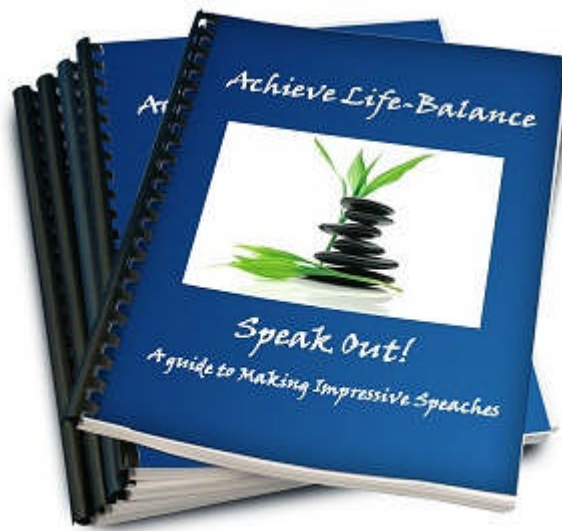


Success Series Five



- Book Five: *Speak Out – A guide to Making Impressive Speeches*

Introduction

If you are a hermit with no definite plans of getting out of your self-imposed isolation in the next few decades, don't waste your time scanning through this handbook. Just throw it in the nearest garbage bin and say your final goodbyes to civilization.

However, if you are eager to suck the marrow out of life by interacting with fun and intellectually stimulating individuals, then this book is surely meant for you. It is a simplified guide to help you improve certain aspects of your public relations skills as well as your socialization techniques, specifically in the arena of public speaking.

Everyone knows that an eloquent speaker is regarded as a very special individual. From the earliest times to the present, those with the valuable and powerful talent of eloquence have held a distinct place in influencing mankind's code of conduct and persuading different groups to action.

Look back at the rich history of the Greek empire. Do you recall how they held in high esteem the art and science of oration? It was considered an art by the beauty of its form, and a science because it requires the faculty of reasoning. So those who were able to combine these two qualities were held in high regard.

While it is true that not all of us can be a superior orator or speaker, having a goal to reach the second or third top spot is a laudable ambition. That is the classic mark of true excellence. As an old scribe said, even if we have but a flicker of hope of surpassing great men, we may deem it a great honor to follow them.

Modern-day neophytes in the field of public speaking should remember that every great speaker once began as a student. No one was exempted. In numerous instances, they owed their towering distinction not so much to their natural endowments as to their unwavering zeal and hard work. World-renowned orators like Demosthenes and Cicero studied perpetually; British authors such as Fox, Burke, Gladstone, Brougham, Chatham, and many others were close disciples of classical eloquence. In the American setting, Webster, Lincoln, Kennedy, Clay, and Martin Luther King Jr. were indefatigable trailblazers in oratorical events.

Some people think that eloquence is just an artificial thing, that it is only reserved for those who have ulterior motives or exclusively for the elite. It is a common misconception which should be corrected here and now. Pure, unadulterated eloquence has something to do with bringing together all the natural resources of mind, body and soul to seek the ultimate end, which is the highest development of our God-given abilities. There is nothing more important than allowing ourselves, with all the commitment in the deepest recesses of our hearts, to reach the very essence of eloquence. After all, life is a continuous quest for perfection. By doing this, we can either achieve the pinnacle of success, or at least advance on that path. It is to an individual's betterment, whether or not he dreams of becoming a good speaker, to improve his skills to the highest level he is capable of. Surely, there is no other gift in the world which will gain for him notable distinction, friendship and eternal fame than eloquence.

Here is a summary of each chapter of this handbook. Go through the texts

so you can have an idea of which is the most important in your development.

In the first chapter, we shall touch lightly on the background of communication, including its classification into verbal and non-verbal forms. The advantages and disadvantages of spoken communication will also be discussed. You may be wondering what this has got to do with making impressive speeches for public consumption. Well, the act of giving speeches falls under public speaking, a form of verbal communication. So before you can buckle down to work, you have to first know and comprehensively understand certain principles on this topic to realize what it takes to get your message across to the audience.

Chapter II tackles various motivational speech concepts and ideas. It includes a long list of criteria to give a powerful boost to your message. It also gives fun and unusual ways to come up with motivational ideas. They are not only meant to squeeze your creative juices, they are also written to help you think out of the box and veer away from the norm which has become a boring template.

In Chapter III, the essentials of how to give your speech that extra “oomph” will be tackled. Important points to remember, like knowing the target demographics, the main purpose of one's speech and using a sense of humor appropriately are discussed. The construction of the basic parts of a speech from the introduction, body and conclusion are also carefully and thoroughly explained. Pointers on how to make the speech come alive are also included.

Chapter IV delves into effective public speaking skills. It teaches you how to keep things simple, how to give accurate information and anecdotes about

various situations, tips for behaving normally and managing your appearance and voice.

Chapter V talks about creating speeches tailor-made for special occasions. There are tips for wedding speeches by fathers of the bride and groom, the best man and the maid of honor. This will guide you to include the essential points necessary to have a resounding impact on the couple and their wedding guests. There are also techniques on how to make a smashing graduation speech, a eulogy, a birthday speech and for a guest who is called on to toast a couple on their anniversary.

In the sixth chapter, how to use proper body language to your advantage is the main concept. It discusses the importance of proper posture, eye contact, smiling and hand gestures.

Lastly, Chapter VII bids you its final message before letting you begin working on your impressive speech.

With these important points out of the way, let's get down to business.

Chapter One COMMUNICATION

Many scholarly books have sought to define communication and explain its meaning, but they are often too technical and it is not their primary purpose to give practical advice to the ordinary person.

So with the purpose of simplicity in mind, we can define communication as the process by which a person gives, receives or exchanges information with another individual. Usually, it involves three means: speaking, writing or listening.

In addition, oral communication is nearly always accompanied by gestures, a show of emotion such as smiling, or even a nod of the head. These are simple examples of non-verbal communication.

Why do we really have to communicate?

You might find yourself wondering about the importance of communication. You might even think we could all survive, and even thrive, on this planet quite easily without communicating at all. Of course this would not be possible.

Communicating with our fellow human beings is a basic part of our existence as intellectual creatures. In the animal kingdom, we particularly stand apart by our communication patterns, which are distinctly intricate and complicated.

From birth, man can relate his needs to others through a fundamental

method of communication -- crying. As a baby, every human is able to get attention to satisfy his needs, be it hunger, a wet diaper or an uncomfortable environment.

As the baby chronologically ages, from an infant to a toddler, from an adolescent to a fully matured man, his life becomes more complex. Much of his daily activities are spent on communicating in one way or another in order to achieve both his needs and wants.

So, if this premise is correct, then everyone should be considered an expert in communication. Right? Well, not really! Certainly, life would be a lot easier if you always got exactly what the other person was trying to say. But do you recall instances where you listened to somebody expounding on a certain topic yet still felt at the end of the conversation that you were none the wiser? That person had actually failed to achieve the purpose of his speech, which was to communicate in such a way that you would easily comprehend.

