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The Definitive Speaking Guide

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Forward

It is widely known that over half of all communication is non-verbal. It is often said colloquially that it's not what you say but how you say it that has the greatest ever lasting impact on people.

When you speak in public, your listeners will judge you and your message more based on what they actually see than what they've heard. That's why it is important that to practice your non verbal communication just as much as your spoken words. It will ultimately allow you to get your message across effectively to your audience.

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Introduction

When you're speaking, you send two kinds of messages to your audience. While your voice transmits a variable message, most of your speech is being told visually by your appearance, your manner, and your physical behaviour.

Studies show that more than half of all human communication takes place nonverbally. Your audience will judge you more on what you appear to be doing than what you are saying.

In public speaking your body can be used as an effective tool for adding emphasis and clarity to your words. It's also your most powerful instrument for convincing your audience of your sincerity and enthusiasm.

Sometimes when you are speaking, your physical actions can actually distract or suggest meanings that don't agree with what your verbal messages saying. Therefore in this case your body will defeat your words.

Public speaking and formal occasions like weddings can be particularly difficult as your audience has an expectation on your speech and your body gestures to be sincere, heartfelt, and entertaining. Therefore you have an obligation to understand how your body speaks as you cannot stop sending your audience nonverbal messages but you must learn how to manage and control them in order to speak effectively.

In this manuscript you'll learn how non verbal messages effect an audience, what kind of information they transmit, and how all your nervousness as can be alleviated by purposeful and physical actions, and how are you make your body speak as our clearly as your words.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

Your goal in public speaking is to communicate. To be an effective speaker you must project earnestness and enthusiasm, and sincerity by making your manner and actions affirm what you say. If they don't, the results can be disastrous. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said.

“What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.”

When you speak, if your audience aren't convinced of your earnestness and sincerity, they are most unlikely to accept your oral communication.

Therefore, your actions certainly do speak louder than your spoken words. You will be clearly understood by your audience when your spoken language and your body language are in sync with each other.

When you speak make sure you follow the following points:

- [You are sincere](#)
- [You welcome the opportunity to speak](#)
- [You believe in what you are saying](#)
- [You are genuinely interested in the Bride & Groom](#) and all other people associated with your speech. In this respect, you are genuinely interested in the entire audience as they too have an integral interest in the wedding party.
- [You are confident and in control](#)

Your sincerity is best conveyed by your actions following your words. Make sure when you practice that your words and your actions are in sync and they confirm what you are saying. Using your voice to modulate what you are saying assists with your sincerity also.

Make eye contact with your audience, and ALWAYS MAKE SURE that when you are talking about someone in your speech, you address them directly, and

talk directly to them as though you are speaking directly with them! Then include the rest of the audience with a pull away line. Eg.

“John, you are my oldest dearest friend” (looking directly at John), “And it’s quite clear that you are truly the best man in the room” (panning the room at the rest of the audience).

Welcoming the opportunity to speak might at first feel like it will never happen to you. However, as your confidence with your speech increases, so will the natural body language that follows your words, and so you will begin to welcome the opportunity to speak.

Remember you have been asked to be the best man for a good reason... the groom would not have asked you to be the best man if you weren’t the right person to give a few heart felt words to him and his bride on the biggest day of their lives.

Believing in what you say should go without saying. It is all about being sincere. This doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t fabricate stories to suit the situation and to make for a better speech, but you should always make sure that it is obvious that your story is fabricated in some way... To do this effectively, once again you should use suggestive body language and voice modulation.

Your words should follow your whole being that you actual care dearly for the bride and groom. Do this in your toast for the best results. Make your toast as heartfelt as possible. There’s many ways to toast the bride and groom, but as best man, you should make a great effort to make this the toast of the night, as it is usually the very last toast to the bride and groom of the night. Try and have two or three toasts all pre-prepared and memorized as it is nice to finish with an original toast that hasn’t been used in previous speeches.

Confidence comes from knowing that you did your best to deliver the best possible speech that you can deliver. This is a truly successful speech. We all have different natural abilities and affinities to public speaking. Ass long as you did your best, you will be confident in your performance and it will show when you deliver it.

