

TOASTMASTER®

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FEBRUARY 2013

**15 TIPS FOR
DELIVERING
BAD NEWS**

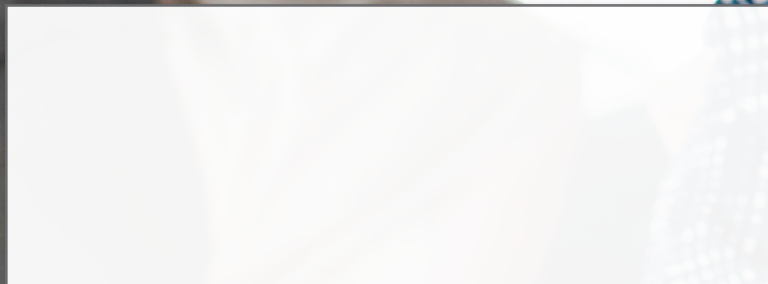
**20 THE
POWER OF
STORYTELLING**

**22 MAKE
CONNECTIONS
THROUGH
SMALL TALK**

LEAD WITH A SMILE

Use your enthusiasm
to get results.

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CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE



I joined Toastmasters in 1990 to enhance my presentation skills and inspire clients to see the value of doing business with my company. Before I joined Toastmasters, my company's presentation success rate was 40 percent; two years after I joined Toastmasters, the success rate rose to 80 percent. I attribute this success to connecting better with clients, and doing so with higher energy. Clients do business with our company because our company connects with them.

My business presentations and conversations revolve around the common interests and values of my clients. My approach is

“compromise and agreement” rather than “conflict and disagreement.” It is through listening to clients’ needs and concerns and sharing experiences that I communicate the value of the services and products our company provides.

My personal experience tells me that making connections requires identifying with people and relating to them in a way that increases our influence. It

Before I joined Toastmasters, my company's presentation success rate was 40 percent; two years after I joined Toastmasters, the success rate rose to 80 percent.

requires that we communicate in *their* world and in *their* language. Actions, tone and style communicate far more than words. As speakers, we strive to make audience members feel good.

Similarly, as club leaders, we can listen to our members’ needs and concerns. We can share our stories about how Toastmasters has transformed our lives by improving our communication and leadership skills. As members, we can share with friends how Toastmasters programs nurture, excite and empower us, and help us to excel every day.

People follow what they see instead of what they are told. They will go along with someone they can trust—one who exhibits conviction and good character. You are the best advertisement for your cause. If we want to connect with people, we must become the kind of people with whom others would like to connect. We need to be consistent in how we portray ourselves, with what we communicate and by how we live.

In our organization, club members—not board members—are the most important people. I am passionate about listening to and meeting their needs. We all must celebrate each other’s success and praise and applaud any achievements. By doing so, we stay connected with our fellow members in Toastmasters, where leaders are made. **T**

JOHN LAU, DTM
International President

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WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
www.toastmasters.org



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Since 1924, Toastmasters International has been recognized as the leading organization dedicated to communication and leadership skill development. Through its worldwide network of clubs, each week Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million men and women of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others.

By regularly giving speeches, gaining feedback, leading teams and guiding others to achieve their goals, leaders emerge. They learn to tell their stories. They listen and answer. They plan and lead. They give feedback— and accept it. They find their path to leadership.

Toastmasters International. Where Leaders Are Made.



"I love that new positive information is being revealed by introverts such as Susan Cain."

—Yvonne Hart, ACS, ALS

Inspiring Introverts

After being told that I am passive by several people, I found Michelle Tyler's article about introverts, "The Quiet Leader" (December), a great read. I was inspired by Toastmaster Stacey Shipman, who noted in the article how important it is to explain to the people she works with how she makes decisions. I have struggled as an introvert and never thought of simply explaining my thinking process to those around me.

I will be a student teacher in the spring, and I plan to explain to the teacher I will work with that I solve problems differently from how many others do it. Thank you for this article!

Heather Anderson, ACG, ALB

Dawn Yawn Toastmasters

Lakewood, Colorado

Speaking Out

Thank you for the informative articles about introverts (December). I, too, am an introvert and have noticed that Toastmasters clubs are full of introverts. I love that new positive information is being revealed by introverts such as Susan Cain. As a life performance coach, I have considered narrowing my niche to focus on working exclusively with introverted professionals.

Yvonne Hart, ACS, ALS

Energy Capital Club

Oak Ridge, Tennessee

Where **Credit** Is Due

I found the article "Lighten Up Your Speech" by Judy Carter (October) both enlightening and useful—with one exception being her statement

to never use a joke you didn't write. Many of us are not as creative as Judy Carter, especially at the beginning of our Toastmasters experience. I use other authors' comedic material all the time. I think of myself as the Milton Berle of Toastmasters!

But anyone using someone else's material should give credit to the author. If the author is unknown, then say so.

Humor is a great way to make a statement stick in the minds of audience members. So go ahead and use another person's joke—just give him or her credit!

Richard J. Major, DTM
Syracuse Toastmasters
Syracuse, New York

Being **Understood**

Paddy Kennedy is spot-on in her advice to ESL (English as a Second Language) speakers in her article "Accentuate the Beat" (November). She says they need to master the "sounds of English ... harmonious to our English-speaking ear," and not necessarily overcome their foreign accents, in order to be easily understood by native English speakers. Ms. Kennedy is to be commended for pointing ESL learners in the right direction.

S. Zafar Iqbal
SRI Organon Toastmasters
Menlo Park, California

Respectful Reminder

The article "It's About Time" by John Zimmer (July) reinforced a timely message to me as a Pacific Island Toastmaster. There is no such thing as "Papua New Guinea time" or "Fiji

time" when one attends a Toastmasters meeting. As the article says, "If you don't respect time, you are not respecting your audience."

A modified version of Benjamin Franklin's famous quote about not squandering time is this: "Dost thou love thine audience? Then go not over time." These words reflect the advice of a visionary leader.

Ofa Swann Tabunakawai, ACS, CL
Capital Toastmasters Suva
Suva, Fiji

Honoring My Father

I joined Toastmasters just over a year ago. In the last year, I have managed to participate in many Table Topics sessions, I have learned how to create a prepared speech, and I've learned additional skills to enhance my delivery. Recently, I was asked to perform the eulogy at my father's funeral. I managed to write and present the eulogy, and although I was still anxious, I was not terrified, as I would have been a year ago.

I want to thank Toastmasters for being there to give me the confidence and knowledge to perform the eulogy. It has provided me with one memory I will never forget, as well as a way to honor my father.

Rob Woods
City Centre Toastmasters club
Prince George, British Columbia, Canada

Do you have something to say?

Write it in 200 words or less. Include your name, address and club affiliation, and send it to letters@toastmasters.org.

PROPOSING A NEW LIFE

How I overcame a chronic illness and got the girl in the end.

By Darren Cawley, CC

It was an optician who spotted it first. I was in my second year at the University of Bedfordshire in Bedfordshire, England, where I was studying for a degree in sport and fitness. I was 20.

What that optician spotted in my eyes was serious enough for him to send me straight to the hospital. My vision was deteriorating due to incredibly high blood pressure, and test results revealed I had chronic end-stage renal failure.

Just the day before, I believed myself to be fit and healthy; less than two weeks later a dialysis machine was keeping me alive. No easy transition for a young Irish man living in a different country.

A few years later, with plenty of ups and downs in between, I began to get involved with organizations such as the local Lions Club. Rather than mull my story over in my head, I decided to share it. I began visiting schools and speaking to young people about good health practices, donor awareness and living with a long-term illness. That's when I joined Toastmasters.

Toastmasters did so much to sharpen my speaking abilities and confidence. I became an effective speaker, spreading my positive message to area businesses, organizations in Ireland and other groups in Europe. I even had the great honor of speaking at the European Parliament—twice.

It was around this time I met Aoife, and she and I quickly became

inseparable, despite the fact that I spent up to five hours every other day in a hospital. Holidays were rare, and I could not work full time. After several years together, discussion of marriage was constantly in the air. But I refused to consider making this commitment while on dialysis. The thought of waking up in the morning after my wedding to go on dialysis was unbearable.

Over time, I realized I wasn't practicing what I preached. In my speeches, I talked about the power of positive thinking and the great benefits of being proactive—no matter what life throws at you. It was time I walked my talk.

In January 2011, I was due to give a motivational talk in Prague, at a conference focusing on dialysis and transplants. Someone would be translating my speech to the audience. Meanwhile, I was looking for ideas on where I might propose, and the conference organizer, Jitka, talked me into proposing onstage! It would certainly test my resolve and all I had learned in Toastmasters.

Before my speech, I explained to the translator, Professor Lopot, that I was going to propose at the end of my talk and he would be translating to the audience exactly what was happening. He was delighted for me, wished me luck and appeared more nervous than me! The speech went very well, and when the time came for me to get on bended knee, Aoife said



Darren Cawley and Aoife.

yes. When we looked down at the 120 guests present, there was Professor Lopot and Jitka smiling, and an audience of mainly women, crying.

Getting sick showed me that adversity can lead to all kinds of riches. It has molded me into a positive role model for others who may be in a dark and lonely place, and it has taught me that anyone and everyone can make a difference. Toastmasters gave me the technical speaking skills and the courage to believe in my own ability—which, in turn, allowed me to deliver a speech, and then propose marriage in front of a large audience.