Nowhere is effective interaction more important than at the office during working hours and during public functions. Essential information needs to be given, received, exchanged and understood hundreds of times in every day. Many things can go terribly wrong because of poor communication between the parties concerned.

The advantages of spoken communication

Although the written word has come to be relied on extensively in many ways, it is well not to forget the advantages of oral communication. The following

are the four main advantages of utilizing spoken communication:

- **It is more personal.** Nothing is better than a face-to-face interaction between a sender and a receiver. Initial mutual rapport has to be established in order to promote trust, confidence and openness. Once this ultimate aim is achieved, everything else will fall into place.
- **Both parties can have the freedom to express their ideas and feelings easily.** This could eventually result in a rapid exchange of expressed ideas and prevent misunderstandings from cropping up. Clarifications can instantly be made if one party feels confused by a particular statement made by the other.
- **The message is relayed without undue hindrances.** In a matter of milliseconds, the message is passed on with minimal obstacles.
- **The initial reaction of the recipient reliably serves as a feedback.** Since there are fewer barriers compared to written communication, the emotions revealed instantaneously can be considered more accurate and spontaneous.
- **We have the use of vocal inflections and body language.** These are missing in writing, and their lack can cause an emotional distance, as well as possible misunderstandings.

Disadvantages of spoken communication

If spoken communication has its advantages, it also includes a few disadvantages. Here are three of them:

- **There is no permanent record.** Unless it is taped, there is really no way of proving that you said what you said in a particular time. This may negatively lead to misquotes.
- **Personality clashes have a high probability of occurring.** Tempers may flare in the heat of the moment, especially if controversial topics are passionately discussed by two opposing parties. It is imperative that a non-partisan moderator be used if this type explosive situation can't be avoided.
- **There is less time to reflect and organize one's thoughts.** When speaking off the cuff, we sometimes present our thoughts in a disorganized way, or we can't find the words to express our ideas, or we say something that hurts the person we are speaking to, and taking back our words is not as effective as using an eraser before anyone gets a chance to see them in the first place.

Chapter Two

MOTIVATIONAL SPEECH IDEAS

A lot of occasions and settings straightforwardly lend themselves to motivational topics and ideas. Name it and chances are, it will surely get a check mark in terms of widespread applicability. Shall we begin? Funerals? Check. Retirement parties? Check. Graduation balls? Check. Self-improvement consultations? Check. Weddings? A big fat and solid check!

It may all sound easy enough, but before you start scribbling down your thoughts on a piece of paper for that 15-minute speech during a wedding, funeral or graduation party, it is a must that you decide on what message you would like to convey to your audience. Do you want to leave them in stitches after giving a funny anecdote about the groom during the reception? Or do you want them to wipe away a tear as you share a heart-warming tale of the bride's generosity that you witnessed in her young life? Maybe you just want to offer the couple your sincere congratulations and best wishes as they embark on the oftentimes exciting, sometimes troubling journey of marriage. Or you could be hoping to influence others to follow the lead of a deceased person in your funeral speech. Or you just want to acknowledge a loved one on her 60th birthday. The point is, you need to make sure that the message is delivered in a powerful and effective way so that the audience will be riveted. It should make them cry like Niagara Falls. Or feel inspired. Or even burn with the desire to revive the dying embers of their own less than outstanding lives.

A truly influential speaker is someone who can make you realize that the

stratosphere is the limit in terms of abundance of opportunities. He can motivate you because he knows ideas and topics that can give greater impact, significant nuggets of wisdom which can lead you to a much higher level.

Here are some criteria for a good motivational speech:

- **It should be uplifting.** In weddings, for example, it is done to praise and commend either or both parties. This will give the newlyweds something good to look back on and at the same time leave the guests in high spirits during such a joyous occasion.
- **It should be distinctly remarkable.** By remarkable, we mean to say that the content of the speech should be deeply ingrained in the hearts and minds of everybody present long after the event has taken place.
- **It should be chronologically relevant.** Some guests can quote lines from a speech given at a particular occasion nearly a decade ago because they find it applicable at the present time. If the message contained is timeless, it will be of significant use to a lot of people whatever their age.
- **It should inspire instantaneous action.** Actions usually entail changes. Change can be done for the better. Attending and speaking at an event can foster changes which promote improvement and self-realization.

Basically, understanding and utilizing the aforementioned concepts can leave you in a much better position. In addition, as you begin jotting down your

motivational ideas, evaluate your written output against those guidelines. Do you imagine that your captive audience will walk away from the venue in a more improved condition than when they came in? If your answer is yes, then congratulations because it means that you are steering in the right direction.

However, if your answer was no, don't lose heart. Try to scrutinize your speech carefully and search for ways where you can make an upbeat, enduring and rousing impact on your spectators.

Thinking out of the box

In planning for an uplifting speech, and any speech for that matter, there should always be a period where you allow yourself to think out of the box. You should take some time exploring the vast world of non-conformity and unconventionality to inject some pizzazz into your prose. It is not necessary to assume a new personality just to make this happen. There are a lot of expert tips to help you.

- **Aim for the vulnerable jugular.** By this, we mean that you should start with the emotion necessary to create a certain mood in your audience. Build a steady momentum from that point on. If you are aiming to motivate a newly married pair to forge on despite the obstacles they will undoubtedly encounter, your primary focus would be to promote a sense of hope and fortitude. You can also present to them, through witty anecdotes, the various problems that will possibly crop up and the doable ways by which they can solve those problems. If possible, try to come up with some words, ideas, images, etc. that convey the idea of optimism and

perseverance. Through those simple means, you will be able to move your audience.

- **Try collaging.** Sounds strange? It may be uncommon to associate speech construction with the very “artsy” connotation of collaging. Actually, it is not really unrelated. The process is quite convenient and useful in providing you with one-of-a-kind topic thoughts or original content ideas.

Take a stack of back issues of magazines, old newspapers, promotional brochures, advertisement materials, etc. that contain edgy graphics and colorful large print words and spread them out on a clean floor. Choose a large piece of plain white (or colored, depending on your fancy) cardboard. Sizes may range from a full spread to a half or quarter sized sheet. Just opt for one that is large enough to accommodate all your cut-outs. Use glue or some form of pasting material to hold your work together.

Make a cursory inspection throughout the collection in search of images and terms that both inspire and stimulate you. It is not important that they be obviously related. In fact, it would really be much better if the pictures and words seem unrelated but actually hold immense meaning in the context of your speech. This will allow you to conjure thoughts you have not consciously imagined before. Once you have set up and filled out several pages (or enough to abundantly cover your poster board), create the design or the layout that seems good to you. Attach them and carefully stare at the final piece. Does it suggest anything special to you? Does it

draw your attention in an irresistible fashion? Can you think of how you might turn this eclectic compilation of random images and vocabulary words into speech thoughts or content ideas? You will be surprised at what you come up with.

