of each situation by asking and responding to questions as clearly and attentively as possible, then analyzing and organizing all the new information I was taking in. I stayed calm and confident, even when things weren't going the way I had planned or wanted. Many of the skills I relied on were exactly what I learned or strengthened during the five years I've been a Toastmaster.

Another benefit I enjoyed and appreciated was being able to add members of my Toastmasters club to my support system of friends and family members who are interested in my health and well-being. They have expressed their interest and concern through cards, calls, visits and offers of help whenever I – or anyone else in our club – have had to deal with difficult circumstances, medical or otherwise. Their good wishes always lift my spirits.

I am *not*, of course, recommending that Toastmasters can or should be used as a substitute for traditional medical care. However, I know from personal experience that whenever any health issues or problems arise, Toastmasters can be a powerful and effective supplemental treatment. The meetings and activities can alleviate or distract you from some of the pain and anxiety that often accompany medical problems and procedures.

For example, when I was asked to be Toastmaster of the district Table Topics contest, I already knew I'd be having surgery a few

days later. I could have skipped the contest and conference, and instead stayed home to rest and get ready for the operation. But what fun would that be? I would have been beset by worrying. But at the Table Topics contest, I was immersed in positive experiences: The audience laughed at the jokes I told during my opening remarks as Toastmaster, the contestants responded with heart and humor when I asked them to describe their dream jobs, and a number of people approached

“Your Toastmasters skills can be of enormous benefit when you are dealing with a medical crisis.”

me after the contest to tell me how much they enjoyed the event.

When it *is* time to deal with the medical issues, Toastmasters training and skills help us focus and concentrate on our situation, and give us better clarity about what must be done or what our options are. And I've discovered one more benefit of Toastmasters: The motivation for good material lessens the sting of difficult times. While overcoming each one of my medical challenges, a single thought kept running through my mind: *When I finally get through this, it's going to make for one terrific speech!* 📌

Betty Liedtke, DTM, is a member of Marsh Winds Toastmasters in Minnetonka, Minnesota, and is the author of “No Place Like Home,” an award-winning newspaper column in the *Chambassen* (Minn.) *Villager*. Contact her at bettyliedtke@msn.com.

2008 World Champion of Public Speaking combats chronic disease with wit and verbal skills.

By Julie Bawden Davis

Speaking from the Heart

L aShunda Rundles credits her mother's unorthodox method of punishment for her gift of verbal communication. "Rather than spanking me and my siblings, my mother would make us memorize poetry and read books and write papers about them," says the 2008 Toastmasters World Champion of Public Speaking. "At the time, I thought, 'This is so stupid! Why can't she just whip me like other kids' moms do?' Instead, she cultivated my mind and taught me that verbal arguments have a lot more staying power than physical altercations."

Rundles' persuasive verbal skills not only helped her win the International Speech Contest, they also enabled her to successfully navigate the medical system and manage a serious chronic illness. Diagnosed with systemic lupus her senior year

masters training and years of public speaking – she began giving speeches as a youngster at church programs and school banquets – have given her confidence and poise. She's not afraid to speak up when the need arises.

"Sometimes a doctor gives you an answer that's just not thorough enough, and you really need to know more," says Rundles. "You have to be assertive."

At one point, Rundles was diagnosed with necrosis – the death of cells and body tissue – in her feet. Eventually, she had eight toes amputated, but it could have been worse if she hadn't been assertive and questioned the original recommended course of action.

"If I hadn't gotten a second opinion, I would have lost half of both feet instead of just eight toes,

her medical struggle. In addition to benefiting from the friendship and support of fellow members, Rundles has often given speeches about the impact of lupus on her life. Speaking and sharing about the subject is therapeutic, she says.

"Being able to voice what goes on in my life," says Rundles, "makes this a lot easier to deal with, rather than just pretending that nothing goes on."

Her World Championship-winning speech – titled "Speak!" – touched on her journey as a lupus survivor, as well as a number of other topics. At the start of the year-long competition, Rundles gave a district-level speech soon after the amputation of her toes.

"I talked about how people will often tell me how unfortunate it is that I suffer with a chronic illness, but I just reply that I am actually fortunate, because I live every day as if it could be my last. For me, there are no wouldas, couldas or shouldas."

As a result of her success managing lupus and as a way to give back, Rundles, a motivational speaker and author, wants to be the national spokesperson for the Lupus Foundation of America. Winning the International Speech Contest helped give her a platform to help others. "I believe lupus needs a voice like Michael J. Fox [who speaks about Parkinson's disease] and Jenny McCarthy [who speaks about autism] to raise awareness and funding."

"I live every day as if it were the last. For me, there are no wouldas, couldas or shouldas."

of high school, Rundles has struggled with numerous physical challenges associated with an unpredictable disease that affects the joints and other tissues throughout the body. A member of the Town North Trendsetters club in Dallas, Texas, she has endured nearly 20 surgeries and countless hospital stays over the years.

Being able to speak clearly and candidly to her physicians has been essential, says Rundles. Her Toast-

masters training and years of public speaking – she began giving speeches as a youngster at church programs and school banquets – have given her confidence and poise. She's not afraid to speak up when the need arises.

"Speak up and ask questions," she adds. "When you get answers, make sure that you're completely comfortable with the advice you receive."

Speaking Helps the Healing

Toastmasters has also provided Rundles with a valuable creative and emotional outlet for dealing with



◀ **LaShunda Rundles won the 2008 World Championship of Public Speaking with her speech, “Speak!” while battling lupus.**

Whether she is talking to doctors or delivering a speech, Rundles believes in honest communication – speaking from the heart. If meeting with a physician, she’ll “ask the hard questions.” “Sometimes I’ve wondered if doctors are trying to protect you with what they’re saying,” she notes, “but I want to know the whole story. Don’t sugarcoat anything that’s happening – because it’s my life.”

Her honesty and passion shine through in her presentations, says fellow club member Past International President Pauline Shirley. “There is a true depth and authenticity to her powerful speeches,” says Shirley. “She’s an incredibly strong woman; you can see that in how she has managed her health.”

Members Rally Around

Toastmasters has provided a tremendous support system for Rundles, who has belonged to the Town

North Trendsetters since 2004. Added to the practical advice and encouragement she has received on speeches, countless Toastmasters have offered fellowship and support in her medical fight. That struggle became especially harrowing in the months after her World Championship triumph. Not long after her win, she was hospitalized when her intestines shut down. Over the next eight months, she endured 12 surgeries. She made a remarkable recovery, defying the doubts of some doctors.

Rundles, who received considerable media exposure in the wake of her 2008 victory, says she received e-mails and cards from Toastmasters around the world who had heard about her battle with lupus.

“I don’t think I would have survived this recent battle without my Toastmasters family,” Rundles says. “I believe the prayers from all over the world actually saved my life.

“To see the reach of what Toastmasters can do, and all the people supporting me, was phenomenal,” she adds. “This new family of people loving me and supporting me and sending me e-mails from all over the world gave me an energy and fight.”

Her strength of spirit amazes those closest to her, such as her sister, Sonya, who says, “Since we were kids, LaShunda has always been a fighter.”

Rundles’ fellow member and 2008 Convention roommate, Cynthia Brown, remembers how sick she was the night before delivering her championship speech. “She couldn’t keep her medicine down and didn’t sleep well all night – and it wasn’t nerves,” says Brown. “Despite how badly she felt, she gave a phenomenal speech the next day.”

One reason it’s been so important for Rundles to persevere in trying circumstances is the example it sets for her 14-year-old son, Dennis. Thinking back on the events of the Calgary International Convention, she recalls praying for the strength to get through her competition speech. “Once I was up [on stage], I was okay,” she says.

“My experience has taught my son how to prepare for the worst while staying hopeful for the best,” notes Rundles. “He’s learned that you don’t ever quit, and it’s not over until it’s over.” ■

Julie Bawden Davis is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*. You can reach her at Julie@JulieBawdenDavis.com.

How to get the most from
medical consultations.