Exactly one month after proposing, while about to go shopping for an engagement ring with Aoife, I received the phone call I'd been waiting nine years for. I would be the recipient of a transplant. My "Gift of Life" has been a wonderful success. I've received the good health I've always wanted, and I'm continuing to try and make a difference by speaking about my life experiences.

Because of the guidance I have received through Toastmasters, I can tell my story well. Because of my donor, I can now give the crowd a happy ending—and just like in the movies, I got the girl in the end. **T**

Darren Cawley, CC, is a speaker based in western Ireland. He travels throughout Europe to talk about the importance of transplants.

AROUND THE GLOBE

▶ INTERNATIONAL INTERPRETATIONS

DANDY CANDIES



Kids love candy. But they're not the only ones with a sweet tooth: Adults also crave sugary confections and desserts, and depending on where in the world you live, certain specialties are in demand.

For example, salty licorice is popular in Sweden, and marzipan is popular in Germany. Europeans, and in particular the Germans, Swiss and British, are also the top consumers of chocolate.

Dulce de leche is a caramelized milk candy that's a favorite in many Central American countries. The Chinese enjoy their milk candy as well, but wrapped in a thin sheet of edible rice paper.

In addition, many Middle Easterners consume Turkish delight, a jellied sweet that's flavored with rose water or fruit and often contains nuts such as hazelnuts or almonds.

Yum!

▶ WHAT'S THE BUZZ?

MENTORING IS ESSENTIAL, BUT HARD TO DEFINE. WHICH APPROACHES WORK?

Members contributed to the discussion on the LinkedIn Official Toastmasters International Members Group:

"A mentor provides 'how to' advice and honest feedback and simply is a friendly face in the room. It is important to have a mentor who is experienced enough to know what the member needs and at which stage—from the 'newbies' who want to know what to do, to the 'pros' who need to be reminded that they aren't perfect."

— AMANDA SEBASTIAN
WINDSOR TSO TOASTMASTERS, WINDSOR, ONTARIO, CANADA

"Here are some of my basic tips for mentors: Spend more of your time asking open-ended questions, which require more than a yes or no answer. Actively listen to the person you are mentoring; don't be busy making notes or thinking of your reply. Treat them with respect as an equal."

— DOUGLAS WILKS, CC
PLAINLY SPEAKING CLUB, PLAINS, MONTANA

▶ SNAPSHOT



In July 2012, members of New Orleans Toastmasters celebrated the 70th anniversary of their club's charter with a party at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. **John Weeks, DTM**, pictured center behind the club's banner, received a lifetime achievement award for his 52 years as a faithful club member.

BOTTOM LINE

February Board of Directors Briefing

In a change from previous years, there will be no public Board briefing nor streaming video of the briefing in February. Instead, results of the Board's discussions and decisions will be shared online at www.toastmasters.org on February 25. Save the date!

Receiving Multiple Magazines?

Many members receive duplicate copies of the *Toastmaster* each month because of multiple club memberships. To cancel extra subscriptions, or to reroute them to another address, notify membership@toastmasters.org.

▶ LANGUAGE TIP

SMS 101

Much to the dismay of grammarians, Short Message Service (SMS) language, also known as “texting” language, has found a home in the English lexicon. Get familiar with SMS if you want to communicate online or swap text messages with the young people in your life.

- **Pictograms and logograms** use letters or numbers to represent whole words. For example, *i <3 u* means “I love you,” with the < and 3 forming a heart and the *u* shorthand for *you*.

- **Initializations** are one of the most popular forms of SMS. The best known of these include *lol* (laugh out loud), *brb* (be right back) and *omg* (oh my god). Some more recent initializations include *tbh* (to be honest), *nsfw* (not safe for work), *pw* or *paw* (parents are watching) and *smh* (shaking my head).

- **Reductions, shortenings and omissions** are used for words that have no common abbreviations. Remove the vowels from a word to shorten it, such as with *frm* (from) or *ppl* (people).

MEMBER MOMENT

TYING THE KNOT, TOASTMASTERS STYLE

Jesse Oakley III, DTM, and Dana Wall-Oakley, DTM, celebrated their wedding on July 1, 2012—the same day he became a district governor and she earned her DTM award. Later that month, they enjoyed their honeymoon at the Toastmasters International Convention in Orlando, Florida. Both are members of clubs in Las Vegas, Nevada. Jesse is an associate materials engineer for the Nevada Department of Transportation, and Dana is a transportation dispatcher for Wyndham Vacation resorts. Jesse answers a few questions about the experience.



Dana Wall-Oakley, DTM, and Jesse Oakley III, DTM, at their “Christmas in July” wedding.

Why did you celebrate your honeymoon at the 2012 convention?

The International Convention was part of our honeymoon. Dana recommended going to Orlando for our honeymoon after she took a trip to Disney World for her birthday. When we found out that the International Convention was going to be there, we thought that was a pretty cool bonus. Seeing Epcot [one of the Disney World theme parks] and going to the International Convention were a winning combination.

What are the pros and cons of being married to a Toastmaster?

For the pros, we both have the same interest and appreciation for the Toastmasters program. This allows us to become better listeners and communicators within our jobs and our marriage. The cons of being married to a Toastmaster are the at-home evaluations. While there may be some positive points, there are always areas for improvement. Fortunately, the evaluations have a good impact on our marriage.

Do you count each other’s “ahs” and “ums”?

Only when I get in trouble. An early lesson I learned is that the wife is right and if she isn’t happy, then no one is happy.

LinkedIn Members Group

Participate in discussions and share best practices in the Toastmasters International Official Members Group on LinkedIn at linkd.in/ToastmastersInternationalOfficialMembersGroup.

Cool Website

Create, broadcast and share your own live podcast online using Spreaker. Listeners are able to provide feedback on a message wall. spreaker.com

Fear Factor Articles

Visit www.toastmasters.org/FearFactor to read articles with tips for overcoming stage fright. Article links are on the left side of the page.

AROUND THE GLOBE

ADVICE FROM THE EXPERTS

IN THIS MONTHLY COLUMN, Accredited Speakers and Toastmasters World Champions of Public Speaking share lessons learned.



Jim Key, DTM, a member of the Lennox International Toastmasters in Richardson, Texas, won the 2003 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking.

How does a speech contestant choose the best speech topic?

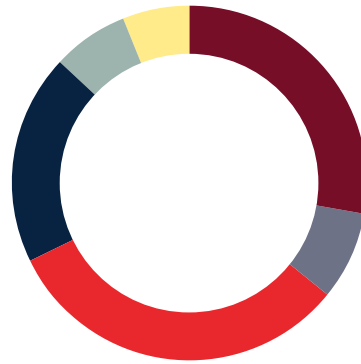
Contestants must clearly define their objectives; consider the experiences, causes and messages that stir their passions; and choose the most important topic to share. I can choose a topic I'm passionate about, but it might be off-putting to a good portion of the audience. If I do [choose that topic], I need to accept the fact that my chances of winning the contest may be diminished. When I find the topic that stirs me and that will serve the audience—and it's one that I can communicate memorably—then my chances for success will increase dramatically.

FACTS WORTH KNOWING

Are You Connected?

Your fellow members are sharing ideas on Toastmasters International's social networking sites every day. Member participation is shown on the chart.* For links to all official Toastmasters social networking sites, visit www.toastmasters.org/socialnetworking and join the virtual conversation today!

Member participation varies across the sites:



32% The Official Toastmasters International LinkedIn Members Group

28% Twitter @Toastmasters

19% The Official Toastmasters International Facebook Fan Page

8% The Official Toastmasters International LinkedIn Group

7% The Official Toastmasters International Facebook Members Group

6% The Official Toastmasters International YouTube Channel

*Member data compiled on December 20, 2012.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Dr. Ralph C. Smedley and his wife, Frances, got married in 1905. They are pictured here at a function.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF TOASTMASTERS TRIVIA!

On February 20, answer the question posted on the Toastmasters International Official Facebook Fan Page at www.facebook.com/ToastmastersInternationalOfficialFanPage to be entered into a drawing for a prize. Good luck!

MENTOR MOMENT

No one has the potential to influence a member's experience like a mentor. Aruna Ankem, ACS, a member of the DHS Toastmasters club in Little Rock, Arkansas, shares how her mentor has helped her.

Why did you join Toastmasters?

I am a software programmer for the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System. I joined Toastmasters to improve my communication skills and to overcome my fear of speaking to those outside of my close circle of friends.

Tell us about your mentor. Carey Schaller, DTM, has been my mentor since I joined Toastmasters in April 2010. Proofreading is part of the work he did while employed by the Arkansas Department of Human Services, and I benefit from his meticulous checks on my written speeches. Not only does he correct grammatical errors, he also suggests which words to stress and how to enunciate them. This is especially helpful since English isn't my native language. I also appreciate his words of encouragement and "Deep Cleansing Breath and Smile" reminder just before I begin a speech.

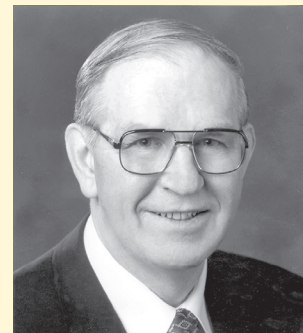
How does Carey give feedback? When I speak, I see an occasional spark in Carey's eyes. This tells me he is acknowledging certain highlights of my speech. He pays particular attention to how I pronounce words and offers quick feedback, sharing his observations of what I did well, and what didn't come out so well.