Research your subjects, and follow a proper speech structure, memorize your opening and memorize a few toasts to the bride and groom, practice your speech to a friend or wife, get their feedback, refine your speech and practice again and again until the speech comes as second nature to you, and you will be confident...

Many years ago a profound public speaker told me;

“for every minute of speaking you should spend 1 hour in preparing for it...”

That means a ten minute speech requires at least 10 hours of preparation. If you do this, you will have all the confidence you need to deliver a great speech.

The Principle of Empathy

This is quite simple to understand and do, and yet such a powerful tool to have in your repertoire once mastered. It's the ability to share in another person's emotions or feelings. When you speak, have you noticed how the audience often agrees with your words? Notice people nodding in agreement? Or have you ever noticed in a one on one situation, how if you fold your arms, the other person will fold their arms too? Or simply rest your head on your hand, watch to see them doing this too! It's amazing, but people tend to converge on the dominant persons behaviour... this is especially true when you are the centre of everyone's attention.

This is because the audience unconsciously feel what you feel and therefore respond accordingly. Therefore, it is of vital importance that your body language is following your words. Carefully!

The caveat of this is of course that the body language is subtle, and not fast and abrupt, as this would be frightful and offer you a disturbed reaction, and maybe fright or horror.

Make sure you include your audience by looking at them. You'll never get empathy from anyone who doesn't feel included, so eye contact is very important.

Why Physical Action Helps

When you demonstrate purposeful, effective physical action while speaking, you will be displaying a barometer to your audience of your true feelings. Any nervousness or obvious lack of self confidence in what you are saying will have the effect of showing your audience a certain lack of interest!

So make sure to be careful. As soon as you step up to speak to make sure your physical actions are purposeful and heartfelt.

But there are also some benefits for having purposeful actions:

- [Your message is more memorable](#)
- [Punctuation to your message adds more meaning](#)
- [Nervousness can be channelled away](#)

Your message will be more memorable because it is human nature to get bored if you're receiving static, mono type content. That's why mediums for communicating information have progressed so far from the days of just radio. Since television sets were invented, the information we've been receiving through them has become more and more interactive and interesting.

Imagine a news reel that had only a newsreader telling you the headlines! Would you be more likely to watch that channel, or the channel that shows some live footage along with the story? A sports match is the perfect example of the actions speaking louder than the commentary! You can watch a watch without the commentary, but it is frustrating not being able to see the touchdown, or the home run or the winning goal live on a televised broadcast.

You need to try and take this concept and apply it to your speech. Make your stories as animated as possible, using figurative and descriptive visual words. Actually describe situations and draw pictures with your words, and then animate your words by using actions that enforce your words. Body movements should be purposeful and calculated.

If making a point, or series of points, try raising a finger in the air to signify this is point one, then raise another finger to indicate a second point. Or, I prefer actually moving from one spot to another to illustrate points, or even talking to the left side of the room for one point, and the opposite side of the room for another. Whatever you choose, it is important to note that as long as your

actions are in tandem with your words; your point will get across with the desired effect.

There is no one way that is better than the other, but rather, it's the way that suits your personality and style of speech that will work best for you.

Isn't it strange that in written language we have a whole lot of different punctuation and symbols that can bring words alive and change the emphasis and meaning of complete sentences or paragraphs? When you speak, you also have these tools of punctuation that can add power and emphasis to your speech. They are body movements, facial expressions and vocal variety. Eg. Modulation of voice.

As previously explained, when making points you can move around, raise your hands, look at different parts of the audience etc... now if you were to raise a question, what type of movement could purposefully add punctuation to your speech? Maybe shrugging the shoulders? How about an eyebrow or two? Or tilting your head up and to the side as if you were considering that thought for a minute? These are all ways to illustrate a question with your actions.

Everyone gets nervous before a speech. So don't worry if you get nervous, so too do the greatest speakers. It is a healthy reaction and shows that you genuinely do care. However, if you are fearful to the point where you find yourself unable to control your voice and actions, then this can destroy your speech. If this affects you, then here's some tips and advice to help you through your nervousness. Firstly, let's identify the origins of your fear.