A Visit to the Doctor

By Florence Ferreira, ACB, CL

Question: How do you know that you've got the "Toastmasters bug"? Answer: You feel an urge to ring the bell when the doctor asks you to say "ah." For some people, the inability to remove their Toastmasters hat upon leaving the meeting starts after three to five years of membership. In my case, a fortuitous turn of events sped the process. Just two months after I joined the organization, at the dawn of 2000, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. As a result, my weekly Toastmasters meetings were paired with regular doctor visits.

This is the type of general evaluation – doctor's visit as Toastmasters meeting – that used to play in my head when I left some of my doctors' offices:





- Our guests were greeted with a frown and pushed to speak hastily through the fleeting opening of a sliding translucent window at the front desk. They might look for another club.
- The meeting started 20 minutes late, a substantial improvement over past weeks.
- For inspiration, the broadcast of headline news through a blasting TV set on the wall might not be the right fit for the test coming next – blood pressure.
- Attendees were left alone for periods extending from five to 20 minutes in one tiny, neon-lit room after another, dressed in used and discolored unisex open-front-or-back gowns. Not very confidence-inducing.
- The Topicsmaster entered the room looking at his notes. No handshake, no smile, no eye contact. Connection is made difficult.

The World of the Patient

In his recent and fascinating book, *Anti Cancer*, Dr. David Servan-Schreiber writes, “When I found out I had a brain tumor, I discovered overnight a world that looked familiar but in fact I knew little about the world of the patient. Like everyone else, you waited in the waiting room that as a doctor you had breezed through, head high, avoiding eye contact with patients so as not to be waylaid.”

“Opportune silence will help prevent medical errors, one of the five leading causes of death in the United States.”

I felt so depressed facing my own “patienthood” at the beginning of my long and still-ongoing cancer saga that I deserted the conventional medical system for three years, a decision I later regretted. When my cancer spread and I was re-examining my options, I realized that a big part of my aversion to the system was communication-related. As a cross-cultural communication consultant, it dawned on me that I was simply facing a different culture – the mainstream medical culture – and suffering from culture shock. All I had to do was use my expertise in bridging the cultural gap.

By then I had five years of active Toastmasters experience, including having been Vice President Education as well as president of my club – the Boca Raton Toastmasters in Boca Raton, Florida. I felt armed enough to give it another try. But this time, I would be in charge.

I developed strategies that have proven successful, allowing me the benefits of my doctor visits without the

emotional side effects. Just as if I prepared to be the Toastmaster of a club meeting, I now work on every detail – from the way I project my image to the effectiveness of my communication and the organization of my records.

Here are a few useful tips:

When You are the Patient

- **Dress to heal.** In Toastmasters we are encouraged to dress professionally. It projects power and authority. As strange as it may seem, I wear a suit when I visit the doctor. Even if you end up wrapped in the forget-my-dignity-open-back gown, a professional outfit will foster enhanced respect while you are dressed.
- **Bring someone with you.** Have you noticed the number of guests who come to the doctor's office accompanied

“Researching your condition and becoming familiar with related medical terms will make you an active participant in your own recovery and may even save your life.”

by someone? It boosts their confidence and helps them compile information. It is very important to take someone with you to the doctor's office. As patients, we are not always in our most clear state of mind, especially after an unpleasant diagnosis. We forget to ask critical questions and we miss information. Whoever you have brought with you will be more alert and able to take notes.

- **Use time wisely.** Since we typically get the red light after somewhere between five and 15 minutes with the doctor, it is in our best interest to come prepared. We need to have our records organized as if we were the Toastmaster of the meeting, bring a list of comments and concerns as if we drafted a speech and underline the most important ones as if we were to give an evaluation. In summary, we need to be ready to discuss the most relevant issues in the least amount of time.
- **Make an impact.** Organization, purpose and clarity in your speech will get you the audience's attention and interest. If you apply the same skills with the doctor, he/she will be more inclined to treat you as an intelligent and valued patient.

- **Give room for silence.** How many times have you struggled to concentrate on your one-minute written evaluation because the General Evaluator kept talking, oblivious to the need for quiet? And how many times have you asked questions or kept chatting while the doctor was writing his notes or your prescription, or while the nurse was taking your pulse? Consideration is critical in communication. Besides, opportune silence will help prevent medical errors, one of the five leading causes of death in the United States.

- **Be a Grammarian.** The Word of the Day turns into a glossary when it comes to communicating effectively with the doctor. Researching your condition and becoming familiar with related medical terms will make you an active participant in your own recovery and may even save your life.

Thanks to a medical test that I had personally requested after reading about it online, I was able to receive, years later, a new therapy that I credit for my survival. Having the results at hand when my condition required immediate action saved my life. Today, patients team up with the doctor in decision-making, so learning new terminology is critical.

- **Connect.** Connecting with your audience members involves showing them – with proper prior research, customized humor and stories, interaction, etc. – that they matter and that “you are one of them.” As soon as I step into a doctor's office, I set myself on relationship-building mode. The simple acknowledgment, “Looks like a busy day!” works marvels at any level. I'll comment on family pictures on desks, express gratitude whenever possible, make people laugh, inquire about their origins when I hear an accent, make note of their names, send personalized holiday and thank-you cards, and so on. When you show your listeners that you care about them you encourage their loyalty and engagement. Likewise, when you connect with your medical staff you reinforce their interest in you and raise their commitment level. Needless to say, you also elicit a shift in bedside manners, if necessary.

When You are the Doctor

- **Promote congeniality.** Every time I push the entrance door of my club meeting, a member standing on the other side greets me with a bright smile. Guests are so impressed by the welcoming atmosphere of the club that they recurrently mention it as one of the reasons that motivates them to join.

In my nearly 10-year cancer odyssey I've come across many doctor's offices, and whenever the staff was friendly it made all the difference. I urge doctors to reflect on the importance of people skills when hiring and training their staff.

■ **Go easy on newcomers.** Some Toastmasters rules are specifically designed to avoid scaring away inexperienced speakers and guests. We don't ring the bell for "ahs" when a guest is speaking or a new member gives the Ice Breaker, nor do we focus on gestures and eye contact at those early stages. We strongly secure the psychological safety of our "freshmen."

Five days following an excruciatingly painful, anesthesia-free biopsy on my breast, I found myself waiting alone for 15 minutes in a bleached-white anti-septic room with bare walls. When my surgeon finally came, she stared at her notes for about three minutes before acknowledging my presence, and then blurted: "I don't have good news for you, Ms. Ferreira." She looked me in the eyes for the first time. "It's malignant. I'm sorry." And without missing a beat, "There is nothing else we can do but remove your breast along with 20 to 30 lymph nodes, and then give you chemotherapy. Here

is some literature for you, and I'll walk you to the front desk where we'll set up an appointment and give you some plastic surgeons' names."

That's when something short-circuited in my head and I took flight. As a doctor, you can't change the facts, but using a gentle and supportive approach will lessen the impact and encourage a healing disposition in the mind of the patient.

■ **Use the Oreo cookie method.** (For those unfamiliar with the American Oreo-cookie analogy, think of crepes, baklavas, *alfajores*, *linzer augen* or Shanghai pancakes – any pastry that comes with a layer of dough on the top and bottom with filling in the middle). When we conduct a Toastmasters evaluation, we start by offering general positive comments, then we give suggestions for improvement, and we wrap up with encouraging remarks.