What is your favorite thing about Carey? It is hearing his humble words "Always glad to help you!"



Aruna Ankem, right, credits mentor Carey Schaller for improving her writing and speaking abilities.

LEARNING ABOUT OUR PAST ... INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTS



LEN JURY, DTM,
PAST INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT 1997-98

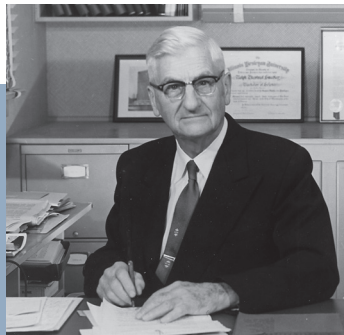
Q: What inspires you?

A: Throughout my life, I've been deeply inspired by one man: Sir Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander. He became the first person to climb Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain. As a 10-year-old boy, this feat fired my imagination. To be a New Zealander became very special. To succeed when so many believe something cannot be achieved became a burning beacon. Hillary had his share of disappointments, but they only strengthened his desire to learn new skills, improve his stamina and, ultimately, succeed. Toastmasters offers you the opportunity to build outstanding abilities for your future, abilities to not only achieve successes but to inspire others by your example. Hillary's achievement is a legacy of inspiration for future generations.

DR. SMEDLEY SAYS

Toastmasters founder Dr. Ralph C. Smedley shared many insights worth remembering, such as:

"You are not a real member of a group until you take your part in a conversation."



Dr. Ralph C. Smedley
1878-1965

Johnny Thomas: HE'S GOT HEART

Transplant recipient promotes organ donor awareness.

By Julie Bawden-Davis

When Johnny Thomas, ACS, CL, was shot during a battle in Vietnam in 1966, the bullet narrowly missed his heart. His resulting injuries baffled medical professionals.

Thomas, a retired United States Army sergeant major and Purple Heart medal recipient, says, "The doctors had no idea how the bullet hit my chest on the left and ripped up the kidney on my right side, but I knew." He had a small Bible—a gift from

tary after 24 years of service. Subsequently, Thomas found it difficult to find work as a disabled veteran with heart disease, but he found a lifeline to latch onto—Toastmasters.

"I felt I had a story to tell, and I wanted to share it," says Thomas, who now is president of the Miami Lakes Toastmasters club in Miami Lakes, Florida. "Though I didn't have a problem standing in front of people and talking, I wanted to learn to communicate better and to orga-

ular assist device known as HeartWare, which kept his heart pumping.

"The miraculous device was connected to the base of my heart, and the associated hardware went everywhere with me, including to bed," says Thomas, who wore the device for more than 15 months. After his heart transplant, he appeared before a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) panel in Washington, D.C., to share how HeartWare gave him precious time. He credits his Toastmasters training for helping him speak effectively to the FDA panel.

While the HeartWare machine physically enabled Thomas to survive months of waiting for a heart, his wife, Lillian, and Toastmasters friends helped him with the emotional consequences of being on a list of 100,000 names that ranks transplants according to the highest need.

"One day I started worrying that I might never get a heart, but then my friends and wife encouraged me, and I began to think about how someone had to lose his or her life to save mine," says Thomas. "With that sobering thought, I reflected on the donor and his or her sacrifices. Soon after, the call came that they had a heart for me."

In an unusual twist of fate, the doctor who performed Thomas' 22-hour heart transplant surgery

"I learned how to show more compassion [for my fellow Toastmasters] than I had been accustomed to displaying as a sergeant major, without diminishing who I was." — Johnny Thomas

his mother—in his left breast pocket where the bullet ricocheted and damaged his kidney.

Except for telling his doctor and mother, Thomas kept his story to himself for more than 20 years until he developed a heart condition that would result in several surgeries and eventually a heart transplant. Though Thomas' heart escaped a bullet, other physical stressors stemming from combat, such as losing a kidney and having undiagnosed diabetes, led to his first heart attack in 1988. He underwent open heart surgery in 1989 and was discharged from the mili-

nize my thoughts." Thomas also was impressed by the respect club members had for one another. "I learned how to show more compassion [for my fellow Toastmasters] than I had been accustomed to displaying as a sergeant major, without diminishing who I was."

Waiting for a Heart

Over time, his Toastmasters involvement was hampered by illness, and Thomas was eventually put on a waiting list to receive a heart transplant. During his wait, doctors sought to keep him alive by implanting a ventric-



Johnny Thomas, the recipient of a heart transplant, regularly speaks about the importance of being an organ donor.

in August 2011 is from Vietnam. Dr. Si M. Pham grew up during the war in a small village in central Vietnam near Cam Ranh Bay. “I left the country when I was 19 years old, the day the north Vietnamese took the south on April 30, 1975,” says Pham, a professor of surgery and biomedical engineering at the Chief Division of Heart/Lung Transplant and Artificial Heart Program at the Miami Transplant Institute. “Until I left Vietnam, I had lived my life witnessing the death and destruction of war, but I was also old enough to appreciate democracy and liberty. I am glad I had the opportunity to present Johnny with a token of my appreciation for his sacrifice by performing his surgery.”

The fact that Thomas is alive is a miracle, according to Pham, who notes that Thomas’ prior multiple open heart operations created scar tissue that made the transplant surgery difficult. Recovery was also rough. His new heart didn’t work immediately after the transplant, which happens in 3 to 10 percent of cases, so Thomas was connected to a heart-lung machine for five days to support his body while the donor heart recovered. He spent 50 days in intensive care before going to a rehabilitation center.



Spreading the Word About Organ Donation

Today, Thomas is doing well with his new heart and regularly speaks about being a heart donor recipient.

Rosetta Rolle Hylton is a communications coordinator for the Life Alliance Organ Recovery Agency at the University of Miami, which is one of 58 organizations in the U.S. that procure organs and tissue for transplants. She says, “Johnny puts a face on what we do, which really helps with organ donation.

“The first time Johnny spoke for [the agency], he had the heart machine on. After the transplant surgery, he came back to speak and showed a picture of himself before the surgery,” says Hylton. “The powerful image of how far he’s come—thanks to a transplant and his spiritual message—moved the audience, many of whom were brought to tears.”

Organ procurement agencies in the U.S. are affiliated with 82 hospitals that perform 500 transplants a year. Hylton says one organ donor can save eight lives, and if the person is also a tissue donor (bone and skin), the donation can potentially have a medical impact on 250 people. Anyone, except an individual with HIV, is a prospective donor.

Jeanette Eggleston, DTM, a member of the Miami Lakes Toastmasters club, comments on Thomas’ powerful message: “Watching Johnny’s struggles, including how he survived ill health while waiting for a heart and attended meetings with his heart machine, is inspiring. He delivers a message that needs to be told about the importance of organ donations.”

Thomas’ many experiences as a heart recipient give him ample compelling material for his speeches, such as a chance meeting with a kidney transplant recipient at the doctor’s office. He discovered, when chatting with her, that they each had received organs from the same donor.

It is such stories of hope and compassion that Thomas plans on continuing to share. “I was wounded and survived a heart transplant for a reason,” he says. “The real heroes are those who die and save lives, and I will continue to spread the word about the importance of being an organ donor.”

Julie Bawden-Davis is a freelance writer based in Southern California and a longtime contributor to the *Toastmaster*.



THE KEY TO CONNECTING

A good speech is a conversation.

By John Kinde, DTM, AS, and Loren Ekroth, Ph.D.

Good speech-making is like a good conversation. If you think a great speech is mainly a performance, think again. Effective delivery, even to a large audience, is intimate. Your delivery should be conversational.

However, in most public speaking, there is little give-and-take verbal interaction. When presenting a 20-minute speech at a Rotary or Toastmasters club, the speaker typically does all the talking. In a workshop, however, the leader or facilitator may actually speak less than the participants.

As you become a better speaker, you become more skilled in conversation. When you become a better conversationalist, you become a stronger speaker. One skill reinforces the other. The power of conversational delivery is its tendency to make you more believable, and more likeable.

Excellent advice comes from Bryant Pergerson, DTM, a finalist in the 2007 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking: “Think of your audience as a friend sitting across the table. You wouldn’t preach to him as though you were giving a speech. Don’t be

a messenger delivering memorized words. Be in the moment. Be authentic. Be conversational.” Some of the best speeches are unplanned, or “in-the-moment,” perhaps because the speaker tossed the notes aside and spoke from the heart.

Think of conversation and public speaking as complementary. Each one enhances the other. Everyday conversation requires you to think on your feet, or from your seat, and be spontaneous but not rambling. Having the confidence of knowing you can control your message, and thoughtfully adapt

it to different audiences, is derived from public speaking experiences. For a rambling converser who too often speaks without forethought, developing these skills is immensely valuable.

The Value of Eye Contact

It seems obvious when you're engaged in a conversation with one person that you're involved in a one-on-one process of communication. When you're engaged in this type of conversation, you are focused

resist the temptation to "spray the audience" with eye contact. The key is to focus on one person while completing a thought. In a one-on-one conversation, it's easy to do, but it is challenging to maintain good eye contact while speaking to several people at once. If you remember to complete a thought before moving your eye to another audience member, you'll make a true connection with the audience.

The active listener sends nonverbal signals to the speaker through facial

"I believe charisma isn't something we project, but a way we listen."