- **Amuse yourself by playing the famous association game.** Start the engine rolling with a single word or concept that has sparked an unusually high point of interest, but not quite enough to really shift you into motion. Now, without restricting or critiquing yourself, commence a free association session. Do you feel the light bulb switching on in your brain? Start with one word or phrase, even a vague idea will do if you feel like you can't put into words the exact thought that you are having. Immediately, write down what comes into your mind right below it, and continue in this way for a minimum of 10 minutes. Kick logical reasoning out of the window. This is a creative exercise, not a logic class. Practicality has no business in this place at the moment. Release your wild imagination and unleash your artistic bent to wherever they might lead you. Soar unshackled with innovative ideas and trust your instinct. In order for this association game to be most effective, go for maximum speed, trying to list down as many diverse associations as you can in the ten minutes allotted. The moment you have completed your task, tuck away your copy in a safe place. Rest your mind and do not look at it again for a minimum of thirty minutes. Once the minimum time for the break is over, you can again pick up your copy and the moment you look at it,

extraordinary and potent ideas are likely to jump out at you!

Now we'll see if you are ever going to have a boring experience trying to jump-start your brain cells again. With a process as entertaining and as practical as this, you must surely be wondering why you haven't applied it in your life before.

Chapter Three

HOW TO GIVE THAT SPEECH THE EXTRA “OOMPH”

First things first. Give yourself a congratulatory pat on the back for taking time to read books like this to assist you in improving not only your skills in making and giving speeches but also your personality development as a whole. You will never know who will be impressed by your simple but well-prepared speech. It could be your future boss, or a potential business associate or even a life partner. The point is, it pays well to do your best in every endeavor, no matter how plain it may seem. If your future audience realized how much time you took and how hard you worked to make an impressive wedding speech, they would surely be impressed. Often, whether due to laziness or fearful procrastination, the majority of people just decide to "wing it." You may be bored, stuck in a depressing rut due to the absence of solid speech material, so in a wild flash of insanity, you finally decide to wait for inspiration to come the day before the event. No, that's definitely a bad idea. See the red light blinking? Just like a traffic sign, this is an obvious signal to immediately stop the negative thought in its tracks. "Winging it" is a big mistake that won't go unpunished. You have to realize that making tiny steps one at a time can bring you closer to your dream of a moving speech. You don't have to hurdle huge obstacles in one day. Reality check: you are not a superhero! And for the extremely lucky minority who can "wing it" with panache, a short preparation would never hurt, either.

So here are some handy techniques on how to construct classy speeches.

- **Know your audience.**

- **Who will be attending?** What will they be expecting to hear from you? Will it serve you any good purpose to defy their social expectations for a well-intended goal? Are you ready to face brickbats in case you don't rise up to their standards? Will you sacrifice certain principles to avoid lending a somber glow to a bright affair like a wedding? There are a few psychologists who say that the most typical, although not universal, human response to surprise is resentment. Therefore, you have to get to know your audience a little better. The more you know about them, the more comfortable you will be in preparing and giving a speech.
- **Use humor on the proper occasions.** Admit it. Life would be dour without a dash of humor. Every writer is confronted with the temptation to sprinkle humor into his speech. More often than not, humor plays a very convenient role as an icebreaker. The crowd will instantaneously warm up to you and be more receptive to the majority of your ideas. Unfortunately, if it is used inappropriately, humor can lower your credibility and even offend your target audience.

You also have to consider your familiarity with the guests. Admittedly, a different kind of humor is shared between two close friends than with a total stranger. The same premise is true, only amplified, when writing and giving any speech.
- **What is the main goal of your speech?** This is one of the most

important considerations you have to remember in trying to create an outline. Just what exactly are you hoping to achieve by making this specific talk? Recall our discussion in the second chapter about motivational speech ideas to refresh your memory.

- **How should the speech be structured?** Simple. It follows the same structure of an elementary essay. It starts with an introduction, followed by a comprehensive, albeit lengthy, body and a conclusion.

A. Introduction. This is a crucial part because this is where the writer tries to establish his ideas and concepts in a powerful but decisive manner. To paraphrase the immortal words of Charles Dickinson, unveil the central message of your speech, but unveil it gradually. There is no need to hammer an audience over the head with it. That is the purpose of the end paragraph called the conclusion! Coming off as overly emphatic at the beginning of a speech would be anticlimactic, just like divulging the much-awaited punch line of a joke prematurely.

B. Body. In this part, you are now free to start giving the main gist of your message. This will be the point where you continue establishing the direction of your speech, built from the first few statements of the short introduction. Continue the order of increasing power - the logical progression of any speech. You want your final point to resonate with everyone, not to mumble it to the

first ten people occupying the front row. Note that we are not merely talking here about volume, but rather about what will be most compelling to an audience.

C. Conclusion. Though this is the last part of the speech, it is by no means the least important. Here, you present your central message in full clarity, leaving no doubt as to the message or argument. It is imperative that you leave the audience with a good grasp of your expressed concept or else you will find yourself bombarded with unnecessary questions from confused listeners.

You can also add a few touches of your own, such as inserting proverbs or quotable quotes from famous personalities to drive home the point. In fact, compared to writing an essay, you are granted a little more flexibility of structure in a speech. But if the annoying writer's block comes knocking at your door and ideas are not coming readily to mind, the basic structure of an essay can guide you to move at a certain pace.

You are the center of attention at that moment so think "live". Bear in mind that whether in the written or spoken form, you must always presume that your words have the audience's undivided attention. This is where the typical speech differs most from an essay: you are performing it live. No eccentric director calls for a cut when you make a discreet blunder or a major faux pas. There will be no acclaimed editors snipping off a piece of movie film at an editing room to erase your errors. This is the main reason why you should write your own speech. You will actually be voicing out a thought that is truly your own, not

some cheap copy.

Hence, it is essential that you utilize a language that you are comfortable using or saying out loud.

Train yourself through constant and correct practice. All the things that have been mentioned about authenticity can still be softened in a subtle way through constant and correct practice so you won't sound like an oppressive dictator out to brandish his life- threatening armaments. The more often you practice writing different variations of speeches, the better you can get away with using certain words, concepts/ideas and phrases that may not be as familiar to you. Conversely, do not try to impress by using long, complicated words unless absolutely unnecessary. If you have to use them, make sure you know what they mean first.

Revise whenever necessary. A big step to be undertaken during the practice phase is revision. If a particular line is giving you major trouble, don't hesitate to think of another way to deliver that specific message. Otherwise, revise in the same way as you would for an essay - with meticulous attention given to grammar, relevance and most importantly, logical flow. Rehearse and rehash your speech until it meets your high standards. Do not be contented with mediocrity. It is only for reserved for losers.

As a summary, you should make sure that you keep on practicing until your delivery is polished. Remember to show the audience who you are, so be yourself when writing a speech. People are, not surprisingly, better judges of authenticity than some public speakers would like to believe. Calm your nerves

and control those butterflies in the stomach! By writing a speech, you are training yourself for delivery; the more seriously you prepare the less anxiety you will have.