Four years ago, after one of my successive surgeons postulated that I had three to six months left to live, my oncologist managed to show me a light at the end of the tunnel. He started his "evaluation" by stating that it was

(Continued on page 22)

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A Visit to the Doctor

(Continued from page 11)

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Whether you are a patient or a health professional, you will find in your Toastmasters training myriad ideas to improve communication, increase effectiveness and find gratification in your mutual interaction. The key is to be proactive. Of course, you can’t anticipate every scenario. So what do you do in face of the unexpected? You draw from your Table Topics experience. This is how it worked for me over a year ago:

While I was waiting in his consultation room, my new primary doctor got an emergency call and had to leave

the office. He appointed one of his colleagues to my care, who openly expressed his discontent about the situation and started reviewing my medical history in a rude manner. I just answered the questions, nonchalantly. Then he asked what I did for a living. And I heard myself reply, “I speak and write about doctor-patient communication.” He turned around in a snap, looked at me bewildered, shouted out, “Really!” and suddenly emerged as a delightful Prince Charming. I’ve been carrying that line in my toolbox ever since, but am happy to report I never had to use it again. Not all doctors’ offices are created equal. 📌

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(Continued from page 15)

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Jamey French, DTM, is a member of Greenville Toastmasters club in Greenville, Ohio. Reach him at www.JameyandMolly.com.

How nurses nurture their communication skills.

Presenting With Care

Last year, I was hired to teach a public speaking course at a hospital – a course targeted to nurses. The nurses in the class wanted better skills and techniques for giving presentations. Most of all, they wanted strategies for overcoming fear and nervousness when speaking to groups large and small.

“The toughest groups to talk to are the doctors,” said Nancy, a nurse at Mid Coast Hospital in Brunswick, Maine, where the class was taught. (The nurses’ names were changed for the purpose of this article so they could speak candidly about their concerns.) She was one of eight in the class, including an operating room nurse, the hospital’s director of nursing education, and a nurse who counsels patients before and after surgeries. Nancy and the others agree that doctors can be impatient and intimidating at times.

Dr. Richard F. Kammerman, Sr., a member of a Toastmasters club for doctors and others in the medical profession, says it’s vital that nurses and doctors communicate effectively. A retired family physician in Santa Ana, California, Kammerman is a member of the Orange County Medical Association Toastmasters club. He says doctors depend on nurses to train patients on various aspects of their care, so it’s critical they both are on the same page regarding instructions given to patients before they’re released from the

hospital – instructions about medicine, diet, exercise, how to administer medicines to themselves, etc.

What’s more, some nurses specialize in areas of knowledge that doctors need to better understand in order to prescribe care for specific patients. “Doctors may need specific education [from nurses] on such subjects as availability of, and how to access, hospice services, and home-care assessments and services, including the patient’s capability of self care and the availability of ancillary-care needs,” says Kammerman, now a professor in the department of family medicine at the University of California, Irvine.

“The physician should be wise enough to take the nurse’s assessments seriously,” says Kammerman. Consider special-needs individuals who cannot speak for themselves. He notes that it is the doctor’s responsibility to ensure the patient and caregivers understand the patient’s condition and the recommended treatment, but it is the nurse who usually sees that instructions are carried out.

As a result, it is oftentimes the nurses who find means of improving treatments ordered. If nurses describe a new piece of equipment or other technological advances that are beneficial to patients, doctors are typically attentive and appreciative, as this information impacts their patient’s care, says Dr. Luis

Kobashi, a urologist and fellow member of the Orange County Medical Association Toastmasters.

Helping with Presentations

While nurses must give many presentations to physicians, they more often give such speeches to other nurses and student nurses. In the Mid Coast Hospital class – which ran for two consecutive evenings last May – I offered a variety of strategies and tips for delivering these types of presentations. I used materials from several sources and selected a few physical exercises designed to funnel tension out of the body before a presentation. We began the class both nights by performing these exercises. We would stand loosely and shake our arms overhead, wriggle our hands, lift and shake the alternate legs and feet, take a few deep breaths and perform slow-paced neck and head rolls. These exercises serve to “bleed off” some of the nervous energy before a presentation so that shakiness is minimized.

In general, audiences most often complain about speakers who don’t talk loudly enough, or talk too quickly. When people are nervous about speaking before a group, they often speed through the material without pauses. Medical audiences in particular need frequent pauses, especially when trying to absorb new material. They also need the pauses so that



words are audible as distinct units and not a continuum of noise. Slow, audible and distinct: This is the foundation for any effective presentation or speech, but it is critical when medical professionals speak.

Much of the tension that comes from anticipating any kind of presentation can be alleviated by visiting the venue where the talk will be given, standing at the lectern and rehearsing the presentation. (Including learning how to work with a microphone and/or pointer for a PowerPoint presentation.)

This is particularly true for those speaking in a medical setting. Nurses might give instruction to students while assisting in a surgical suite, in which case they should know where to stand and what their duties are for a specific operation and where their students will stand. That way, they'll know how best to present their material around the actual surgery. The nurse giving the talk goes in knowing her space

and equipment, and can focus on delivering the material itself.

Whether the nurse's presentation is to fellow nurses, students or a group of doctors, the better her technique, the more an audience will absorb. The important thing in any lecture is to present ideas clearly and stay on point, says Kobashi.

"In other words, don't explain at length principles of wound care and handling, with which all surgeons are already familiar," he says. Know the audience and their basic level of knowledge before planning the specifics of the presentation.

The opening of a speech for doctors or nurses might not be as critical as one for, say, business executives paying for a high-powered motivational speaker. However, openings are still important. The Mid Coast nurses believed that opening with an interesting statistic or anecdote was good to garner audience attention. Statistics and anecdotes humanize material and are also

effective to convey significant content and make it memorable.

"It is hard to be energetic while giving talks on medical topics," said Mary, a nurse who finds enthusiasm for her presentations by remembering that lives can depend on her effectiveness in conveying information related to patient care.

Practice makes perfect, and that includes timing a presentation before giving it, as all Toastmasters know. Prepare the material, "visit" the venue if possible, know who your audience is, and the rest will follow. The first presentation is the hardest, as the Mid Coast nurses admitted, but once a speaker has that first delivery under her belt it gets easier, and the presentations get better and better. ■

Sherry Ballou Hanson is a freelance writer, poet and instructor living in Brunswick, Maine. Reach her at www.sherryhanson.com.

How Toastmasters helped my wife survive!

By Jamey French, DTM

Standing Tall

You only have to be a Toastmaster for a short time to realize that Toastmasters can help you grow personally and professionally, but...grow *physically*? It's true. This is the story of how Toastmasters helped my wife, Molly French, grow two inches taller.

I have been a Toastmaster for 12 years. During this time I achieved my DTM, served in every club officer role, became an area governor and District 40's lieutenant governor marketing (LGM). I discovered that Toastmasters is more than just meetings, speeches and conferences. The skills we learn transfer into our personal and professional lives as well. Over the years, I have touted that message to individuals, small groups and large auditoriums full of people. I've shared many testimonials about the life-changing benefits of Toastmasters. But I never fully understood the power of my own Toastmasters training until March of 2008, when my communication and leadership skills saved Molly's life and then helped her stand tall.

Suddenly Sick

In February of that year, Molly went to our local hospital with what she thought was a sore throat. The doctor decided it was a viral infection. "Just let it run its course," he said. Three days later, overwhelmed by a massive infection, Molly went into septic shock. She returned to the

emergency room where she was placed on oxygen and immediately transferred to a larger metropolitan hospital.

The next day, her 39th birthday, she fell into a coma and was breathing through a ventilator. What followed was a multi-organ shut-down beginning with her lungs, liver and kidneys. Her condition worsened over the next two days and her doctor told me she had a five-percent chance of survival.

Putting My Toastmasters Skills to the Test

When things were at their absolute worst, I called a meeting that, in retrospect, turned out to be crucial to Molly's survival and ultimate recovery. I'd received a lot of confusing suggestions from many well-meaning people. Their ideas of what to do were so diverse and opinionated that I could not make an informed decision. And I needed to make some critical decisions regarding her care – not the least of which was deciding if she should be moved to a better-equipped hospital, a risky proposition since Molly might not survive the flight. So I asked to meet with several specialty physicians,



Jamey and Molly French

direct care nurses, nurse managers and other experts. We gathered away from the Intensive Care Unit, in a quiet room.

Mustering all of my Toastmasters training, I took the lead and announced, "I will make the decision and I will live with my decision; however, the only decision I will not live with is one I make without having all possible options discussed in this room right now." I continued, "I need options, not opinions."