— public speaking coach
Lee Glickstein

on your conversation partner. Your eyes don't wander when someone else enters the room. Dedicated eye contact makes a connection more intimate.

Similarly, in public speaking, dedicated eye contact, like the kind used in a one-on-one conversation, creates a connection. This is accomplished by making eye contact with one person in the audience at a time. This technique of locking in eye contact with one individual connects the speaker with every member of the audience. When you have that true connection, others in the audience feel included. They get the impression you are talking to them. This is because the person you're making eye contact with is a member of the group. Members of an audience share a sense of community, so when you connect with one, you connect with all members of that group.

When speaking before a group, avoid the trap of thinking you're speaking to several people at once, and

expressions, smiles, nods of agreement or questioning looks. The listener may not be speaking, but he or she is still communicating. If you are not maintaining eye contact, you're missing out on feedback provided by the audience. This idea contradicts the nonsense of yesteryear, when speech instructors advised speakers to look over the heads of the audience or, worse yet, to visualize audience members naked. The best public speaking is heart to heart as well as mind to mind. It requires not only seeing your audience, but seeing that you are being seen by them.

An audience member experiencing conversational eye contact feels a connection with the speaker that otherwise wouldn't be there. Avoid giving a robotic, memorized speech, delivered the same way regardless if you are speaking to an empty room or one full of listeners. Effective eye contact gives the speaker the feeling of having a conversation rather than the feeling of "giving a speech."

The Smile

Toastmasters founder Ralph Smedley's well-known quote "We learn in moments of enjoyment" speaks to the issue of conversational delivery. Body language and facial expression are key elements of turning a speech into a conversation. From a distance, watch two people who are having a conversation. If they're having a good time, they're likely to be smiling. When we move a conversation to the stage, our nervousness often causes us to lose the smile. Students of the performing arts are trained to smile under pressure. While you're singing, dancing or otherwise performing, smiling is unnatural and a skill that must be learned and reinforced. Chorus directors remind the singer to "put your face on!" Dance instructors insist that you "do the steps while showing the fun."

So it is with public speaking. When faced with the challenge of remembering your words while still connecting with your audience, smiling does not come automatically. It does come with practice, however. As Darren LaCroix, 2001 World Champion of Public Speaking, says, "It's all about stage time, stage time, stage time." It's the training and confidence you've developed through hard work that makes it possible to be conversational and to look like you're having a good time in the spotlight. A look of stress does not make for a conversational performance. When you're smiling and having fun, so is the audience, and the conversation is brought to life.

The best public speaking also requires listening to your audience. Public speaking coach Lee Glickstein devotes many pages to how a speaker should listen in his book *Be Heard Now! How to Compel Rapt Attention Every Time You Speak*. Here's one of his insightful comments: "Most people assume that charisma is a kind of sparkling confidence that only certain

people can radiate. I believe charisma isn't something we project, but a way we listen." Such deep listening creates the quality of a thoughtful, attentive conversation that really connects.

An obvious difference between a one-on-one conversation and a speech is the issue of projection. With a large group you clearly have the added challenge of projection. You may be focusing on speaking to one person at a time, but the entire audience must still hear you. Eye contact will help you maintain a conversational style or tone of voice, but you are responsible for projecting that style to the entire audience. With practice, you will learn to project while maintaining a conversational tone.

Verbal Style

Another difference between conversation and public speaking is the level of formality in words and verbal style. Your choice of language level should meet the requirements of the occasion.

Generally, public speakers are expected to employ a more formal tone, one that has been planned and rehearsed. A converser uses a more casual tone, one that can include slang, nicknames and standing jokes known only to those persons in the conversation. If an intimate vernacular is used with a stranger or client, it inappropriately suggests a relationship that doesn't exist. Similarly, if you use a formal language with friends and family, it implies social distance that doesn't fit. But a public speaker who seems rehearsed may seem phony to others who expect spontaneity and even some pauses filled with *ums* and *ahs*. Yet, for most public speaking, a casual tone is too loose and therefore inappropriate.

Authenticity of Character


Listeners of conversers and audiences of speakers share a common desire: They seek authenticity from these messengers. They want speakers to be real,

people who speak from the heart, folks they can admire and emulate.

In his ancient treatise on the art of persuasion, *Rhetoric*, Aristotle identified three aspects that determine an orator's ability to persuade. First among them was *ethos*, the character and credibility of the speaker. The other two were *logos* (reason) and *pathos* (appeals to emotion). Aristotle was highly critical of the Sophists of his time, speakers who manipulated audiences through clever words and appeals to emotion. He considered them hucksters who, despite all their rhetorical tricks, lacked personal credibility.

Dr. Albert Schweitzer, a German philosopher and physician, captured the essence of character as a source of persuasion in these words: "Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing." As in conversation, when speaking in public, authenticity of character is important if your words are to have impact.

Over a century ago, in 1904, legendary speech professor James A. Winans established the independent department of Oratory and Debate at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. During that more formal time in our history, he had the prescience to claim that public speaking is extended conversation. He understood that to be most effective, public speaking has to be personal and heart to heart.

Becoming a better speaker means becoming a better conversationalist. Public speaking and conversation are partners and collaborators, two somewhat different but always complementary modes of human communication. 

Loren Ekroth, Ph.D., known as "Dr. Conversation," lives in Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information, visit conversationmatters.com.

John Kinde, DTM, is an Accredited Speaker and a humor specialist living in Las Vegas, Nevada.

BOOST YOUR SPEECH WITH BODY LANGUAGE

Using effective nonverbal communication is crucial to delivering an engaging speech. Your body language is part of your presentation; it helps to maintain the interest of the audience.

These tips will help:

▶ **Work those facial muscles.**

Your facial expressions reinforce the emotional tone of your speech. Frown to show disappointment, raise your eyebrows to demonstrate surprise and smile broadly to express enthusiasm.

▶ **Make gestures consistent with words.**

Make your gestures match what you are saying—for example, if you are speaking about a bird you saw in the sky, point your arm upward in that direction.

▶ **Move with purpose.**

Move around on stage rather than stand stiffly in one spot. But when you move, do so for a reason: For example, walk to the other side of the stage as you transition to a new topic, or move toward the audience as you ask a question.

— Editorial Staff

HOW TO DELIVER BAD NEWS

5 tips to soften the blow.

By Christina Miranda

As a business leader, are you raising your prices? Cutting services? Not giving out staff bonuses this year? Putting an employee on probation?

No one wants to deliver this kind of unwelcome news—or be the recipient of it. But sometimes it's a necessary evil of doing business, and you're the unfortunate soul who has to bear the burden. Here are five tips to mitigate the drama:

1 Let your own emotions run their course before sharing the news with others. You may not like or agree with the news you must deliver, but there is a reason it needs to be done. Come to terms with it so you don't bring your negative emotional energy to the communication. Your audience will take its cue from your approach, and if you're defensive, nervous, weepy or angry, it will only fuel a negative response.

2 Restrict your buildup and get to the point. By the time people get through six long paragraphs of posturing and pussyfooting in your email or press release, they are on high alert, and filled with negative emotion. So when you finally hit them with the unpleasant punch line in that last paragraph, their adverse reaction is intensified by the emotions you already nurtured in them. The same thing holds true for verbal delivery. Often, the anticipation is worse than the actual news.

3 Consider the timing carefully. Procrastinating often makes it worse (especially if rumors about the announcement are circulating), but rushing to break the news just because you want to put it behind you comes with great risk. A knee-jerk communication is usually delivered with clouded judgment, high emotion and a lack of due diligence. Most importantly, consider when this news will best be received. Bad news is never welcome, but before you decide on the ideal time, consider factors such as time, day and your audience's state of mind.

4 Avoid misdirection and trickery. It's tempting to load up bad-news communication with a bunch of good news in the hopes of distracting your audience. However, it will only damage your listeners' trust in you. You may choose this path because doing so will make you feel better ("See? I'm not that bad—look at all the good things I'm still sharing."), but to the news recipient, it just looks wishy-washy and weak. And in many cases, it can give the appearance of trivializing serious news and not treating it with the respect it deserves.

5 Remember that nothing is confidential. Emails can be forwarded, and social media is designed to be the world's fastest grapevine. Whatever you do—whatever you say—before you "go there," answer this question: How would I feel if

50 million people knew about this tomorrow? Nothing tames you into acting gracefully like the thought of being vilified by an outraged public. United Airlines (among other companies) learned this lesson the hard way. Above all, you must remember that no matter how you spin it or when you say it, your audience won't like it. That's why it's called "bad news." It would be irrational for you to tell your customers you're raising prices and have them respond with "No worries, we don't mind." So be realistic. If you expect to deliver bad news and have people walk away happy, this will not work out well for you.

And that brings us to the last point: Delivering bad news is not about you. The recipient does not want to hear about how you were up all night belly-aching over delivering this news or that it gives you no pleasure to do this. Asking for their empathy at a time like this will likely result in their wanting to smack you. Let them have their moment of sadness without trying to steal some sympathy. **T**

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LEADING WITH A SMILE

A positive attitude and enthusiasm make for better business.