Chapter Four

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING SKILLS

Public speaking is a field dreaded by many people. Some individuals would opt to dive over a rocky cliff rather than make a speech, even if it's for a solemn and heart-tugging ceremony like a wedding of a loved one. Oftentimes, they conjure up every potentially embarrassing scenario: "What if the audience criticizes my appearance?" "What if I forget my memorized lines?" "What if all of my prepared jokes fall flat?" "What if I have a seizure in the middle of my speech due to heightened anxiety and all the guests present will remember me as the epileptic guy/girl for the rest of my life?" You haven't even started and yet you are already overwhelmed by too many what ifs! Banish those negative thoughts to the trash can.

It's a fact of life that not all people were born great speakers. However, many have come to realize the importance of public speaking in their lives so they committed to improve themselves in this discipline. The moment a person decides to take the plunge to better himself, he can assess his capabilities and take note of his deficiencies in a straightforward manner. This way, he can readily strengthen his skills and remedy his weaknesses.

If you are brave enough to conquer your frazzled nerves and the unhealthy but commonly experienced one million heartbeats per minute, you will surely benefit from the following general information as well as specific techniques at the end of the chapter.

First, you have to answer the question, "How do you think you come

across to other people?” Perhaps, you have never stopped to think just how important good speaking skills are. Can you recall a teacher you had at school who, brilliant though he or she might have been, just could not “teach” a class? That poor teacher was unable to communicate in such a way that you could simply understand.

The same principle can be applied to all walks of life. Certain qualities are needed to become a good speaker.

Keep things simple

Whatever may be the topic that you are discussing, you need to be able to express your ideas, thoughts and feelings in an easy-to-understand manner. This means organizing your information and keeping the language simple.

Be accurate

The accuracy of what you will be sharing is vital. Are you a hundred percent sure of your facts? Have you chosen the most acceptable way to express your story? Inaccurate information may be considered as worse than no information at all. Never quote something that can be challenged. Just imagine yourself telling a pack of lies about a couple at a wedding reception. Chances are, you would be cut in the middle of your speech and engaged in a heated verbal tussle, or even worse, a bloody fistfight. It is definitely not a moment worth remembering.

Behave normally

When speaking, never try to put on an act. Cliché as it may sound, just be yourself. Speak as you would normally speak, and behave in a way that feels comfortable to you. Pretentious “airs and graces” will soon be seen through and could cause embarrassing situations.

Managing your appearance

You may be thinking that “dress” does not come into speaking skills, and you would be partially right, but it is important to appear suitably dressed for every occasion. If you dress well to attend an interview, for instance, you will have the confidence to speak confidently about yourself, knowing that you look your best. Scruffy jeans, a dirty and crumpled shirt with matching greasy hair are not recommended attire for most speech-giving occasions. Neither is a skimpy see-through outfit with a plunging neckline and a scandalous hemline!

Remember, your first impression could be a lasting one and your general appearance will be noticed even before you open your mouth to speak. Dress with proper care so that people will realize that you indeed took time to prepare for this speech.

Weddings, for example, have their own dress codes depending on the time of day. Wedding functions set in the morning do not usually require formal attire, so women should go for easy-to-wear pieces that still hit the appropriate notes. For funerals, black is the typical color of choice while formal wear is the implicit rule. For birthday and graduation parties, semi-formal attires are usually

preferred but some opt for more casual styles. In any case, the general rule here is that if you are going to make a speech, it'll be best for you to wear something that will be attractive and appropriate, and yet comfortable enough so that you can concentrate on your speaking.

Managing your voice

General speaking techniques

Recall times when you talked with different people: your father, boyfriend or girlfriend, chief executive officer or mentor. Have you noticed that you usually adopt a different style of conversation for each? So imagine that someone, perhaps a significant other, who loves and appreciates you, is intently listening. Start out by visualizing that you're simply talking to them.

It's a well-known fact that most, if not all, successful speakers project an unmistakable sense of conviction and high level of energy. They have no choice, if they really want to hold their audience's attention captive from start to finish. They are very much aware that if they stop concentrating on the words and the thread of their speech, so will the audience stop listening.

It's imperative that you firmly believe what you say and deliver it with certainty and a burning passion. Your listeners are not bumbling idiots. They will immediately sense it if you are not being sincere.

Delivery. At first, these tips may feel slightly unnatural, even a bit funny, when you initially try them. But you can observe how effective they are by closely listening to the diction and phrasing of top radio and television presenters.

Did you notice how they:

Emphasize important words? In every sentence, you have to underline the key phrase or idea. So when you read through your speech, you will find it useful to highlight the main words of each sentence, usually nouns and verbs. A simple but prudent act like this will serve as a constant reminder to pay attention to your emphasis, which will give your presentation the extra 'oomph'.

Don't allow the volume of their voices to lower down at the end of sentences? This is a common mistake committed by newbies because they have the tendency to start strong and end weak. Keep in your mind that every single word has to be heard in full. If you just wanted to mutter it, then why did you include it in the first place?

Do lower the tone at the end of a sentence? Many people will raise the tone at the end of a sentence, as if they were asking a question. It gives an impression of someone who is not sure of what they are saying and is looking for reassurance from their listener. Even in ordinary conversations this can be annoying, but it is totally incompatible with public speaking.

Here are other important things to remember in using your vocal prowess while delivering a speech.

- **Pace and pause.** There is no escaping the fact that pacing and pausing holds tremendous value in public speaking. These are two integral elements that you can take advantage of to render a heartfelt speech. If possible, do not speak too fast. Don't rush,

particularly when you are just beginning to utter the first few lines.

Slowing down will help emphasize and reinforce your key ideas. As a summary, speak just fast enough to keep the audience from becoming bored but slow enough for them to fully comprehend what you are saying.

- **Learn how to vary your pace to inject a sense of exhilaration and gravity.** Use pauses to add a hint of color to the delivery of your speech. A pause may be used to set up a significant point, to add emphasis to certain phrase or to allow the important point to set in. However, a pause should be used properly. If overexploited and extended more than the desired length, it could make you look pompous or arrogant for wasting precious time.
- **Use a volume that is audible to all.** Even with a microphone, you may need to increase your volume compared to regular conversation. This does not come naturally to most people, and will need practice on your part to increase your volume without deforming other aspects of your intonation.
- **Accents and articulation.** Although it is important to be natural in what you say, the way you say it can be worked on. If you have a very broad accent, you would be well advised to try to slow down in order to make your words more easily understood. There is no need to become "posh" or use an affected voice, but careful pronunciation of words will help enormously.