The information I obtained from that meeting enabled me to make the painful decision to take the risk and send Molly to a hospital at the University of Michigan – where her life would hang in the balance.

Surviving and Standing Tall

Once in Michigan, her condition remained critical. After three weeks in a coma, she woke up only to be

faced with more grave news: Her legs had suffered greatly, and the doctors said it would be best to amputate them. Because I had made the informed decision to bring her to that particular hospital, I felt confident in the doctors' judgment.

After two and a half months at the University of Michigan enduring six surgeries, countless procedures, multiple blood transfusions, weeks of dialysis, specialized ventilators and intensive rehab, Molly's pure spirit, tenacity and courageous attitude prevailed; she returned home. Over the next several months she faced even more intensive therapies, procedures and surgeries. Finally, she was fitted with a set of new prosthetic legs.

Four months after being hospitalized, she stood for the first time! Her first words were, "I feel so tall!" After so much worrying that she would never walk again, there she was – standing. We were surprised to discover that the new legs made her two inches taller. When asked about the extra height, Molly – a mere 5-feet tall before – responded with a big grin. "I always wanted to be taller, and I just figured, why not? I might as well get something out of the deal."

Life-Saving Skills from Toastmasters

Now, when Molly and I speak to audiences of all sizes and from all backgrounds, the most common question we are asked is, "How did you get through it?" Our answer is simple: "Our friends and family, our faith and, believe it or not, Toastmasters."

Before, during and after that eventful meeting with Molly's caregivers, I put skills to work that came naturally to me because I had been practicing each – leadership, speaking, listening and evaluating – every week for a dozen years. The Toastmasters meetings and conferences I attended, the speeches I

gave and the practice I enjoyed for all that time ultimately added up to one thing: saving Molly's life.

Communication Skills at Work

I was able to keep my emotions under control, avoid opinion-choked debates and stay focused on the pros and cons of the options. I was able to curb egos from becoming a part of the conversation and give everyone in the room the opportunity to share information without allowing anyone to dominate the conversation. With a lot of medical lingo being tossed around the room, I was able to ask appropriate questions and re-state what was said in order to clarify and con-

"I never fully understood the power of my own Toastmasters training until March of 2008, when my communication and leadership skills saved Molly's life."

firm that I truly understood. Those skills ensured that it worked both ways, and that the medical team understood me and our wishes. As though I were giving a speech in Toastmasters, I had a beginning that explained my purpose, a body where I supported my purpose and a conclusion that not only summarized my purpose, but offered a strong call to action.

Leadership Skills at Work

I was confidently able to state, "I will make the decision." I was also able to share my extreme concern for my wife along with the sense of urgency that a quick, yet informed, decision be made. These abilities sent a strong message that, even while wrought with emotion, I was willing and able to think clearly and make the critical decisions. This in turn instilled in the medical team the sense that they could share all information with me and that we were

on the same team. Most importantly, everyone knew I led the team. Just like leading a meeting in Toastmasters, I kept the meeting within a time frame, kept it on-track and on-subject. By the time we walked out of that room, everyone supported the ultimate decision and then worked to make that decision a reality.

Evaluation Skills at Work

During the meeting with Molly's medical team, I had to use my evaluation, listening and critical-thinking skills to discern opinion from facts and viable options versus "pie-in-the-sky" options. Drawing on my evaluation skills enabled me to make a decision that ultimately

saved Molly's life. Just like performing a speech evaluation, I listened carefully and gave feedback to the doctors and nurses regarding each of their suggestions and explanations. I then used the information to form my own opinions on the best course of action.

Table Topics Skills at Work

During the many conversations on that day, and the days that followed, I was asked an unbelievable number of questions. Many of them required me to put emotions aside, think critically and answer intelligibly – in only a few moments. After all those years of hoping that the Table Topicsmaster would not call on me, I'm now thankful that I was called on anyway. Those spur-of-the-moment, little-time-to-think, stressful Table Topics had prepared me for the real-life Table Topics I was about to endure, when it mattered most.

(Continued on page 22)

A Visit to the Doctor

(Continued from page 11)

not as dark as it seemed; that despite the severity of my state, there were new treatments I could try. Then he described the course of action. And the words he used to conclude still resonate in my mind: “Now your job is to think positive. Never lose hope.” Words meant with love never hurt anyone.

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Make a Goal... and **Score Big!**

Rich Williams, a former Toastmaster, has always set goals to motivate himself. A veteran bowling coach who has worked at the highest levels of the sport, he is a well-known subject matter expert who gives many presentations on bowling-related topics. Williams says his practice of setting goals, combined with his Toastmasters experience, helped him become a professional presenter.

“When I joined Toastmasters, I was surprised to learn that I had some serious refining to do to reach the professional presenter level,” says the resident of Chesterland, Ohio. “I achieved my presentation goals due to the goal-setting work I did.”

**Goal-setting
leads to
success by
fostering
focus and
discipline.**

By Sushma Subramanian

Setting tangible milestones to aim for helps him remain successful. In addition to setting goals for his career, Williams uses goals to stay on target in his personal life, which includes bowling and a regular exercise routine.

“At 57, I still run four miles four times a week and I do strength training at least three days a week,” says Williams, who, along with his wife, Doris, runs Williams Sports Consulting, which provides training to bowlers of all levels and ages. “Every time I lift a weight, there’s a goal involving the number of repetitions or the amount of weight in the lift. Every time I run, I reach for an ‘equal to the last time’ or ‘better than the last time’ performance.”

Tenaciously pursuing these fitness objectives, he says, has helped him reach his bowling goals. In one league he plays in, Williams has now raised his scoring average to 235 a game.

Goal-setting has also played a key role in Jana Barnhill’s life. When the 2008-’09 president of Toastmasters International first joined the organization and was working her way through speech manuals, she gave herself deadlines along the way. For example, she had to achieve her Competent Communicator award by a specific date. Years later, when she was running for a leadership office in Toastmasters and pursuing the Accredited Speaker designation, she used similar incentives – promising herself that she’d call a certain number of people by a certain date or that she would give a speech by a certain time.

“Goal-setting has played a major role in my advancement in Toastmasters, both as a speaker and a leader,” says the Lubbock, Texas, resident. “My personality is one that can be easily distracted. As a result, if I don’t set goals for myself, I find myself very busy but not necessarily accomplishing anything.” Having a plan for how to accomplish certain tasks or objectives also gives Barnhill a sense of accomplishment once those tasks are completed. She makes sure to share her intentions with mentors and fellow club members, so they can hold her accountable if she doesn’t accomplish her goal on time.

Be Aware of What You Want

The Toastmasters program starts with one goal – complete the 10 basic speeches and earn the CC award. But most members have broader objectives as well. This can require self-awareness, notes Rus McCarter, a leadership and training consultant. “What are you passionate for in life? To motivate yourself, you must first be aware of what needs you are trying to satisfy,” he says. “It’s never just about being a better speaker,” adds McCarter. “Your underlying needs – acceptance,

money, admiration, being seen as successful – drive your pursuit of your goals.”

While most people set goals for themselves, not everyone does so correctly. A pair of psychologists, Gary Latham and Edwin Locke, published the first real research on the subject in the 1960s. The results showed that productivity increases when people set goals. Subsequently, managers around the country began setting ambitious quarterly and yearly goals for their employees. But they had to be the right kind of goals. Locke and Latham recommended following these general guidelines for setting goals:

- They must be specific, measurable, relevant and time-bound.
- They must be challenging enough that they can inspire.
- They must be something people want so that they remain committed.
- They should be flexible. People should check in every few weeks on their progress and leave room to rethink or reinterpret goals.
- They must be attainable. If they seem impossible to reach, people tend to give up.

There is a well-known acronym that’s often used to characterize the goals people should set for themselves: It’s called SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely.

“If I don’t set goals for myself, I find myself very busy but not necessarily accomplishing anything.”

- Jana Barnhill

While the seminal work of Locke and Latham has long been the definitive word on goal-setting, more recent researchers have also sounded a cautionary note. “The problems come when you take it *too* seriously,” says Lisa Ordóñez, a professor at the Eller College of Management at the University of Arizona. “You put too much weight on the goal, and you’re too stressed out.”