By Linda Allen, ACS, CL

It's not my job. It's my joy!" That's how Stan Clark answered a question about his business success in a television interview. Clark is the CEO of Eskimo Joe's, an internationally known retail company and restaurant based in Stillwater, Oklahoma. What a difference one letter makes in a word's meaning. People who view their work as a joy rather than a job can do great things.

caricature with "the big grin for the greater good." Joe's smile is even on T-shirts and sweatshirts worn by people around the world. Clark, the man behind the success, is enthusiastic, with high energy and an infectious smile. He is so serious about positive leadership that he teaches Smiles 101, an orientation required for all new hires and a yearly refresher for all management employees.

which is also the topic of his book *Love Works: Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders*. Manby is the president and CEO of Herschend Family Entertainment, the largest U.S. family-owned theme park corporation, headquartered in Norcross, Georgia. In the business context, he views love as an action rather than an emotion, and says the best way to run an organization for success and personal fulfillment is with love.

Manby's appearance on the TV show *Undercover Boss* influenced his philosophy. As the featured boss in a 2010 program segment, he interacted anonymously with employees and learned about their personal goals and struggles. That experience spurred him to expand the company's employee assistance program to be more accessible to families in need.

Steve Irby, CEO of Kicker, has also created a workplace environment guided by a positive attitude and respect for all employees. Kicker, like Eskimo Joe's, is based in Stillwater and has an international presence; the company manufactures and sells a growing list of high-performance audio and computer products in many countries.

"Employees want to be appreciated, recognized and considered in company policies," says Irby. To make

"I give more work than I'm paid for because the job gives me the quality of life I crave."

— Aaron Malin, Kicker global trainer

Happy, positive leaders motivate others. Their enthusiastic approach and caring attitude benefit their employees and team members, which ultimately benefits the client or consumer.

"We coach, teach and preach happiness so our employees will practice it with our guests and suppliers," says Clark, who has been in business for 37 years and employs nearly 500 people. "If we're not excited about what we do, we can't make people feel good."

The Eskimo Joe's restaurant is a popular college hangout. The public face of the company is Eskimo Joe, the

Clark wants his company to be a win-win experience for guests and employees, many of whom are college students. "I want my employees to leave knowing how to be a part of a successful team and with the idea of serving others. One of my proudest moments is when someone comes up to me and says, 'I loved working for you. Can I come back?'"

Labor of Love

At the 2012 Toastmasters International Convention, keynote speaker Joel Manby spoke about leading with love,



Randy Miramontez / Shutterstock.com

THE IMPACT OF ZIG ZIGLAR

By Paul Sterman

Zig Ziglar, who passed away last November at age 86, left an indelible mark in the world of public speaking. The longtime Texas resident was a hugely popular motivational speaker—and author—who was admired for his homespun humor, upbeat perspective and clever way with words. Toastmasters International awarded him its Golden Gavel award, the organization’s most prestigious honor, in 1999.

Ziglar worked as a salesman for many years, selling everything from insurance to cookware. Delving into public speaking in the 1950s, he pitched a different product: positive thinking. Ziglar was an indefatigable optimist (he referred to an alarm as an “opportunity clock”), and he exhorted people to see the bright side of life, to look at what they had rather than what they lacked, and to always keep believing and persevering. He reinforced his message in more than two dozen books, garnering total sales well into the millions.

Ziglar made a lucrative living from his speaking career: His fee was \$50,000 per speech, and in his busiest years he gave 150 presentations a year. The motivational-speaking industry also owes Ziglar a debt: His extraordinary success paved a path for the throng of speakers who now populate the field.

Humor was always a central element in Ziglar’s presentations, enabling him to mix advice with entertainment. “Every seven to nine minutes, I’ll have [the audience] laughing,” he once said in an interview. His folksy witticisms have been well-catalogued through the years. Here are five of his most memorable sayings:

“If you go looking for a friend, you’re going to find they’re very scarce. If you go out to be a friend, you’ll find them everywhere.”

“Expect the best. Prepare for the worst. Capitalize on what comes.”

“Your attitude, not your aptitude, will determine your altitude.”

“If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.”

“People often say motivation doesn’t last. Neither does bathing—that’s why we recommend it daily.”

that happen, company leaders need to communicate that they care. “Our focus is on people as people, which gives employees security and generates a happy person at work and at home.”

Being enthusiastic and positive are also qualities that Kicker looks for when hiring new employees. “What we’re doing should be fun, exciting and creative, and we attract people who like that work environment,” Irby says. “Attitude is a big factor when we hire. We want motivated employees who are self-starters.”

Aaron Malin is an example of such an employee. A global trainer at Kicker and a member of Pacesetters Toastmasters in Stillwater, Malin values Irby’s macro-management from the top, which makes employees personally accountable and responsible and fosters great loyalty. “I love my job! To work for a man with character, vision and purpose is far greater than working for money,” Malin says. “I give more work than I’m paid for because the job gives me the quality of life I crave.”

Eyeing the Bottom Line

While Clark, Manby and Irby lead organizations that respect and appreciate their employees, they all point out that they have to pay attention to the financial bottom line to remain in business. When employees don’t meet job responsibilities and company standards, the situation has to be corrected. All agree that talking to employees in these situations should be done on a one-to-one basis, privately and with respect, information and encouragement. But they also recommend praise and recognition to motivate employees to do their best.

Leading with happiness is the ideal, but the reality is that even happy leaders face challenges and problems. Businesses and organizations operate in cycles. The job or responsibility may not be fun all the time. Irby advises setting an example when you have to do difficult things. People will model what they see, so make your actions positive.

Companies with positive leadership offer more than a paycheck. Skills and values that can be transferred to future jobs and life experiences are important to younger workers, who are looking for employment that adds value to society and contributes to their quality of life. Leaders who practice and model good values typically have an easier time recruiting team members and filling positions, and they are likely to have less employee turnover.

You don't have to be a leader of a large corporation, department or even a committee to incorporate happiness into your work and personal life. The way you lead your personal life affects others in your family, community and workplace, either positively or negatively. Malin practices personal leadership by mentoring young men entering the workforce.

"Live your life as if it is your own business; it will give quality to your

life's work," says the Toastmaster. "I'm making a life instead of a living. What I'm doing is not as important as the attitude with which I am doing it."

Whether they call it leading with joy, happiness or love, positive leaders are strong bosses who change attitudes from "I have to do this" to "I get to do this" and "I can do this." When combined with other leadership skills and principles like time management, planning, organization, delegation and feedback, happiness becomes an asset that inspires strong future leadership, whether in business, community or social activities. **T**

Linda Allen, ACS, CL, is a member of the Enid Speakers of the Plains Toastmasters in Enid, Oklahoma. She is a writer, speaker and trainer specializing in cultural awareness, professional and personal development, and leadership.

Reading Material

Here are a few books, articles and projects that explore the topic of positive leadership and related themes.

Love Works: Seven Timeless Principles for Effective Leaders by Joel Manby, joelmanby.com

"The Wooden Way" by Craig Harrison, DTM, the *Toastmaster* magazine, October 2008, www.toastmasters.org/ToastmastersMagazine/ToastmasterArchive/2008/October/Wooden.aspx

The Happiness Project by Robert Holden, happiness.co.uk

Happy for No Reason by Marci Shimoff, happyfornoreason.com



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PICTURE THIS

Use storytelling to plant sensory images in people's minds.

By Caren Neile, Ph.D., ATMS

The pinnacle of my career as a professional storyteller must be the call I received from a reporter for the sophisticated women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*. Fortunately for all concerned, she didn't ask me to pose for the cover. She wanted an interview on the subject of storytelling as a form of interpersonal communication.

At first, I was surprised. After all, both my storytelling and Toastmasters training had focused up to that point on work with large groups. The most

thinking I had done about storytellers in personal encounters was to recognize that many of them weren't holding a conversation—they were holding the floor, often for an interminable period of time.

The reporter asked me if interpersonal storytelling, when done appropriately, could help someone attract a member of the opposite sex. I realized that when I write and lecture about storytelling in large groups, I tend to discuss it as a form of seduction. So why couldn't it be

used to seduce an individual, whether for a date, a job or simply attention?

And that's when it all started to make sense. It's been said that our brains are hard-wired for stories; enjoying and learning through stories is in our DNA. In addition, many of our earliest relationships and experiences center around storytelling in our families. So it is logical that storytellers attract interest and attention. Storytelling also has an effect on memory, enabling us to hold onto

details longer, in part because they are presented in a logical sequence.

“The most powerful tool in intercultural communication is telling a story,” says community activist Lori Vinikoor, DTM, a former Division D governor and a member of West Boca Toastmasters in Boca Raton, Florida. “A story is what people walk away with. Because stories make you feel, listeners remember them long after they’ve forgotten anything else you’ve said.”

“Let me tell you about the bear and the dog ...”

The act of storytelling naturally brings people closer. Imagine I am telling you a story about a bear and a dog in the forest. In your mind’s eye, you are most likely picturing these animals. I haven’t told you what they look like—big or small, male or female—but you have a general idea of their physical characteristics, so you fill in the blanks. In this way, you are completing, or what storytellers call *co-creating*, the story. That gives you both partial ownership of the experience and a closer link to me as the storyteller.

The ability to plant sensory images in people’s minds that allow them to see, smell, hear, feel or taste things that don’t actually exist is a powerful skill. So is the ability to hold people’s attention, as anyone looking for love can tell you.

The topics covered in Toastmasters’ *Interpersonal Communication* manual—conversing with ease, negotiating, handling criticism, coaching and expressing dissatisfaction—can all be enhanced by the targeted use of storytelling. Here’s how:

1 Conversing with Ease. One of the first steps in conversing with a stranger is “fact disclosure,” telling about your occupation, hobbies, etc. This would be an excellent time to give an example of what you do through a story.