Nervousness in public speaking works on three distinct levels... They are; Mental, emotional and physical.

Your mental and emotional responses can be controlled through self confidence which is built up with practice and familiarity. Once you're familiar with your content, and practiced a few times, your self confidence will in turn increase which will naturally decrease the likelihood of having a nervous response.

Speaking publicly activates the adrenal glands, creating an active energy force. Your heartbeat will quicken, and your breathing will become shallow and rapid. Your muscles will tense, and you will become visually nervous to your audience unless somehow all this tension is alleviated. In this respect, having

practiced purposeful movements in your speech will help remove these natural distractions that can occur when speaking in public.

Your Speaking Posture

How you position your body when you speak has its own little communications and visual messages to your audience. More than anything, it reflects your attitude, telling your listeners whether you're confident, alert and in command of the situation or not.

Good speaking posture has other benefits too. It helps you breathe properly and project your voice effectively. It also provides a great starting point from which to gesture or move your body around during your speech.

Good posture will have the effect of helping to alleviate tension and minimize random movements that can be distracting to your audience.

So what is proper speaking posture?

1. Stand straight. But not too stiff! You should be relaxed but upright.
2. Balance your weight evenly between your feet.
3. Your knees straight, but not locked
4. Chest up, stomach in
5. Head and chin up, but not overly so as to look pompous
6. Let your arms hang freely beside your body.
7. Take a couple of deep breaths, and count from 5 down to 1 while breathing out.

Feel relaxed yet? If this position doesn't feel natural for you, then it won't for the audience either, so modify your stance and posture slightly until you feel completely at ease. Try the breathing and counting in each position until you find your optimum stance. This is the stance you should use to begin all your speeches henceforth.

Gestures

A gesture is simply a specific movement that reinforces a verbal message, or conveys a particular thought or emotion. Although gestures can be made with head and shoulders, even legs and feet, most gestures are made with hands and the arms.

Your hands can be the best aid in communicating your message. Therefore, it is important to know your speech and not be gripping a piece of paper or notes to prompt your speech. By doing this you basically remove the most powerful tool you have in your speaking arsenal to help get your message across.

Inexperienced speakers are unsure what to do with their hands, some try to get them out of the way by putting them in their pockets, or behind their backs. Or even wave their hands with no real purpose, or use their hands in a manner that distracts from your words. Don't do this!

Your actions with your hands should be purposeful and suggest the precise meaning of what you are saying.

Other gestures can have universal meanings, so are easily understood by your audience. Things like nodding your head up and down as to signify a "Yes" statement or an "Agreement" as an example.

Whatever your gestures you choose to incorporate, they should be purposeful and add to the impact of your speech.

Good Gestures can have the following effects

- They clarify a statement, or give visual support to a statement
- They dramatize your ideas and help illustrate your points
- They add emphasis and punctuation to your words
- They help dissipate nervousness and tension
- They function as a visual aid for your audience
- They stimulate participation
- They will arouse visual senses in your audience

Despite the vast number of movements that qualify as gestures, all gestures can be grouped into a few categories.

- [Descriptive gestures](#)
- [Emphatic gestures](#)
- [Suggestive gestures](#)
- [Prompting gestures](#)

Descriptive gestures are used to clarify or enhance your message. They help the audience understand comparisons and contrasts. They can help visualize shape, size and movement or location.

Emphatic gestures are used to underscore what's being said. They indicate earnestness and conviction. For example, a clenched fist suggests strong feeling, such as anger or determination.

Suggestive gestures are symbols of ideas and emotions. They help a speaker create a desired mood or express a particular thought. Eg. A shrug of the shoulder can indicate ignorance, or a suggestion of a question.

Prompting gestures are used to evoke a desired response from your audience. If you want listeners to raise their hands, then you must first raise your hand. If you want to raise a glass, then you should prompt this by first raising your glass.