Experts say that when you take goal-setting too far or become consumed with certain professional aspirations, it can be detrimental. Examples abound in the corporate world of unethical behavior that’s been demonstrated in pursuit of financial or other goals.

“Goals do work,” says Ordóñez. “They work to focus our intentions and focus our energy. But sometimes they have unintended consequences.”

Douglas Vermeeren, an expert on achievement who speaks to businesses about success, says that *remembering why your objectives are important* can prevent some of the negative behaviors associated with goal-setting. When speaking to a Toastmasters group in Antwerp, Belgium, Vermeeren reminded members of the influence they can have as speakers. “We think we’re part of a club to grow our own life or improve our personal abilities,” he said, “but we don’t realize we’re not just building skills for ourselves. Speeches can have an enormous influence.”

Keeping Yourself Committed

A benefit of goal-setting is that it increases one’s accountability – to yourself and to others. Toastmaster Dena Harris recalls a club meeting when the president of her group had

all of the members stand and announce their goals – with timelines. He then e-mailed to club members a “goal list” that contained everyone’s stated goals and accompanying deadlines. The purpose of this, notes Harris – a member of the Blue Moon Toastmasters in Greensboro, North Carolina – was not only to hold members publicly accountable for their objectives, but also for them to use the list to encourage and support each other in their efforts.

Vermeeren says that we also need to think in the long term. You can achieve more meaningful goals by looking further in the future rather than just toward the

Start the New Year Right!

Yes, it’s that time again – time to start in on those New Year’s resolutions. Time to turn over the proverbial new leaf – kick your exercise program back into gear, create a new filing system, read more books and, oh yes, that old standby: Shed some extra pounds.

If you’re like many people, the annual goals tend to lose traction as the months roll by. But here are three tips for making your resolutions stick:

- **Write them down.** The simple act of writing down your goals on a piece of paper (or an electronic document, if you wish) helps you remember and act on them. Ideas that stay in your head don’t carry the same power as those committed to a document of some sort.
- **Schedule them.** Once you’ve decided on a few realistic, manageable goals (cut down your candy intake? re-organize your garage?), mark your specific goal dates on a calendar. Use that as your motivation and guiding force.
- **Share your goals with others.** If you make others aware of your aspirations for the new year, you’ll establish a support squad of well-wishers who can help encourage and motivate you in your pursuits. So spread the word with family, friends and fellow Toastmasters!

What Toastmasters goals will you set this year? Helping your club to earn the DCP award? Entering two speech contests?

Perhaps one objective could be to find more diverse topics for your presentations. The *Toastmaster* magazine has some helpful advice. Check out “Eureka! A Speech Idea!” on page 20 and “Finding Inspiration all Around You” on page 21 for help on ideas for speeches.



next speech you give. He spent years asking successful business professionals, athletes and scientists about how they achieved their goals and noticed some common themes that helped him formulate his own guidelines:

- Recognize your potential to achieve the goal. Without that, you can't produce the desire.
- Form a goal. Craft it as a clear possibility.
- Increase your probability of achieving the goal, either through developing the right relationships, getting the necessary financing or even simply placing yourself at the right place at the right time.
- Make yourself the type of person who could achieve a goal by looking at other people who have achieved it. Take the right kinds of actions.

Barnhill sets up short-term as well as long-term goals for herself. "Short-term goals are important because they keep you on track. They are smaller, incremental goals because you can't accomplish something all at once."

It took Barnhill nearly 15 years to reach her goal of becoming the president of Toastmasters International. She knew that aspiring to serve as the leader of an organization with members around the world would help her gain

the leadership skills she believed she was lacking. Knowing her end-goal, Barnhill took the proper steps, rising from position to position within the organization. She used her experiences in lower offices to gain the skills and credibility needed for the role she was aiming for.

"Some people might want a title more than a position," Barnhill says. "You can't get your cart before your horse."

Of course, goal-setting doesn't do any good without follow-through. You have to set your sights on a target and then take action. Gary Blair is president of the GoalsGuy Learning Systems in Tampa, Florida. On his Web site, goalsguy.com, he stresses that accomplishing one's objectives in life takes a great deal of energy and work – that "every action, word and thought has a direction that either moves you closer to, or further from, your goals."

That means there's plenty of effort involved, but also plenty of chances for achieving what you want.

"Each day," says Blair, "offers an opportunity for improvement." ■

Sushma Subramanian is a freelance journalist in New York. She can be reached at sushma.subramanian@gmail.com.

Wish You Were FUNNIER?

Dear Fellow Toastmaster:

Do you wish you were **funnier**? Do you believe that "funny people" **think differently**?

The truth is... funny people *do* think differently. Truer still; **you will never be funnier unless you change the way you think**. That is exactly what *Get More Laughs By Next Week™* will do for you. I Darrentee it.

Would a **step-by-step process** for getting laughs be helpful?

I never got laughs. I was quiet and shy and had severe stage fright. It was quite an epiphany for me when I discovered the simple exercises comedians use to develop material. A whole new world opened up for me when I was shown that humor was a *learned skill*, as opposed to a trait one must be born with.

Naturally, I did things the hard way, so it took me years of struggle and tens of thousands of dollars to uncover the steps that would take me from bumbling amateur to sought-after professional. This is a *proven* system. I've been teaching this process for more than ten years.

Stage time,



Darren LaCroix
2001 World Champion of Public Speaking

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How to find a goldmine of topics.

By Sandy Jacobson, CC

Eureka! A Speech Idea!

Do the 10 required speeches for your Competent Communicator award seem insurmountable? Think about it: 10 talks on 10 topics. To some of us, that's not only a lot of talk, it's a lot of topics. Some survive the 10-speech challenge by giving presentations that can all be traced back to a single theme. That's not advised, because variety is a cornerstone of the Toastmasters program. Topics are as diverse as the club members themselves. Wide-ranging and engaging speech subjects will keep you vibrantly human... and talking!

So here are 10 tips for generating some great speech ideas:

1 What would you like to know more about? Ecology? Leadership? The history of luxury? Now is your chance! Writing and presenting a speech is a great way to bring your interest to life. Look into an intriguing concept and figure out what you have to say about it.

2 Observations – do you see trends? What are people looking for on the Internet? Search engines like Google provide search-trend analysis. Another trend source is new words in our living language. Consider checking out Web sites that monitor the origin of new words.

3 Adopt the inquisitive qualities of journalists. Do you read another language? Check out the wealth of topics in world newspapers at <http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages>.

4 Ask, “What moves me forward at work?” Mentoring, teamwork, how to make good decisions, entrepreneurship, negotiating? Write a speech about an improvement you'd like to achieve. Break it down into steps and perhaps include how you'll measure your success.

5 Teach. Learn a new skill and share it with the audience. Outline interesting points, tips and techniques. Show your enthusiasm.

6 What do you get lost in? What are your interests or hobbies? Do you know a lot about model-making, knitting or catering?

7 Enter another world. Choose a trade, specialty, industry, association or nonprofit and look up the sources they make available on the Internet. U.S. association directories are searchable on the ASAE Web site at <http://www.asaecenter.org>.

8 Check out community resources at your nearby library. You may have access to databases and electronic services, including the full text of magazines and newspapers as well as myriad other resources.

9 Talk to friends and family. What speech ideas do they have? What speeches or subjects influenced them or have remained relevant? Quiz them and see what you come up with together.

10 Put yourself in someone else's place. Be a refugee, a farmer, or a sculptor commissioned to do public art for your city. An experiment with perspective can start from a photograph, an interview or a story. Use your imagination and research!

Be sure to consider your audience and each of the manual's 10-project objectives, tips and evaluation guides – and then put these 10 ideas to the test. These can also work for Table Topics and other situations where you want to liven up the group and stimulate new ways of thinking. With a little practice, you'll soon produce speech ideas that are intriguing, unique and unforgettable. Enjoy the payoff!