He: *I play ice hockey in my spare time.*

She: *Oh, I hear that’s a rough sport.*

He: *Not in the pick-up games I play in. Once I was skating at top speed when I was knocked down by another player. Man, that ice was cold and hard! Before I could move, the guy skated back to me and told me how sorry he was. Then he helped me back up to my feet.*

2 The Successful Negotiator.

Speaking of ice, the first step in negotiating with others is to break the ice. This element of the process establishes common ground between the two sides, which is an important way to build a framework for successful negotiations.

She: *Hey, did you get caught in that traffic on the way over here?*

He: *Yes, it was so slow I didn’t think I’d make it. Is it always this bad?*

She: *Believe it or not, I’ve seen worse. Once when I was on that same road at rush hour on a Monday morning, the traffic was at a standstill. I literally had the car in “park” for five minutes. Needless to say, I was late for my meeting.*

3 Diffusing Verbal Criticism.

Responding to verbal criticism in a non-defensive manner requires, among other things, paraphrasing the speaker’s thoughts and feelings. One way to do this is through story. Repeating the person’s story can show him or her that you have really listened, which can calm the situation.

He: *Let me see if I’ve got this right. You came home from work the other night tired and irritated from a long day. Before you had a chance to turn on the light, you tripped over my briefcase and shoes in the hall. You yelled for me to help you up, but I wasn’t home. And that just made you angrier. Is that what you’re saying?*

4 The Coach. When a supervisor tries to improve the performance of an employee, she needs to explain what needs improving. Highlighting

the problem with the strong images of a story can be extremely useful.

She: *I was driving an important client back from lunch the other day. I had almost clinched our deal, but I needed some information from the office. I used the hands-free feature, which broadcasts what the person on the other end is saying. When you picked up the phone, you were giggling so hard you could barely get out the company’s name. You can’t imagine the look on the face of the client. I now know the true meaning of the word “grimace.”*

5 Asserting Yourself Effectively.

Again, vividly stating the problem when you are unhappy with a situation can be accomplished effectively through a story, as in the previous situation.

Beware the Pitfalls

In the examples above, the stories were short. A person who fills the conversation with stories to the exclusion of anyone else’s opinions, feelings or own stories may not always be a bore, but is certainly a *boor* in this case. Always remember that conversation is a two-way street.

Another potential problem is when the same story is interpreted in several different ways, depending on the listener. To avoid being misunderstood, be sure you control the message of your story, even if you need to say, “The moral of the story is”

When used effectively, storytelling is a powerful tool. By knowing how it works and what it can do, you can use it to your advantage. **T**

Caren S. Neile, Ph.D., ATMS, teaches storytelling studies at Florida Atlantic University. She has performed and lectured throughout the world, and has presented sessions on the topic of storytelling at two Toastmasters International conventions.



THE ART OF SMALL TALK

8 tips for improving your conversation skills.

By Patricia Fry, ATMS

Your Toastmasters training has helped you feel comfortable when speaking in front of a group and self-assured when leading a meeting or giving a speech. But what about when you are conversing one-on-one? Does your confidence level take a dive during your day-to-day communication with others?

There is often more at stake during casual conversations than in other

have been many studies showing that people who see you as similar to themselves will like you more. In a social setting, I think the most important thing to do is to ‘click’ with the other person, because that’s really the only way you will open up the doors to potential friendships, romantic relationships or even business opportunities.” She adds, “The easiest way to initially click with another person

ing ourselves after others and receiving peer feedback.

As we’ve learned through our Toastmasters experience, feedback is a powerful tool that can be used to change poor speaking habits. This is also true when it comes to conversation skills. Most people, however, aren’t comfortable with criticizing the communication habits of others. They aren’t apt to say to a co-worker, “Hey, stop monopolizing the conversation. Give me a chance to say something.” They don’t often say, “I hate talking to you because you never respond to what I say. You go off telling your own story all the time without ever acknowledging mine.” You are not likely to be told when your communication skills need finessing.

It’s elementary but worth repeating: There are two parts to effective conversation—speaking and listening. And both parts require thought and skill. Consider the following tips for becoming a better, more respected conversationalist:

1 Become more social. For many, lacking conversation skills boils down to their lack of confidence in social or business settings. Reading up on how to develop better communication skills can be helpful, but experts advise putting yourself in social situa-

“In business, everything starts with a conversation. Whether it’s making a sale, hiring an employee or negotiating a lease, excellent conversational skills are a must.”

— Denise Marinacci, CC

more formal situations when you are more prepared. As Denise Marinacci, CC, of Edmonds Toastmasters club in Edmonds, Washington, says, “In business, everything starts with a conversation. Whether it’s making a sale, hiring an employee or negotiating a lease, excellent conversational skills are a must.”

Meaningful communication is an aid to building personal relationships, as well. Diane Windingland, DTM, of PowerTalk Toastmasters in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, and author of *Small Talk, Big Results*, says, “There

is to find common ground—to show the similarities between you.”

Why is it that we receive so little training to help us hone conversation skills when we rely on this ability every day of our lives, in so many situations? You may remember your parents or grade school teachers saying, “Don’t interrupt when I’m talking” or “Look at me when I’m speaking to you.” These words of advice remain valid; but for the most part, our conversational style and habits weren’t taught to us. They developed over a period of years through model-

tions as often as possible. Pay attention to the flow of conversations within your business or social circles. Observe those who seem to be the most effective communicators. What techniques do they use? How do they relate to others in the group? Listen to what they say and notice what they don't say.

Instead of arriving late to a Toastmasters meeting and leaving at the drop of the gavel, show up early and strike up a conversation with whomever is there. Ask if you can help set up for the meeting. Stick around

“The most important Toastmasters skill is the ability to listen. ... Without the ability to understand others, we fall short in our goal to communicate with them.” — Roy Schott, DTM

afterwards, even for a few minutes, and talk to someone before leaving. Once you feel more comfortable in this friendly environment conversing with a stranger, practice your skills by attending a social event

2 Be a good listener. This is not to say you should stand on the outskirts of a conversation and just listen. Engage in the conversation. Be attentive to whomever is speaking, and respond accordingly by nodding or smiling. Let the speaker know you have been listening by commenting on the message. You will gain more respect in social and business circles when you demonstrate good listening skills.

A good listener is someone who is genuinely interested in what others have to say. Roy Schott, DTM, of Scottsdale Toastmasters in Scottsdale, Arizona, says, “The most important Toastmasters skill is the ability to listen. Our evaluation process teaches us to be critical listeners and to ascertain what the other speaker is saying. Without the ability to understand others, we fall short in our goal to communicate with them.” Likewise,

when we are thinking about our next comment instead of paying attention to the speaker, we are not demonstrating good listening skills.

3 Encourage the other person to talk. If you want to be considered a wonderful conversationalist, just invite others to talk about themselves. We are all more comfortable speaking about a subject that is familiar, and what is more familiar to you than you?

4 Ask questions. Start a conversation or demonstrate your interest

in what a person is saying by asking questions. Open-ended questions elicit more interesting responses. That's why they are called “conversation starters.”

Crackerjack conversationalists—those people with whom others love to converse—generally have good memories. They pay attention to others. They take in what they learn about others and use that information to engage them in conversation. You might say, “Hi Brad, how was your Hawaiian vacation last month?” Follow up by asking, “What impressed you most about Maui?” or “As I recall, the last time I saw you, you were applying for a new job. How did that go?” or “Hey Sally, how's that grandbaby? Did you have a good visit with her in Atlanta?” A follow-up question to keep this conversation going might be, “What does it feel like to be a grandmother?”

Deb Ferguson, ACB, ALB, is vice president education for Edmonds Toastmasters. She is also a member of the Business Edge Toastmasters, an advanced club in Lynnwood, Washington, composed largely of entrepreneurs and business owners who hone their

communication skills to promote themselves and their businesses. Ferguson suggests supporting the interests of others by not only paying attention to what is being said in conversation, but by remembering it and even acting on it. She says, “Be aware of what's happening around you. When you read or hear about something you know interests someone you have met, tell that person about it. Get a copy of the article and share it with the person. This tells him or her that you listened when they spoke to you and you remembered what they said.”

5 Use body language to express interest in the conversation.

This seems elementary, but if you're observant, you'll notice that not everyone follows this good advice. Face the speaker with unfolded arms. Lean forward slightly, if you are seated. Make eye contact. Acknowledge statements with a nod, comment or question when appropriate.

6 Know when to speak and when to listen.

Conversation should involve give and take. Each person in a conversation should speak *and* listen. Participate, but don't monopolize. Sometimes, someone else puts you in the position of monopolizing a conversation. This person asks question after question about you without offering any information in return. Having someone express that much interest in you may be the height of enjoyment and flattery but after a while, it will begin to feel like an interrogation rather than a conversation. Avoid interrogating others.

7 Be prepared. A good conversationalist engages the listener and stimulates the conversation. Keep up with trends and current events so you'll have something to talk about. Take a keen interest in others, but also live an interesting life of your own. Try new things. Accept unusual invitations. Volunteer for causes that

interest you. Go back to school. Read. Meet new challenges, and then share your experiences within social circles.

Practice what you learn in Toastmasters meetings in regard to storytelling techniques and vocal variety. Hone these skills to hold the interest of friends and business associates during casual conversation.