- **Intonation.** The human voice has an amazing capacity to add nuance and meaning to words by the use of intonation. People can express sarcasm, doubt, hesitation, humor, sadness, anger and a myriad of other emotions and attitudes just by their intonation. This is one of the most important advantages of speaking over writing, and you will want to use it fully. In fact, you use it all the time, mostly in an unconscious way. The difference between ordinary conversation and public speaking is that you have to emphasize your intonation more when speaking to a group because you are farther away and these subtle nuances will not go over if you do not amplify them. If you don't do this, your voice will sound monotonous and you will not get your message across to your listeners. Also, if you are someone who was taught to suppress your emotions, your voice may reflect this by being less expressive. You're going to have a lot of work to do to correct this, because at first you will probably feel very uncomfortable, even ridiculous. Record yourself, and ask others for advice.
- **Resonance.** Singers spend a lot of time learning how to direct their voice in a way that creates a pleasant resonance. Speakers need to do this too. Once again, listen. Listen to professionals, listen to your neighbors, listen to mothers in the shopping mall yelling at their children trying to get them to behave. That same mother may have a beautiful melodious voice when she is soothing

a child who has just skinned her knee. How she says “Now, now dear, it's all right” will make a big difference in how the child reacts (example on audio). And whether your voice is melodious or sharp will make a difference in how your audience perceives you and reacts to you.

- **Avoid verbal tics.** Interspersing your speech with “you know” and “OK” or other verbal tics is something you might do with being aware of it at all. You would do well to record yourself and count how many times you use these useless expressions. If you do tend to use them, as many people do, it will take a lot of effort on your part to correct yourself, but it is absolutely necessary if you don't want to drive your audience crazy.

Chapter Five

CREATING TAILOR-MADE SPEECHES

How to make a father of the bride's speech

Most fathers of the bride avoid preparing their speeches because they find it hard to let go of their baby daughters. It is actually easy to make a father of the bride's speech. You just need to express your feelings, whether it is poignant or full of delight, to give the union a welcoming atmosphere. Your talk serves as the keynote speech of the big day. It is only appropriate for it to begin with a grand opening.

There are essential points to include in this speech:

- Radiantly welcoming the guests if you are acting as the host.
- Welcoming the groom, as your new son-in-law, and his family into your family
- Speaking with pride and joy about your precious daughter
- Mentioning the status of your relationship with your new son-in-law
- Referring to your own marriage and thanking the bride's mother for your own long-term happiness.
- Thanking your wife, the bride's mother, and perhaps the groom's for their hard labor in organizing the wedding from start to finish.
- In some cases, it is also necessary to thank certain religious individuals for celebrating the marriage. It may be the priest, rabbi, imam or any other clergyman/woman.
- Mentioning the bridesmaids, especially if they are members of the

family and close relatives.

- Speaking about marriage itself and what it entails. Talk from your own experiences because it is what the couple can relate to.

What not to include:

- Never talk offensively.
- Avoid vulgar details.
- Avoid mentioning previous boyfriends or live-in partners.
- Don't project a forlorn attitude. The couple needs to feel that they are being fully supported in this endeavor. Looking morbid or sad would only make them feel bad.
- Do not say anything that can embarrass any member of the wedding entourage or a guest. Restrain yourself from making crude remarks even if you don't particularly agree with the presence of some individuals. Respect the decision of the married pair.

How to End:

- A loving toast to the newlyweds would be sufficient.

How to make a father of the groom's speech

The father of the groom should create a speech that is straight to the point, light-hearted and sincere. Avoid beating around the bush. Like all great speeches, it should strike the audience with impact by opening with a riveting line.

There are essential points to include in this speech:

- Expressing your profound gratitude to the hosts for a successful celebration.
- Welcoming the guests if you serve as the host or co-host of the wedding reception.
- Mentioning your loyal and dutiful son, his interests, hobbies, personality and his growing years. Talking about your relationship with him is also important.
- Calling attention to the presence of your other children and the groom's role in your family life.
- Welcoming the bride, as your new daughter-in-law, and her family into your family.
- Including wise and pertinent advice on marriage.
- Graciously offering your wife thanks for playing a significant role.

What not to say:

The same points mentioned for the father of the bride are applicable to the groom's father as well.

How to End:

- A speech blessing the couple as they begin a new chapter in their lives would be suitable.

How to make a best man's speech

Traditionally, you are the head of the wedding assistants, so do whatever the role requires you to do. First, don't miss the chance to respond to the

previous speakers on behalf of the groomsmen, bridesmaids and other helpers. Second, you need to propose a glowing toast to the parents of the newlyweds. Compliment them for bringing up such a fine son or daughter. Third, give a toast to the married couple. Usually, the best man is third in line to give a wedding speech, after the fathers of the bride and the groom respectively.

1. Try to begin your speech by delivering a joke with a poker face. This will immediately warm the audience and break the ice. Use only a clean, comical statement pertinent to the occasion. Do not hit anyone with sensitive jabs.
2. Since not all the wedding guests know who you are, introduce yourself before giving your speech.
3. Show your appreciation to the groom by thanking him for his speech and for requesting you to be best man. You could crack another joke here by quipping, "who else is he going to ask?"
4. Praise the bride to high heavens. Your frank, personal opinion doesn't really matter. The groom finds her gorgeous so go with that. Thank all the maids/matrons of honor, bridesmaids and other members of the entourage.
5. Commend the hosts of the wedding party on behalf of the guests. They are often the parents of the bride. Know that they have spent a lot of time and effort (not to mention money) on this event so it is important to thank them.
6. Thank the bride's father for his eloquent speech and kind words.

7. Propose a toast to the parents of the newly married couple. Try to make sure that EVERYONE raises their glass during this moment to make the parents of bride and groom feel really special.
8. Say your thanks to the couple for their numerous gifts and pay compliments to the maids/matrons of honor, bridesmaids, groomsmen and to all the people who helped in making the wedding ceremony and reception a rousing success. As an additional note, check with the couple if they would like to thank anyone in particular, the caterer, florist, musicians, photographer, wedding planner, etc.
9. Cite a few funny incidents in your speech about the wedding preparations. It is not an expected job of the best man, but doing so adds a humorous glow to the whole shebang. Try to insert some averted "catastrophes" during the ceremonial day. Spill some best-kept secrets from behind the scenes. What if you don't have any? Well, you might be able to embroider on and add some literary exaggeration to what was actually a minor problem. Once again, avoid being offensive in any way.

Roasting the Groom

1. Share with the audience your relationship with the groom. You might begin by telling the guests how the two of you met. You can also include how your friendship has evolved throughout the years and how you came to be the best mates in the entire world.
2. The reasons why you were selected as the best man may also be

included. You can ask the groom prior to the wedding but to give a festive accent, give his answer a humorous twist.