Sandy Jacobson, CC, is a member of Michigan Avenue club in Chicago, Illinois.

Strike more gold with the help of Toastmasters' “Speech Topics: They're All Around Us” (Item 1616), available at www.toastmasters.org/shop



Discover endless speech topics in life's everyday sources.

Finding Inspiration All Around You

As the president of a growing Toastmasters club, I watch our members go from nervous newbies to confident speakers. Observing this transformation is a rewarding experience. I also get to see what people struggle with in their journey to becoming a Competent Communicator. Some achieve their CC very quickly, while others have a great deal of difficulty.

What's interesting to me is the reason for success or failure. In my opinion, it's *inspiration*. When you're speaking, you have to be inspired about your topic... you have to believe in it and want to talk about it. The members on the fast track in our club – Parker Toastmasters in Parker, Colorado – are not necessarily the “best” speakers, but they are *inspired* to speak. They have something to say and want to tell others about it.

What is inspiration and how do you get it? I wish there was an exact recipe I could give, but short of that I'll offer you the guidance I give new members in our club. I have given speeches on a variety of topics, and I'm often asked by new members, “Where do you get the material for your speeches? Where do you find the inspiration to write them?”

In actuality, getting the material to speak about is the easy part. Look into your own life, the daily experiences and the people who are important to you. Surely there's material in there just begging to be spoken about. Think about your job, kids, spouse or hobbies. The list is actually endless. Let me walk you through a real-life scenario that

led to one of my most popular speeches. You'll see just how easy it is to find inspiration.

As the director for a technology company in Denver, Colorado, hiring new talent is one of my responsibilities. Last fall, I had a position open for more than 90 days because we just couldn't find the right person for the job. While interviewing a crowd of candidates, I came across people who had lied on their resumes, failed the pre-employment drug test or even mysteriously disappeared.

An Idea Hits – Literally


The worst part of the hiring nightmare happened on one particularly bad day. A job candidate was so nervous during an interview that I thought he was going to faint. When he made it to the end of our session without passing out, I congratulated him. Too quickly, as it turned out. As I was shaking his hand by the door, he threw up on me.

I couldn't pass up a golden opportunity to talk about the experience. With a little ingenuity, I turned that terrible day – and its frustrating background – into a comical speech that I delivered to my Toastmasters club. I called it “How *Not* To Get Hired.” With a little organization, vocal variety and humor, it turned out to be one of my funniest speeches ever. And it took me less than 30 minutes to write, because I really enjoyed venting about what happened.



So finding inspiration for a speech is not as difficult as it sounds. I often coach new members through their first speech, and when they tell me they have nothing to write about, I simply ask them three questions:

- What did you do today?
- What did your kids or pet (whichever applies) do today?
- What happened at work today?

After going through this exercise, people are usually surprised at the number of speech topics we uncover. This method has never failed to produce a great speech for a new member. Between your life, family and job, there's got to be a speech in there somewhere! 

Joel A. Pogar, CC, is the president of Parker Toastmasters in Parker, Colorado. He is a professional speaker, as well as a coach and club mentor. Reach him at jpogar@gmail.com.

By Roena Oesting, DTM

Speaking to My Stove

There is a well-known joke that goes like this:

“How do you get to Carnegie Hall?”

“Practice, practice, practice.”

The importance of practicing is a central principle of Toastmasters. How many times have we heard this comment at a club meeting: “You needed to practice that speech a bit more.”

But how should you practice? What practice techniques work best?

I joined Toastmasters in 1999 and have given nearly 75 manual speeches. In all that time, I’ve tried many different methods of practicing, and these 10 strategies have been most effective for me:

1 Never write out a speech in full. Leave the written-out speeches for the experts or for competitive speaking. This eliminates the urge to read your speech, helps you sound natural and increases your eye contact with the audience.

2 Jot down the points you want to make. Select the examples or quotations you will use. You can make this a formal outline or just a list of words or phrases that move you through your speech.

3 Write out the closing sentence. Think about the impression you want to leave the audience with and the one final word you want them to remember. Write and re-write this closing sentence and say it out loud a dozen times, or more, until you have it memorized.

4 Next, write the opening sentence and polish it until you are com-

fortable with it. Then learn it. Even if you fall over a chair on the way to the lectern and lose your notes, at least you will remember your opening sentence.

5 After these two most important sentences are complete, you’re ready for the first run-through with your outline. Stand in front of the most visible timing device you have, and practice. I talk to my stove, because it has a large timer and I can see it easily. I love using it because it doesn’t talk back or evaluate me. I set the timer for two minutes longer than my speech’s maximum time limit.

6 Never expect perfection. The first practice session may not be as polished as you would like, and the timing may be off. I often stumble part-way through, and fumble to find where I am in the outline. I then sit down, relax and go back to the outline. This is a good time to remove any extraneous material, add more examples or re-arrange the structure.


7 After modifying your speech, review the notes from your last evaluation. These include the notes your evaluator has written in your manual and the notes you wrote. (If you don’t make notes while your evaluator is speaking, you should). Find two or three things your evaluator said went well and write an affirmation of just one of them, such as: *I’m good at eye contact* or *My voice is loud enough to be heard at the back of the room.* Stand up and repeat these affirmations three times out

loud. My stove doesn’t care if that seems silly. The affirmations remind me of my best speech qualities.

8 Now it’s time to practice your speech again. I don’t know how your kitchen is laid out, but my refrigerator becomes “Mr. Toastmaster” and my canister set is “Fellow Toastmasters and guests.” The speech is more polished during the second practice session, but I may still need to tweak the outline.

9 After the second practice session, put the speech away for the rest of the day. It’s important to let a speech simmer a bit and enjoy your life outside of Toastmasters!

10 On the next day, practice a third time. Read the opening and closing sentences twice out loud and review the outline before practicing a third time. For me, my patient stove awaits; my refrigerator is ready to be “Mr. Toastmaster” and introduce me, and the canister set – I mean, the audience – is eager to hear my speech.

Sometimes that’s all the practice time I have. The third practice session is the confidence builder. It confirms that I can do this speech and will not make a fool of myself. If I can practice one more time, that’s great. If not, I still have the best-educated, most-patient stove in town. 

Roena Oesting, DTM, is a retired educator and a member of the Great Communicators Toastmasters club in Coronado, California. Reach her at oesting2@yahoo.com.



Stage Fright

How one professional speaker tamed a nasty attack of the jitters.

By Karen L. Twichell, ACS

— WHY NOW?

I've been speaking on the topic of family caregiving and giving this particular speech, or some variation of it, several times a month for about five years. Why, then, did I – an experienced speaker – recently suffer from an attack of stomach-turning stage fright? For some reason, on this particular day, my heart started pounding and those little butterflies I sometimes feel seized the opportunity to grow to the size of bats! I hadn't even left home for the event, but I was already in deep trouble.

No Excuses!

I'm passionate about my topic and believe in my message and my presentation. I'm always excited to share my story and help the caregivers who come to hear me speak. I knew the venue was a prestigious country club in Palm Desert, California, with excellent audio and visual equipment. The luncheon tables were going to be set with linens and lovely bouquets of spring flowers. The attendance exceeded everyone's expectations. This was a perfect setting for my presentation. So I stood there, fighting the bats and wondering: *What's going on?*

There Were Reasons

As soon as the trouble started, I asked myself what was different that day. My fear was compounded by the following factors:

- About a dozen friends who had never heard me speak professionally were attending this event.
- I was having the speech video and audio recorded.
- I was hired to do this presentation by an event planner who is also a friend. She had never heard me speak, and I wanted to do an exceptionally good job for her.

This was a good reminder that no matter how experienced we become as speakers, the potential for some level of stage fright never really goes away. Having accepted that this was, in fact, happening to me, I went through a list I compiled years ago about how to solve this problem:

- **Having friends in the audience is a good thing!** Familiar faces are always welcome, and I knew the subject matter was appropriate for most of them.
- **The recording shouldn't be of any concern.** It was being done by a professional whose job was to

make me look good and provide me with additional back-of-the-room products to sell. I could let *him* be nervous about that.