Toastmasters meetings provide a good arena in which to prepare for social moments. Windingland, of the PowerTalk club, says, “Table Topics prepares me to think quickly on my feet. Often [in conversations], someone asks a question and I need to respond right away. Evaluations require that I listen carefully. And participation in club and district events gives me practical application for conversations.”

8 Model yourself after someone whose conversation skills you admire. Who is your favorite

conversation partner? We all know someone who gets positive attention at social events and business meetings. Consider the people you look forward to talking with. What makes them stand out in a crowd? What are some of his most endearing qualities? How does she make you feel when you’re talking? Study her body language, opening and closing statements and speaking style. To improve your conversation skills, mimic someone you consider successful in this area.

Sarah Norkus, ACB, CL, of Tri-City Toastmasters in Fort Lee, Virginia, came to Toastmasters hoping to improve her public speaking skills to promote her published books, which are in the Young Adult genre. But in the process, she gained much more.

“What I didn’t expect was the added bonus of improving my

conversational skills,” Norkus says. “The confidence I have gained through Toastmasters has helped me to converse more naturally with others. ... Having intimate conversations with people about my writing has actually resulted in more sales than any sales pitch I tried with my first book.”

Being a good conversationalist isn’t necessarily a natural trait. It can take thought and practice. Apply these tools and improve your ability to converse in any situation. **T**

Patricia Fry, ATMS, is the author of 36 books, including *Talk Up Your Book: How to Sell Your Book Through Public Speaking, Interviews, Signings, Festivals, Conferences and More.* Visit matilijapress.com or patriciafry.com.

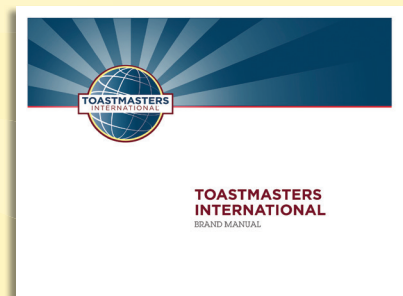


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STEPPING OUTSIDE THE MOM ZONE

An audition leads to self-discovery.

By Christine Clapp, DTM

I got my rejection letter via email: “Thank you so much for auditioning. Unfortunately, we have decided not to use your story in the show. I really enjoyed your story—it was well-constructed, funny and had great suspense, but ultimately it did not fit in the show.”

I earned my Distinguished Toastmaster award in 2008. And although I still participate in two clubs, work

The topic certainly called to me, as the imperfect mother of two young children—Finnian, who at the time was 3, and Beatrix, then 5 months. And the notion of auditioning was wonderfully terrifying, as I don’t have a background in theater and have never been part of a show.

So I signed up to audition and rehearsed my story several times a day during the week leading up to tryouts.

It was a fun, informal process. Between speakers, we nibbled on desserts, introduced ourselves and talked about how the experiences we heard rang true to our own. I even met a mother who was a teacher at my son’s school.

When it was my turn, I felt naked onstage—there was no lectern, no conference table, no screen with PowerPoint slides. I stood silent before starting my story because I blanked on my opening line. Then it came. Soon the narrative was flowing; I felt more relaxed and I was enjoying my moment in the spotlight (or rather under the arch).

I was disappointed to learn my story wasn’t selected. Performing on a real stage before a paying audience certainly would have been outside my comfort zone. But I am proud that I auditioned. I learned that I have the courage to stretch myself as a speaker, and I am committed to trying new things in the future, maybe even stepping up to that open mic. I also learned that the rewards of going outside your speaking comfort zone are the people you meet and the stories you hear. **T**

Christine Clapp, DTM, is a member of The George Washington University Toastmasters in Washington, D.C., and president of Washington, D.C.-based *Spoken with Authority*, which develops the voice of experts who want to broaden their impact. Follow her on Twitter @ChristineClapp or spokenwithauthority.com.

The notion of auditioning was wonderfully terrifying, as I don’t have a background in theater and have never been part of a show.

on projects from the Toastmasters communication and leadership tracks and present regularly for my business, I was feeling a little too comfortable at the lectern. I wanted to step outside my speaking comfort zone. I wanted to again feel the unsettling rush of butterflies in my stomach.

I knew I had found the perfect opportunity when I came across this post in an online forum for neighborhood parents: “*Ever feel like the worst mom in the world? Ever pretend that screaming kid wasn’t yours? We want to hear your story! Audition to be a part of SpeakeasyDC’s Mother’s Day show, ‘Bad Mommy Moments: A Storytelling PlayDate for Moms.’ We’re looking for stories about motherhood failures, surprises, tough decisions, ‘new’ bodies, balancing work and kids and life, losing yourself, finding hope ... and why it’s all worth it.*”

My heart raced as my station wagon crawled through a charming northern Virginia suburb; I squinted to read the street addresses so I wouldn’t miss the home where auditions were being held that evening.

After parking and telling my story one last time to the steering wheel, I left the comfort of my Volkswagen, tiptoed through a dark front yard and stepped into a bright front room where furniture was oriented toward a stage—a small space under an archway that separated the living room from the dining room in a carefully decorated, cozy home.

About a dozen women, including two who were organizing the program for SpeakeasyDC, gathered in the living area and listened as each woman told her story. Some of the stories were scripted, others memorized and a few improvised. Some made me laugh; others made me cry, and my favorites did both.

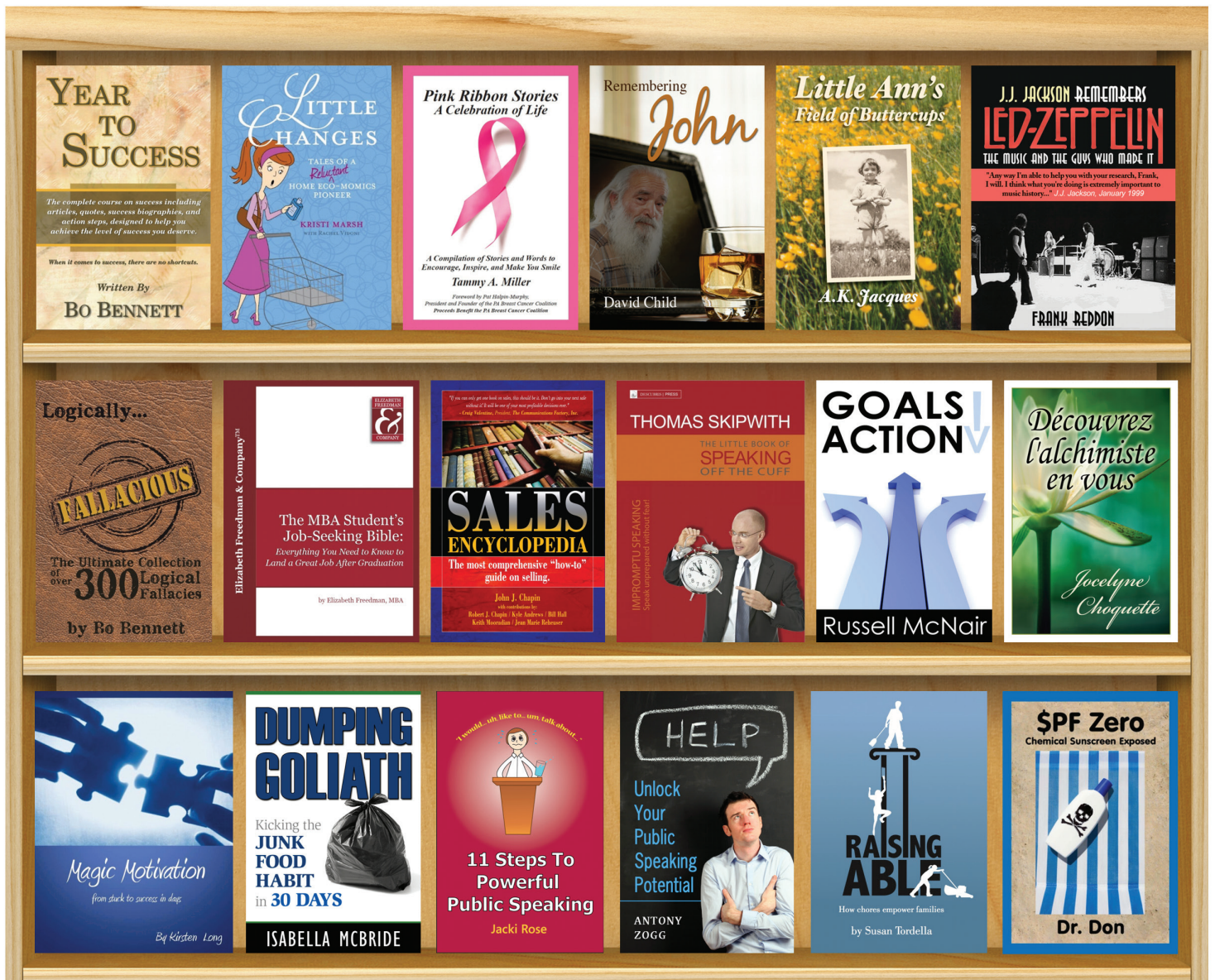
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MAKE 'EM LAUGH!

Educate your audience by entertaining them.

By Linda Henley-Smith

You are planning a presentation. Good for you! But will the audience enjoy it and benefit from it? You may have all the wisdom in the world to impart, but if your presentation lacks pizzazz, you might as well speak to an audience of ducks, because your wise words will go unheard.