Some tips on using gestures effectively

1. *Respond naturally to what you think and say. Don't suppress your natural instincts.*
2. *Create the conditions for gesturing, not the gesture itself. That is – be involved with communication, not worrying about your hands. By immersing yourself into the speech, your gestures should come naturally*
3. *Suit your actions to the words and your speech*
4. *Make your gestures convincing*
5. *Make your gestures smooth and well timed*

Body Movement

Changing your body position during a speech is the most obvious form of visual communication you can give. The trick is to use this powerful communication effectively and purposefully. When you control your movement your entire body is supporting your speech in three ways:

- It supports and reinforces what you say
- Attracts the audience's attention
- Burns up some nervous energy

All of these however can work against you. So just remember that you should never move without reason. Your eye is always attracted to a physical movement. Notice that the whole audience attention is disturbed by someone entering the room late? Or someone dropping an item to the floor?

Make sure you don't move around too much, or inherit nervous movements such as rocking or swaying. These can have a disastrous impact on your speech. Practice movement in your speech beforehand to help train yourself to move in a purposeful manner when you speak.

Facial Expressions

Certain facial expressions can be a dead giveaway to nervousness. Maybe a straight expressionless face is good for poker, but it is absolutely the opposite in a good best man speech.

People will tend to watch your face when you are speaking, so it is a good reason to smile and be happy. Remember that your audience is a mirror image of what you are saying, so if you smile, chances are you'll get plenty of smiles back. This is a great occasion, so a smile throughout your speech is a fitting emotion to convey on your face. Try not to frown, or let any other nervous behaviours affect your facial expression. As with gestures, to your audience, your facial expression is a barometer of how you are feeling. They will look to

your face primarily for evidence of sincerity, so make sure your face is a mirror image of your words.

Examples of nervous facial expressions include jaw clenching, quivering bottom lips, excessive blinking, biting teeth and lips.

Show the audience and the bride and groom that you are pleased to be able to congratulate them publicly with a great smile and suitable facial expressions that syndicate with your words.

Eye Contact

When you speak, you involve your listeners with your eyes. This makes your speech personal and conversational. It includes everyone in your speech about those with whom you are talking about. One sure fire way to break the communication bond with your audience is to fail to look at them at all.

No matter how large an audience may be, each listener wants to feel important, to sense a personal connection with your words.

When you are speaking about someone and that person is present, you need to be looking directly at them. Turn your shoulders to face the person and look directly at them when you speak.

Once you see that your audience and your subjects become increasingly interested in what you are saying, the easier it will be to make eye contact.

Additionally, by watching the audience's reactions, you'll be able to assess the audiences attentiveness and reaction to certain parts of your speech. And if you are really clever, you'll be able to adjust your speech and points of reference and emphasis accordingly.

How to Make a Good First Impression

This part is easy! You're at a wedding, so no doubt you'll be wearing an outfit fit for a wedding. Tailored or not, it will be smashing. However, part of making a good first impression is in your mannerisms too.

When you are being introduced, don't be shuffling paper around, this is a distraction to the audience. You shouldn't need to by now as you should have rehearsed your material and know it well enough not to require notes.

Breathe slowly, and count from 5 to 1 in your head to help centre yourself and relax before you stand up. This will help project a cool calm persona to your audience right from when you stand up.

When you initially speak, if you aren't well known to the whole audience, it will help to include some form of introduction. Something that is light hearted often works best. Something like:

“Hi, my name is John, and I'll be your best man for this evening...”

If you need a microphone, but are not used to speaking in a microphone then don't blow or splatter any tests into the microphone... it is better to include your audience with your tests to see if it is working at the right level for you. Here, use something like...

“Don't worry if you can't hear me at the back. The silence from those in front will assure you you're not missing out on anything...”

Conclusion

Public speaking from here shouldn't be as terrifying as you initially think. With careful planning of your movements, and knowing what your nervous tendencies are, you can help by replacing them with other purposeful movements that tie in with your words, thus creating an overall image in your audiences' minds. The best public speakers have learned how to overcome their nervousness and create good powerful speeches that are accompanied by gestures and movements that create a powerful impression on their audience.

Good luck with your speech.