- **Why did I need to be concerned about doing an exceptionally good job for the event planner?** I strive to do an exceptionally good job every time I speak, and this was no different. I was well-prepared and well-rehearsed. I was dressed appropriately and immaculately groomed.

This list helped me realize that I simply needed to put a few of my advanced-speaker tricks into play to take control of the unexpected anxiety.

Super Stage Fright Solutions

This particular event was set to take place about 30 minutes from my home. As soon as I started my car, I tuned into a country music station and sang along with the various artists – as loudly as I could. By the time I arrived at the venue, I was about 75 percent back to normal and beginning to look forward to speaking.

Still, I felt a bit uneasy. It was a warm, dry day with a humidity level of only 7 percent and my voice was reflecting the dryness. I became conscious of the following tricks that I always carry but rarely need to use:

- **No caffeine on speech days.** I had ordered decaffeinated coffee that morning, but did I actually get it? (Mental note to skip coffee in future).
- **Avoid dairy products.** They can coat your mouth and throat. Check.
- **No alcohol.** It can affect your speech and thinking. Check.
- **Throat lozenges.** They can soothe an irritated or dry throat. Check.
- **Breathe deeply.** It reduces body tension and slows your heart rate. Check.

- **Stretch.** It helps to physically shake tension out of the body. Check.
- **Greet each audience member at the door.** Seeing their smiles helps humanize them for me and shrink those bats back down to butterflies. Key.

Audiences Are People Too

The last bullet point was the key. I always try to talk with attendees prior to my presentation. This way, I become more connected to each of them as a part of the audience, and I believe it solidifies the audience's connection to me as well. Although it does take additional time to do so, I feed off that interaction with the audience because it generates even more energy for me as I begin my speech.

On this day, I positioned myself at the far end of the sign-in table so as not to impede the check-in process. When each person picked up his or her program and name badge, I introduced myself as the keynote speaker.

Everyone seemed touched by this gesture. Most people said something like, "I'm so happy to meet you. You're the reason I'm here today." It became clear that many people I met really needed to hear what I had to say. What better cure for the jitters is there?

So I pursued those conversations a little further. I asked if they were currently in a caregiving situation, or if they expected to be soon. It didn't take much to get them to respond. The trick was to learn a little about what they needed from me without hearing each person's entire story. That way, I could move on to the next attendee and gather as much information and encouragement as I needed. I assured each person that

"No matter how experienced we become as speakers, the potential for some level of stage fright never really goes away."

if they didn't get exactly what they needed from my presentation, I would be available after the event to help in any way possible.

By the time I stepped up to the podium, I knew how many audience members were caring for loved ones. I knew the majority were caring for parents, spouses or siblings. And I knew they were dealing with illness or aging, as opposed to something short-term and less disheartening, such as an injury or a newborn child. Because I knew this, I could speak to each audience member as if he or she were the only one in the room.

Exercises to Help You Relax

Excerpted from Item 272A of Toastmasters' *The Better Speaker Series*.

If you have the luxury of privacy just before you are called upon to speak, try these exercises:

- While standing, inhale and stretch your arms toward the ceiling. Then exhale as you bend and touch your toes, keeping the knees straight. (If you can't reach your toes, bend as far as you comfortably can.) Repeat this several times.
- Hold your arms out to the sides, parallel to the floor, and rotate them in small circles, first forward 10 times, then backward 10 times.
- Drop your head to your chest, rolling it to the right, to the back, then to the left, in a circle. Repeat this several times, then reverse the procedure, rolling your head to the left, to the back, and to the right.

A Lesson Remembered: It's About Them

I memorized the names of a few attendees who were particularly open about their caregiving challenges during our discussion and used them throughout the presentation. This technique told the audience I really listened to them earlier and that I really wanted to help. I have found that using names keeps people alert and gets them more involved in the presentation.

I also mentioned the names of a few others sitting near the front because I could read their badges. For example, I said, "Suppose Carol here was having trouble convincing her mother that she should no longer drive a car." It didn't matter if Carol was actually caring for her mother, because I knew that many of the attendees were dealing with aging-parent issues.

As a continuing member of Toastmasters International, as well as a professional speaker, I was clearly reminded on this day that I was not immune to suffering a nasty bout of stage fright. I hope to be prepared, always, for that day when the butterfly-bats and the rapid heart rate gang up on me again. A lot of good ideas from experienced Toastmasters are shared in meetings about how to handle this situation. Knowing some of them helped me beyond my greatest expectations to make those butterflies flutter lightly once again. ■

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Adding pizzazz to text-heavy slides.

Getting Smart with Graphics

† How often have you been in the middle of creating a Microsoft Word document or PowerPoint slide show when the idea of introducing a diagram, flowchart or bar graph seemed like the perfect way to add some visual appeal to your presentation? Chances are the urge was quelled, however, by the knowledge that those applications aren't always illustration-friendly, and that most of us are far from professionals when it comes to designing graphics.

SmartDraw

That's where SmartDraw comes in. San Diego-based SmartDraw.com released its 2009.5 upgrade last year and has now added its 2010 version. This intuitive software makes it easy to create professional-looking organizational charts, timelines, technical diagrams, bar graphs, flowcharts, calendars and additional graphics within PowerPoint and other Microsoft programs. For speakers wanting to enliven their presentations quickly, SmartDraw provides a shortcut by using templates – more than 40 of the most-used charts and diagrams – and stock art for generating graphics. Rather than starting with a blank screen, you can use the simple commands within SmartDraw templates to add pertinent graphics information and watch the software do the rest. No need to do any drawing yourself. The software also allows you to begin designing projects as a visual outline, or mind map, to help with the planning process. Automated design helps navigate any speed bumps.

The 2009.5 and 2010 versions offer improved integration with

PowerPoint, smarter flowcharts and mind maps, sticky notes and some improved graphics with new special effects. They also feature more professionally crafted gradients, styles and themes. You can view your entire presentation in storyboard mode, which means you can see the whole thing at one time before exporting it into PowerPoint. If need be, you can also retrieve an outline of your presentation storyboard and save it as a text file.

SmartDraw also offers editions tailored to specific industries. There's the SmartDraw Legal edition, for example, designed to help attorneys, investigators and legal professionals create graphics for courtroom exhibits, crime scenes or accident reconstruction diagrams. SmartDraw Healthcare aids doctors, nurses or other healthcare professionals in creating patient handouts, presentations, staff education materials and more.

For more information, visit www.smartdraw.com.

Perspector 4.2

While using PowerPoint slides laden with bullet points is an unparalleled way to communicate a lot of data in a short time, the danger is putting your audience's minds on auto pilot as they watch an endless sequence of similarly designed visuals. Perspector 4.2 software offers a way to mix it up and add some visual pizzazz to text-heavy presentations. Speakers can, for example, use the software to transform a classic list of bullet points into an animated display, or add 3D effects to the slides.

Perspector doesn't require use of third-party software to incorporate

graphics or animation in PowerPoint, and you can choose from an impressive array of library artwork.

The software allows you to build 3D images from various shapes and then add special effects such as lighting, picture wrapping and transparency. You can personalize any of the 3D art objects or business images in Perspector's vast library by adding your own text. In Perspector's Professional edition, you can add your own images to the library, making it easier to reuse them in future presentations, as well as create 3D charts from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

Many users appreciate the fact that there's no need to load external software to create 3D images and that they can edit images right inside PowerPoint. Editing a 3D image in Perspector is as simple as dragging a shape to move it, or dragging a handle to resize or rotate a shape. Editing bulleted lists inside graphics also is user-friendly, as is distributing a range of colors over multiple 3D shapes.

Some find Perspector also has valuable training features. Claudyne Wilder, head of Wilder Presentations, likes a function in the software that allows her to project two PowerPoint slides in one. In helping clients redesign slides for improved impact, for example, Wilder can project before-and-after design shots on the same slide, allowing for easier comparison.