3. Address the bride and groom before giving the guests fresh and cheeky anecdotes about the couple. Don't forget spontaneous teasing statements to draw laughter.
4. Share the 3W's and 1H. Where/When/Why and How did they meet each other? This is very important to those who are unfamiliar with the couple's first encounter.
5. How did he divulge to you about his new girl. What were his exact words? Once again, this offers plenty of opportunities for tongue-in-cheek humor.
6. How has he changed since meeting his bride? Does he behave differently now? How? Give specific instances or funny examples.
7. Roasting the groom is the heart and soul of the best man's speech. You may, gently tease him in a charming way in front of all the wedding guests present. Make an entertaining show out of it, with lots of room for boisterous laughter! Share funny stories and disconcerting incidents about his past and use simple props if necessary.
8. Crack some jokes about his high school or college years (especially if you grew up together), employment skills, favorite sports, passions and impressive achievements.
9. Show pictures, photos or images of embarrassing situations for the groom and tell the real story behind it. If you can't recall any, make up

a good one just for laughs. Again, as a reminder, be nice.

10. Pretend to be a showman by telling a story complete with props - used toys, old sports wear, polished school plaques, and so on. Props can make a best man's speech.
11. Offer some words of advice and your thoughts about love and marriage. Be genuine, forthright and sensitive.
12. Inspirational quotes may be utilized to strengthen the important points in your best man speech, especially when you are discussing their future.
13. Provide common bits of marriage advice if you are married yourself. You can offer the things that you have learned, such as tips on how to settle arguments, relocating to another town, raising kids, etc.
14. Give some sincere comments about the happy couple. You have to speak from your heart.

Toasting

In giving a toast to the maids/matrons of honor or bridesmaids, avoid mentioning the groom's wild days, like his surreal escapades with various women in the past. It might upset not only the groom but also the bride and other important wedding guests like little children.

Generally, the following tips are applicable:

- Number your cue cards for a more professional presentation and make sure that you have arranged them in proper order. Trust me,

you don't want to scramble for a disorganized pile in the middle of your speech.

- Speak with a clear and distinct voice. What good will come out of a mind-blowing speech if nobody hears it?
- Assess that there is adequate lighting before beginning your speech. A speaker who keeps on squinting and raising his cue cards towards the light is not a great sight.
- Take three deep breaths to calm your nerves.
- Add a personalized touch to your piece. Every guest would like to hear a true story.
- Then practice until you get everything right.
- If the use of a microphone is unavoidable, position it from a distance of approximately four to five inches away from you. Don't hold it too close to your mouth.
- Preferably, use a free-standing microphone so your hands can access your cue cards without a fuss. Ask the person in charge of the venue for its availability beforehand.
- Leave the audience in stitches. A funny anecdote is usually popular.
- Make it short. The audience should not be shackled to their seats for eons.

How to make a maid of honor's speech

A maid of honor (or matron of honor if married) is typically the person dearest to the bride's heart. It could be her trustworthy best friend or her elder sister whom she looks up to. It could even be a high school coach or a guidance counselor who inspired her to be the best that she can be. It is a special individual who could know a million things about the bride that even her good old Mom and Dad don't know about. Usually, the maid of honor is also one of the guests in the wedding that would surely have the chance to speak during the wedding reception and announce her best wishes to the newlyweds. A lot of maids/matrons of honor commit the mistake of going to the wedding reception without any preparation. Therefore, they inevitably mess up during the delivery of a speech. Some even forget to give a toast because of frazzled nerves. Due to this mistake, they miss the opportunity to be able to show other people the sterling character that made them the maid/matron of honor of the blushing bride.

Are you not sure of how to give a memorable toast? There are effortless ways by which you can do it. You have to realize that being a maid of honor is a rare privilege. As such, it also comes with immense responsibility, including giving your best during this significant celebration. It is part of your role to give a great toast for the bride. Although there are only a few ways to express your heartfelt toast in a form of a short speech, you have to discover and utilize them fully. After all, it's not every day that your younger sister or best friend gets married. It will only happen once and you should take great pains not to miss that awesome chance to make your participation unforgettable.

First, you have to decide on a story, preferably witty, that you can share

with all the guests present. It could be a story from her preschool years, an embarrassing anecdote, the moment you met each other and realized that you were meant to be lifetime buddies, or a particular incident where the bride played a telling role in your young life. As an opening remark, this story may be expounded to your satisfaction. However, bear in mind not to give an additional story because it could take too much time and lose the audience's interest.

Second, you have to give the groom some hints about what makes his bride tick. You could share her likes and dislikes as well as her unusual reactions to certain situations. You are expected to be the person most likely to hold the bride's many secrets and you have to give a few of those away during this reception. Share only the minor ones which are applicable in their marriage and keep the majority, especially sensitive ones, to yourself.

Third, you can share with them your sincere wishes and pieces of advice to keep their marriage ties strong. You can also share tips on how to handle simple financial, psychological, and emotional problems. You can also give a spiritual thought that they could ponder on and use as a solid foundation as they embark on their journey as a married couple.

Last, don't forget to bring a huge box of tissues to wipe away the tears that are sure to fall as you give your speech. A handkerchief will do if you are not the emotional type but just to stay on the safe side, bring two. Expect the wedding speeches from others to be a healthy mixture of joy and sadness so do not be surprised to see and hear a lot of crying during speech delivery. Remember, it is much better to come prepared for the downpour of tears rather than a deluge of

sweat from the forehead.

General tips

1. **Prepare your notes.** Even if you boast of a photographic memory, all that memorization might disappear due to intense nervousness during the big day. To make sure you have a foolproof back up, don't forget to bring your notes.
2. **Make sure your notes are arranged properly.** It is very easy to lose track of your thoughts if you don't have a written guide to direct you.
3. **Read through your notes.** It is simply amazing how natural you will seem if you have read through your notes a couple of dozen times before the actual performance.
4. **Don't forget to censor yourself.** You have to realize that an 87-year old granny may have different moral sensibilities from your own. Decide on whether or not she would like to hear a certain joke.
5. **Ask friends beforehand for suggestions.** Some friends with a wacky sense of humor can contribute funny yet sensible thoughts.
6. **Impose a time limit.** A 15-minute speech is enough to say everything important that you have to say. A one-hour speech will have wedding guests itching for you to zip your mouth with packing tape.
7. **Avoid hogging the limelight.** The reception is not about you, right? Shift the attention towards the happy couple and you will undoubtedly

get more applause for behaving properly.

8. **Go easy on the alcohol.** A single drink for courage is enough? Any more could lead you to an embarrassing situation.
9. **Kick worry out of your system.** It is the newlyweds that are the main focus for the day; you only have 15 minutes to be placed under the spotlight.

How to make wedding anniversary speeches

If you are a guest requested by a couple celebrating their nth wedding anniversary, you should consider it an honor because they see you as somebody who has been there for them. Therefore, your speech to the couple should be jocular yet truthful. A little dose of reminiscence adds a dash of finesse to wedding anniversary speeches. Do your homework and research among the immediate family and close friends to find out what the couple means to them.

What to include in wedding anniversary speeches:

- An attention-grabbing opening to seize the attention of the visitors.
- A citation of some special occasions during the couple's wedded life.
- Make an effort to include an amusing story about something that has happened in the course of their married life.
- A reference to the number of years married especially if it is a big anniversary such as a silver or gold.
- A first-rate anniversary speech should also take into account the countless

achievements of the couple throughout the decades. You can mention the partnerships they have formed, the companies they have founded or the prizes they won for scrabble.