In our fast-paced world, bored TV watchers turn to channel surfing if a program doesn't instantly grab their attention. Likewise, you can bet that live audience members will change channels mentally if they are not entertained. Don't be afraid to use a little humor. This shows you respect their time.

There is an adage used in sales training: "If you can make 'em laugh, you can make 'em buy." Humor and laughter are important ingredients in building personal and professional relationships. In a sense, you are selling yourself and your concepts when you speak. To make your presentation successful, keep attendees on their toes by incorporating some unexpected humorous phrases or funny props into your speech.

Humor inspires and motivates, liberates learning and maximizes memory retention. It prepares listeners for receiving information. Very few subjects are too serious for a little

levity, and the more serious the content, the more important it is to break the tension. Humor also equalizes, energizes and enhances creativity, which aids in problem-solving. It breaks down barriers and puts everyone at ease, which makes for more productive sessions. However, sensitivity is always a priority.

Using humor can be challenging. Some are afraid to use it lest they come across as unprofessional. This will only happen, however, if the speaker doesn't know when and how to effectively interject some light-heartedness. Here are tips for making your next presentation more fun for everyone:

The author, Linda Henley-Smith (shown at left and below), speaks about humor at the 2011 Toastmasters International Convention.

Preparation: Begin by building a humor library. Become a student of observational humor and be on the lookout for something funny you might be able to use. For instance, look at bumper stickers or walk through a novelty store where funny cards, T-shirts, magnets and other products are sold. Jot down what makes you laugh. I once saw a sprig of mistletoe and a sign hanging over a baggage check area in an airport. It read, “Here is where you kiss your luggage goodbye!” I have used a variation of that line many times in my speeches on customer service and diffusing potential conflicts. Use your imagination to build on those humorous phrases. Think about how

went flat. I was dressed as a mummy and couldn’t change the tire because my costume was too confining. I had to find someone to help me. This story probably wouldn’t work in a speech about budget cuts, but it is a good lead-in for my session on teamwork.

Props: Props serve many purposes, including adding dimension to your program. People remember what they see longer than they remember what they hear. For instance, if you are talking about conflict resolution, you could make your point by using two punching dinosaur puppets. Audience members will think about those puppets the next time they are faced

confidence level and the mood of the audience. If you have practiced your speech, are comfortable with your material and know your audience, you’ll be able to sense if and when you should use humor. If the crowd doesn’t laugh, keep calm, because it happens to the most professional humorist. The trick is to keep going. Spectators take their cue from the speaker, so if you are confident and poised, everything will be fine.

It takes effort to create a program and present a message. You want your audience to really experience your program, and be excited by it. You want to make an impact! So be passionate about your topic

Using your life as the source of your humor guarantees that your presentation will be unique.



you can incorporate them into your presentations to emphasize your points. Know your audience and tailor your humor for them.

Personalization: The best humor comes from real life! I don’t tell jokes, because there is always a risk that the audience has heard them before or will find them offensive. Using your life as the source of your humor guarantees that your presentation will be unique. Every one of us can recall an embarrassing situation that left us blushing at the time but now seems funny. These situations can be entertaining, so use them! But make sure you stay relevant to your topic.

Once, while on my way to a costume party, the tire on my car

with a conflict. Be creative. You will drive home a point in a humorous way, and your attendees will leave with the image of those props to remind them of your words.

The next time you are out shopping, keep your eye and your mind open for something that is appropriate for your topic. For example, you can use a yo-yo to illustrate how life is full of ups and downs, or little plastic hand clappers when you are talking about teamwork and encouraging others. I have a giant pair of plastic scissors that I use when I speak about cutting the negativity out of life.

Project Poise: The success of your humor attempt will depend on your

and make it fun for those listening. Remember—humor isn’t about being funny or telling jokes; it’s an attitude. It takes courage to use humor and try innovative techniques, but these efforts will set you apart from other speakers. **T**

Linda Henley-Smith is an international speaker and author based in Phoenix, Arizona. At the 2011 International Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, she presented an education session about using humor to solve problems. To learn more about her, visit lindahenley-smith.com or follow her on Twitter @LaughLadyDiva.

I AGREE WITH YOU, DEAR

How happy couples communicate (yes, there is such a thing).

By John Cadley

Much has been written about communication between the genders. This, we are told, is one of the keys to nuptial bliss. Happily married people communicate; unhappily married couples don't.

To which I say: Poppycock, balderdash and flapdoodle.

I was in an unhappy marriage, and when my then-wife said something, her meaning was always perfectly clear. What's not to understand about "You're an idiot"? When I asked her what was wrong, she said "Nothing," I knew immediately that not only was something wrong, but that it was my fault. When she was angry with me and I asked why, she said, "You wouldn't understand." I understood perfectly: She wasn't about to waste her breath explaining something to a person with the IQ of a small soap dish.

The far more interesting question is: How do happily married people communicate? Yes, *happily* married. I used to think that was an oxymoron, but now I'm in a ridiculously happy marriage, the kind I used to look at and think, Oh, pullllleeease, quit the acting and start insulting each other like real husbands and wives. But now, I'm a believer. Just the other night, my wife, Cathy, and I were talking about money. Just writing the word gives me hives. In my previous marriage, I refused to discuss money until we both signed a piece of paper that

said no matter what happened, there would be no serious injuries (defined as requiring hospitalization) and no arrests—but if arrested, no convictions. Then we each donned our protective headgear and went to work.

Compare this with the conversation I had with Cathy. I made a suggestion as to how certain moneys should be spent and ... she agreed. Not only did she agree, she said it was a good idea. I briefly considered calling a doctor because I thought I was becoming delusional, but then I remembered: Oh yeah, I'm in a happy marriage. This is what happens in a happy marriage. People actually say what they mean. They have conversations instead of arguments, discussions instead of confrontations. (Yes, I know, this is all so sickly-sweet you can't stand it. Well, take a Pepto-Bismol, because there's more.)

When my wife and I go out to dinner, we talk the whole time. If we go for a walk, we finish walking before we finish talking. Disgusting, isn't it?

Does this mean we never disagree or argue? Let me put it this way: When my wife has something to say to me, she usually starts with "sweetheart" or "honey." If she starts with "John," I know she's upset. That's it. No name-calling. Just "John." I get it. It's like with a dog I used to have. His name was Jack, but I always called him Jacky Boy or Jack-Jack or Jackson—unless he did something wrong. Then, I just looked at him and said, "Jack." Suddenly he perked up his ears, cocked

his head and stopped wagging his tail. That's kind of how I react to "John," except for the tail part.

And yes, I hate to say it, but we never go to sleep angry. If there's a problem, we lie there and talk it out until nobody's crying anymore. This is a distinct improvement over my previous marriage, in which I tried not going to sleep angry until I realized I hadn't slept for five years.

If this is causing you to take even more stomach reliever, let me reassure you that, no, we haven't reached the point where we're finishing each other's sentences. If we ever do, I might start taking Pepto-Bismol myself. And I've found that sometimes, the best communication can be a temporary cessation of communication. I learned this from my wife's father, who has been happily married for 50 years. When I asked him for the secret, he put his arm around my shoulder, looked to make sure his wife wasn't listening, and said, "John, sometimes a man has to know when to take a walk."

I've followed that advice on several occasions, and it works wonders. I don't walk very far, though. It usually only takes a few blocks to cool off, and besides, I'm not too crazy about exercise. **T**

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York.

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Romeo Amauri Lopez Calderon and wife **Maria de Jesus García Huerta**, from Morelia, Mexico, pose in front of “The Bean” in Chicago, Illinois.



Paul H. Mueller from Peoria, Illinois, and his daughter **Christie** from Cordova, Tennessee, visit Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada.



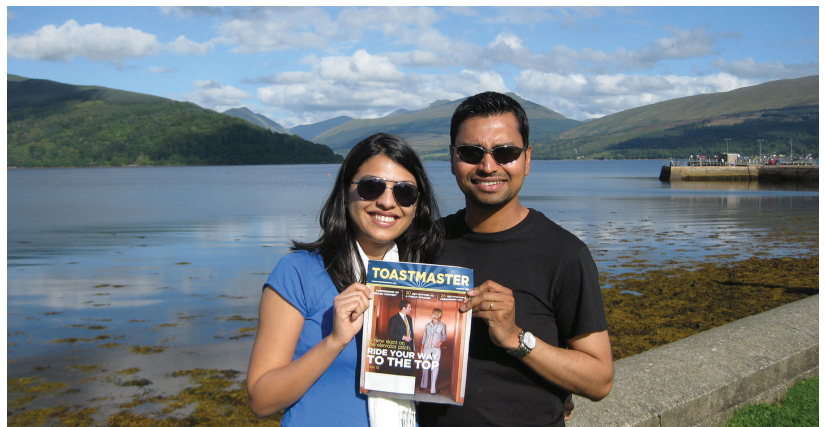
Alistair Cottle, **Renee Philippi** and **Gowyn Jones**, all from Edinburgh, Scotland, scuba dive off the island of Gozo in Malta.



Zoe Bentley and her mother, **Lisa Cottrell-Bentley**, both from Milpitas, California, brave the Sonoran Desert heat in Sahuarita, Arizona.



Amy Hofmann from Bismarck, North Dakota, visits a wombat at the Caversham Wildlife Park in Perth, Australia.



Sharon Mendonsa and her husband, **Sheldon**, both from Doha, Qatar, enjoy the scenery at Inveraray, Scotland.



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