For more information, visit www.perspector.com. □

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The Blackboard Bbuzz club gathered hard evidence to prove its value to employees.

Erasing All Doubts

The questions hung in the air. During a club-officer meeting, our president asked, “Why don’t more people attend our meetings?” The vice president education asked, “Why don’t members finish their CCs?”

Figuring out the answers to those two questions was vital to keeping our young corporate club alive. The members of Blackboard Bbuzz Toastmasters are employees of Blackboard Inc., an education software company headquartered in Washington, D.C. As a corporate club, we have many things going for us, including support from company leadership. Our president and CEO gave an Ice Breaker during one meeting and was evaluated by a club member. The Human Resources department helps recruit members in its new-employee orientation program. Our meetings take place in a state-of-the-art conference room, and we have a generous budget that covers lunch for most meetings.

they would expect from any other business proposal, our employees expected an onsite Toastmasters club to make a solid business case – with data-driven evidence – that participation in Toastmasters is worthwhile.

What follows is the story of how Blackboard Bbuzz demonstrated the value we’ve brought to our company through innovative programs and workshops that are open to all employees. Such activities allow the club to achieve its goals, while employees reach their goal of becoming better communicators. Our entire company benefits as a result.

About Our Club

Our company creates enterprise-level software applications for education. Many of our employees are engineers, programmers, system administrators, technical support agents and project managers. They are highly motivated, highly technical and data-driven. Without seeing the tangible advantages of regular

Toastmasters skills to their daily job responsibilities.

Facing these challenges, our club officers needed to present evidence that we added value to the company. Our club president took the step of meeting with various department heads and asking how we could help their employees become better communicators. He brought their feedback and ideas back to our club officers, and we held a brainstorming session. As a result, the club identified two main areas where we could serve our company: helping people make better presentations and helping them network.

Presentations

Most company employees make presentations internally to other departments and externally to our clients. Our presentations are created in PowerPoint and are often delivered via teleconferencing or Web conferencing. Being passive participants in many of these presentations gave us Toastmasters a chance to observe presenters’ strengths and weaknesses and devise a way to help improve presentation skills across the organization.

Our club created a program that offered a private review, with oral and written feedback, to any employee scheduled to make a presentation. We offered this service through the managers of each department; managers could recommend that their employees schedule a review with our club to gain valuable feedback. By participating as reviewers, club

“Employees simply did not see the direct relevance of Toastmasters skills to their daily job responsibilities.”

So why didn’t people attend meetings and finish 10 speeches? The answers, we discovered, had to do with our failure to demonstrate – using measurable results – the value we bring to our organization. Just as

club meeting participation, the members were not convinced it was worth their time and effort to attend regularly or give more than two or three speeches. They simply did not see the direct relevance of



▲ It's business as usual for Blackboard Bbuzz, a corporate club at a software company in Washington, D.C. In only its second year, the group earned Distinguished Club status.

members also benefited by exercising their critical thinking skills and evaluation techniques.

We registered great results. All employees who participated said their presentation skills improved. As an added bonus, a club member who was a reviewer successfully competed in the Area Evaluation Contest. These successes directly affect the way our company is now regarded by our clients and in our community. They improve our collective ability to share critical technical information while also giving positive feedback.

Managers have noticed the improvements and even noted it in employees' annual performance reviews. By having a place to practice where supportive feedback is provided and a company goal is shared, employees can improve their presentation skills and be formally acknowledged for their efforts.

This formal review and acknowledgement gave our club the first data it needed to make a business case for our importance.

Networking

Every year our company hosts client conferences around the world, culminating in an annual conference that includes workshops, network-

ing and a chance for clients to meet the people who build the software they use every day. Many clients report that the greatest reason they attend is for the networking opportunities. However, when client evaluations were processed for past events, the networking skills of some employees were rated low. Networking opportunities were being lost during the most important client event of the year – one that was a major investment for our business.

To address this issue, our club designed a program in conjunction with the Human Resources department. We produced a two-hour interactive workshop on networking skills. A team of Toastmasters led the discussion and fun interactive exercises for the 80 employees who attended. We helped employees improve their networking skills by demonstrating how to creatively introduce themselves, how to write and deliver a dynamic “elevator speech” and how to efficiently “work” a room to meet with as many people as possible.

The internal feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Employees

were able to put their new skills to work almost immediately at the next conference, which was held soon after the networking program. Client feedback now rates employees' networking the highest in years.

This second piece of data helped to make our business case.

Conclusion

Our efforts have paid off. Armed with the data collected from these two successful programs, we've been able to convince members to attend more meetings and complete more speeches. In 2007-2008 – only our second year – Blackboard Bbuzz earned Distinguished Club status. We had another strong year in 2008-2009, reaching Select Distinguished status, producing an excellent educational program and drawing a robust membership. **T**

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FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT!

By John Cadley

Set One Goal, Reach Another

This column won't just be an essay on setting goals. It will be an actual demonstration. You will see a man (a) set a specific goal to write an 800-word column, (b) achieve it, and (c) do so without actually writing 800 words.

GOAL: I will finish my monthly column for the *Toastmaster*. If I don't, they will send large, burly men to my house to "collect" it, and it's hard writing humor when you're being hung out of a third-story window by your ankles.

So now I am starting to write an 800-word column and I see that when I finish typing this sentence I will have 113 words so far. Only 687 to go. Well, now only 683 since I used four words to say how many more words I had to go.

Pretty good for just getting started. But then that's always the easy part. Whenever I set a goal I always write "Set Goal" at the top of my list. Then I can cross it off and feel as if I'm well on my way. Which I am. We are now up to 193 words and counting.

Unfortunately, this is where resistance begins to set in, not because I'm afraid that I won't reach my goal, but that I *will*. This is the problem with goal-setting. Goals don't like it when you draw a big, black line through them, so they retaliate by making you feel that you must immediately set another. That's just the way goals are.

Thus, my "reward" for finishing this column will be the thought: "Now you have to start on your next one." And that's not a very good feeling, especially when it evokes

images of hanging upside down by your ankles.


So if you'll excuse me, I'm not going to write any more words for a little while, lest I reach my goal too soon. You might want to take this time to get a cup of coffee or go to the bathroom.

OK, I'm back. I'm leaving the blank area above to fill up some column space so I can get to the end without ever really having written 800 words. That means I will satisfy my editors (who are really nice people when they're not threatening my life) without technically reaching my goal and thus immediately being faced with another one.

It's not just the phenomenon that goals beget more goals *ad infinitum*. It's what Oscar Wilde said: "There are only two great tragedies in life. One is not getting what you want, the other is getting it." Goals can be deceiving. They promise you all sorts of satisfaction and fulfillment, and yet when you reach them they somehow fail to deliver all you were expecting. For instance, when I finish this column I will read it back and think, "Gee, this isn't such a great column, I'd better write another one to make up for it." And then I'm right back to worrying about burly men and defenestration.

I know many readers will disagree. Goal-setting is essential for success, they will say. It's one of the

3,458 habits of high achievers. They will even quote the famous dictum: "He (or she) who fails to plan, plans to fail." Perhaps. But history offers some unassailable evidence that things might just as easily be otherwise. The finding of America, the discoveries of penicillin, X-rays, microwave ovens and vulcanized rubber, the formulations for Silly Putty and artificial sweeteners – these are all the results of *failures* to reach some other goal. So perhaps what we should really say is: Set a goal, work hard to achieve it, and hope you don't reach it because you'll probably get something better instead. For instance, NASA has a goal to reach Mars. Let's say they miss by a few billion miles and get sucked into a black hole and start sending back pictures of a parallel universe where pollution, poverty, sickness, global warming, crime, corruption and political advertising have all been eradicated, and where the Chicago Cubs actually win the World Series. Anybody got a problem with that?

So at 755 words, let this column "fail" to reach its goal of 800 words. It will, however, make history as The First Unfinished Column Ever Written, published by its editors, read by its readers, and exempting its author from having to reach any more goals as long as this one remains unfinished. That's quite an achievement. 

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