- A mention of the celebrating couple in the family framework. For example, an ideal anniversary speech should articulate how they supported their children, took care of their parents or visited their grandchildren in faraway places during special holidays.
- Sometimes it is suitable to express thanks to a family member or good friend for organizing the get-together.

How to end:

While facing the couple, you should convey your best wishes and congratulatory remarks. On behalf of those present at the gathering, you should conclude with a toast to many more years of bliss.

How to make a graduation speech

Graduations are momentous occasions. They are one of the most awaited days in the school year because they acknowledge the accomplishments of those who worked hard and excelled academically. A graduation ceremony usually involves receiving or conferring academic degrees. It is attended by people that have been a part of the graduates' significant support systems.

If you were given the assignment of giving a speech honoring your graduating class, here are some reliable points to keep you on top of the event:

- **Write a speech that appeal to the taste of the audience.** Take note if

you will be speaking before a group of college or high school students.

Will there be parents to supervise the affair? Make sure your written material is both relevant and appropriate across the audience's age brackets. Ditch anything that might be construed as distasteful. Ask yourself this question, "What do they need to know?"

- **Be genuine.** Sincerity is always better than a slew of superlatives that makes your speech sound like advertising gibberish. Keep your sight on the content. Substance is more important because it creates a wonderful and lasting impression that you are a man (or a woman) of wisdom, honesty and professionalism. Try to share as much information in as few words as possible; that is the secret to a powerful graduation speech.
- **Share plenty of stories.** The anecdotes should be about the students or the graduating class, the mentors and other valuable persons in that educational institution. The stories can be humorous, touching or sentimental. Make the graduating class come alive.
- **Talk about grand events.** Try to include the important moments that happened in the school, the community, the nation, even the world, in the last four years. Did your school basketball team won the elusive state championships? Did your football team dominate the playoffs? Now is the perfect time to acknowledge them once again.
- **Discuss the meaningful events the class went through together.** This is where you talk about what happened at the Junior-Senior Prom, a fund raising event, the successful school play, Spirit Week, etc.

- **Include everyone.** While the past school year may have found you hanging out with your own set of friends, or cliques, now is the time to reach out to others. Talk about everyone in the graduating class: the Honor Society members, the athletes, the band kids, and everyone else. This speech is meant for everybody.
- **Don't hesitate to use pop culture references.** This is an era of overwhelming pop culture so include them in appropriate doses to personalize your speech. Use popular television shows, Hollywood movies and chart-topping songs.
- **Avoid the urge to talk about yourself.** Remember, it's not your personal party so it isn't classy to steal the limelight from the rest of the people.
- **Show gratitude to the parents.** Exhort every member of the graduating to class to give their moms and dads a round of applause. This will mean a lot to them.
- **Acknowledge the teachers.** This is probably the only time where you can get away with being sappy to your mentors so make the most out of it. Make them cry with happiness.
- **Chuck clichés straight to the garbage bin.** "A new chapter in your young lives", "spreading your wings and soaring in the sky", and "be yourself" should not be heard in your speech. They are generic statements that can apply to any occasion. A good speech should be made exclusively for that graduating class.

Simple organization of your thoughts and application of the

aforementioned tips will go far in crafting your graduation speech. It can also pay great dividends on the big day. People will be doubly impressed with you and you will be pleased you ran the extra mile.

How to Write a Eulogy

Does the mere thought of writing a eulogy bring you to tears? Or does it send shivers down your spine? It shouldn't have to be either of the two. Why? You should think of a eulogy as a great opportunity to acknowledge a dearly departed one. It could also be used in order to inform others about the life of the person who recently passed away. Another purpose is to give honor to the outstanding achievements made by the deceased, especially if it contributed to the development and well-being of a lot of people. Usually, eulogies are read at private funerals, attended only by close relatives, friends and associates.

Typically, a eulogy provides specific information about the deceased, including his famous quotes and anecdotes. It is usually spoken in a way that reflects the reader's deep emotional attachment to the departed individual.

Just like other speeches, eulogies can be made in different ways. Some prefer to go the serious route and evoke a solemn atmosphere while others inject a dash of good humor into the undertaking. If you don't want your audience to wallow in misery and drown in their tears, then go for humor. It will not only uplift the somber mood of the audience, it will also lessen the build-up of tension in your chest. When taking notes for your initial draft, make sure that what you are writing is distinct and understandable. Your goal is to get the message across to

the guests, not confuse them with incoherent mumblings. If you want to include a very specific example, such as a particular memory that others may not easily remember, say something to the effect, " I recall the time when...." or "I remembered that.....". Take heed that it is so much easier to talk about something that the guests can relate to.

Be positive. While it is probable that this person is not a candidate sainthood, still make the effort to acknowledge him or her in a purely positive light. Certainly, your affection should be seen and felt as you read your eulogy. The audience should not detect even a hint of negative attitude or else it will leave a bad taste to the occasion. Pay your respects to the person in a loving, matter-of-fact manner. Pepper your speech with bright memories and positive details. When making a eulogy, include all the necessary and relevant information. However, when the time comes for you to read it, communicate with the audience as if you're simply talking to them.

Exhort the audience to be actively involved with the process. Make them beam with pride, smile broadly, cry sincerely. Be one with them as you carry on with this tribute.

When planning your eulogy, don't fail to recognize the departed for who or what he/she was. Now is not the time to make up half-baked stories. Be honest with what you are sharing. List the most significant memories you had with that person. Enjoin your audience to listen attentively and respond appropriately to you. Give a memorable eulogy --one that the guests will remember for quite some time.

In conclusion, it doesn't really matter whether you produce a funny or serious piece of work for as long as it comes from the heart. Make it distinct and understandable. Keep the audience involved. Do your best.

Whoever you are making the eulogy for or whatever the reason is, aim for perfection. Construct it as mark of excellence for you, for the audience and for the departed one who may be listening.

How to make a birthday speech

Birthdays are often fun affairs where food, drink and humor overflow. Most cultures celebrate birthdays as a way of thanksgiving for the previous year's blessings and as a wish for abundance in the upcoming year. Most of the time, it is marked by a traditional birthday party. Friends prepare not only material presents for the person but also speeches meant to induce various emotions.

However, as a general rule, do not make speeches or incorporate topics that can make the person too uncomfortable.

Here are some tried and tested tips to keep you in the safe zone:

1. Avoid mentioning their age. For young tots, teenagers and even

those in their early 20's, this does not pose as a problem.

However, this is applicable for people in their late twenties and above. Some individuals loathe the fact that they are getting older.

For them, it means more wrinkles, additional responsibilities, ticking biological clocks, etc. They may enjoy the party, but not the process of aging.

2. **Ditch the rude stories.** Try to keep your story as wholesome as possible. Racy humor is not the order of the day, especially if the parents or grandparents are around to listen. Birthday parties are usually family events so make your speech appropriate to the general population.
3. **Kick embarrassing anecdotes out of the picture.** The person might find it an insult if you broadcast his shortcomings, such as a drinking problem, to a sea of strangers.
4. **Don't raise the subject of deceased family members or friends in your birthday speech unless the person himself does it first.** It's prudent to steer clear of this subject to avoid upsetting anyone.
5. **Sad events should not be mentioned.** You were tasked to give a birthday speech to promote optimism so do your job well. Project an upbeat personality. Surely, you don't want them bawling their eyes out because you mentioned their favorite puppy who was run over by a truck, right? Failed relationships, loss of a job or a property are also forbidden topics.
6. **Don't pretend to be a stand up comic.** Some people assigned to give birthday speeches think that the wackier the speech, the better. It's as if they are writing a script for a comedy show on television instead of a personal message. While humor is called for, too much of it can be annoying, especially if you lose focus on what

you really want to impart. Remember that comedians have been trained to deliver punch lines with correct timing. The majority of people cannot approximate that particular skill. So, the best that you should do is to be sincere and genuine.

7. Use nicknames sparingly. A macho husband might resent it when you affectionately call him "honey bunny" in front of his beer-guzzling, football-worshipping buddies. Your teenage son might also be embarrassed if you broadcast to the whole high school populace that he is still mommy's adorable little pumpkin. Calling them by their names would be enough.

8. The birthday speech should be tailored not to offend any guest in any way. A thoughtless remark like "I'm sure you are just here for the free bar" will alienate most, if not all those present. Though it may be true for some, it is not applicable to all.

9. In the speech, don't reveal things visitors don't know about. If you have an inside joke with the birthday celebrant, either keep it a secret or try to explain the background of the joke.

10. Avoid a long, tedious speech if you do not want to leave people fidgeting in their seats, wishing they were somewhere else. Party guests would prefer you keep your talk to a minimum.

Three to five minutes would be appropriate.

To sum up, keep your birthday speech, short, sweet and simple so that you will wow the guests and have them shouting for more!

Chapter VI

How to Use Body Language

Giving a speech entails not only attending to the spoken and written words; it also involves body language. Human beings communicate a great deal about themselves by the body language they project, and see in others. Let us take for example the case of two individuals. Though they may have almost identical qualifications and experiences, one can come across as enthusiastic and confident while the other can seem nervous or indecisive through the postures and gestures they transmit.

In a nutshell, body language is known as non-verbal communication. It refers to the way we communicate by using different parts of our body rather than the written or spoken word. It is very often the way in which we show the emotional side of our relationships with others. The messages we convey can be deliberate, such as a nod of the head, a smile, a grimace, a shrug of the shoulders, or involuntary such as a shiver. Body language can often convey more meaning than any words that may be spoken.

It is very important for your body language to be interpreted the way you want it to be. Other people can be just as perceptive as you and if you show a bored expression or raise your eyes to the ceiling in annoyance, the chances are it will be noticed. If you want to show your annoyance or boredom, then that is fine, but sometimes you may need to hide your real feelings and pretend to be interested in what someone else is saying, perhaps for the sake of an important

deal or because the person talking is important to you for one reason or another.

Remember when you were just a little kid when your parents told you to think before opening your mouth to speak? In the same way, try to control your body language and make it work for you in an effective and desirable manner. With practice, you can send out the right signals and have control over the wrong ones.

First of all, you want to make sure you are relaxed before you start your speech.

Here are a few tips to help you:

- **Those frazzled opening nerves are to be expected.** Before you rush to the podium, chat with the people in your audience. It will help generate a warmer and more cozy atmosphere. You will also feel more at ease because a sense of fraternity is slowly but surely being created.
- **Shake your hands a few times to release the build-up of tension.** As the master of ceremony announces a few introductory sentences, repeat your opening lines to yourself three or four times to distract you from your nervousness and to boost your confidence. This short ritual will assure you of a good start.
- **Another way to relax is to take three deep and slow breaths.** You inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth with one hand placed over the stomach to ensure it expands and contracts properly. Hold your breath for at least two seconds

before releasing it. If you are just starting, pause for a minimum of three seconds to establish yourself.

To add another dimension to your public speaking, here are some ways that you can use body language advantageously:

- **Stand upright**, but your back should not be ramrod stiff, just enough to maintain proper body alignment.
- **Smile**. Smiling shows genuine warmth for the audience and is rarely misinterpreted.
- **Maintain eye contact**. Don't forget to make eye contact with some members of the audience, momentarily from one person to another as a way of showing sincere interest in them.
- **Engage with the obviously animated listeners** - but not so much that other wedding guests will feel left out! If possible, scan the audience. Try your best not to miss anyone, anywhere, ever. This will give you a pretty accurate assessment of their attention span and reactions.

Occasionally begin a sentence surveying one particular section of the audience and finish looking at another section.

Are you too shy to look straight in the eyes of the audience? You can always look in the ubiquitous spaces between them if you are not that confident of yourself yet.

Keep your gestures natural. Steady rehearsal and continuous practice help make them so. If you are speaking with genuine conviction, your hand

gestures will be real.

Arms

- The arms should be at waist level when reasoning.
- For authority, power and commitment, they should be chest high.
- If you want to appear uncommitted, then hang them straight down.

Polishing a performance and avoiding errors: As an amateur, you may find it extremely useful to practice your presentation while facing a full-length mirror. It will have a double effect - to assist you in perfecting your delivery and to help you avoid a whole slew of common errors. For example, it will guarantee that you:

- Don't drop your head to the ground when reading the prepared speech. An open secret used by influential speakers is to type the contents of their speech only on the upper half of the sheet of paper. This way, they can look up to their audience easily to emphasize key details and to assess the audience's reaction to their statements.
- Don't let your back do the talking. Showing a tremulous expression is bad enough, turning your back to the audience makes it even worse.
- Avoid the tendency to play with a pen or pointer.
- Avoid gripping the podium, table or lectern.
- Do not bend towards the microphone (adjust its height).
- Maintain proper body alignment. Do not lean towards your cue cards because it will strain your back, causing you to get tired in a short time, and it will not look good.
- Avoid staring fixedly at your cue cards or prepared notes.

- Stop fidgeting! Keep yourself from touching your face, wringing your tie and fiddling with the lapel. Act with pure confidence.

And when your speech is finished, give the audience your biggest smile. By doing this, you are telling them that you have done your very best, that you enjoyed giving your talk and are supremely confident that they enjoyed it too. You are also imparting, in a subtle way, that they were a great audience and responded well. Maybe you are raising your eyebrows in disbelief, asking, "All those things can be caused by a smile?" Yes! After all, it's using the above techniques that are the real secrets.

Chapter Seven

FINAL MESSAGE

The author sincerely hopes that you have learned a lot from the things that have been talked about in this handbook. Just follow them and try not to worry too much.

Remember, don't just stare into outer space if you have been assigned to make an impressive speech. Gear that brain into a higher level of activity. Go and dazzle them with your speeches! Good luck.