

HUFFPOST

Become an Effective Public Speaker

By Dr. Sudip Bose, MD, FACEP, FAAEM



It's been said that the one thing that people fear more than death is speaking in public. I was struck by comedian Jerry Seinfeld's observation on that. He said, in effect, that more people attending the memorial service would rather be in the casket than delivering a eulogy at the podium in front of the gathered crowd. Interesting observation, right?

Sure, public speaking can be intimidating. You're up there, out front, all alone, your words echoing around the venue, sometimes with very little reaction. Are you hated? Are you liked?

Are you loved? Is anyone even paying attention to you? All those thoughts flash through your mind as you search the crowd in front of you for a face that seems sympathetic. You hope the person you lock in on as that person with the seemingly sympathetic-looking face isn't merely trying to abstain from passing gas and has his own worries in mind.

Will your jokes ring hollow, or will you get a reaction? Will your brief demo of spinning a laptop on your finger tip like you would do with pizza dough be a source of rousing recognition and perhaps even applause?

It can be tough to be a speaker in a public arena. But I've found by keeping the acronym **CHIPS** in mind, you can master public speaking. Let me go through each letter of the acronym and explain:

C is for Confidence

This is an absolute must. You must be confident. You must be sure of your subject and your ability to deliver and communicate the information you are speaking on effectively to your audience.

It's amazing how an audience can sense fear. And it's amazing how quickly a talk can unravel if you don't have confidence in your delivery of information. Sure, almost everyone is nervous when walking on stage or a lectern to deliver a speech in front of dozens, hundreds or thousands. Performers at the top of their game who are wildly popular sometimes have literally gotten physically ill before they went on stage. The singer Lorde, for example, who burst onto the scene with her hit "Royals" said in an interview that she has thrown up before her show. "I am reduced by nerves," the singer said. "I can be completely crushed by feelings of all kinds ... I get nervous, I get freaked out ..."

Other celebrities with stage fright include the singers Rod Stewart and Barbara Streisand (who dodged performing for years because of it), actor Mel Gibson, and comedienne Carol Burnett (who reportedly threw-up before many of her performances).

Yet they gathered themselves up, shoved their fear into a virtual closet, shut it away and went on to do their work with confidence. It's the only way. You must project confidence in front of an audience. That said, it's not the end of the world if you don't; everyone has a bad day every now and then. But to be an effective public speaker, having confidence leads the list of attributes you want to have.

TJ Walker is a public speaking expert and has this to say about the importance of speaking with confidence: How to Speak With Confidence

H is for Humility

Remember, I said confidence, not arrogance. There's a difference. You must work to convey a sense of humility when you're in front of people and not come off as being an arrogant a... Well, you know. There can be a fine line between confidence and arrogance.

Don't think you can just wing it – at least not at first. Don't be that arrogant person who thinks he or she can just jot down a few notes the night before, get out on stage and give a masterful performance. If you can do that, you'd be one of the very few. More often than not, you'll let yourself and your audience down. Arrogance can lead to your undoing.

Why humility, though? After all, you're speaking to a group for a reason. You're a leader in your field and recognized as such or you wouldn't have gotten the speaking engagement in the first place. But you've got to be able to show that you're serving something beyond your own interests – perhaps there's something you struggled with in the past and had to overcome. Sharing an experience like that creates empathy, shows humility in exposing a vulnerability, and helps make a connection with your audience.

Quite often as human beings, we connect with each other through struggle – shared in real time, or shared with an audience after the fact. When you connect with others through struggle, you're communicating with your audience in a way that shows that you and they are on an equal level in that regard. They think, "I've had to deal with that, too." Or, "I've felt that way, too." Or, "I know how that feels."

Tony Robbins, perhaps currently one of the top public speakers, says that, "The way to move an audience is by becoming moved yourself, which can only happen if you're being genuine." And, he says, "You need to be in the moment and flexible to make it real and raw. You'll enjoy it, they'll enjoy it, and you'll be memorable."

He gave a Ted Talk where that principle was on display: Tony Robbins' 2006 TED Talk

It's a delicate balance – showing confidence and humility at the same time – but one you should strive for when speaking to an audience.

I is for Inspiration

Speak to serve. Speak to inspire. Public speaking is not about you, it's about your audience. You're giving the talk, theoretically, to benefit your audience and to communicate your life experience to provide, hopefully, a different way of looking at things. You're there to hopefully connect with the listeners. Inspire them as best you can; give them a different perspective; allow them to access your experience, your learning, your development, to motivate, and hopefully along the way, to entertain.

Focus on inspiring your audience, and that can also help you with your confidence, because it takes the pressure off your self-consciousness and introspection and places the focus on your audience and flips the speaking process into a mode of being an extroverted speaker with the listeners placed in the spotlight. That's what I try to do when I talk, and I try to focus on the following goals to hopefully benefit the audience:

- Teach executives leadership tactics in crisis situations
- Develop quality leaders with integrity in an organization
- Improve decision making to increase company sales
- Enhance communication strategies to better engage employees
- Train, **inspire** and motivate
- Keep the audience laughing, learning and energized
- Raise funds and awareness for injured combat veterans

In the preparation work I do leading up to my presentation, I keep those goals – my purpose in speaking – in mind. I think, “How can I help the audience achieve *their* goals? It's an outward focus rather than inward focus.

A little inspiration: Why Do We Fall?

P is for Preparation

You can't prepare for a talk enough. Practice, practice, practice. Don't just write your presentation, give it. Talk to the furniture in your house. Have your husband, wife, son, daughter, friend, stranger – whomever – listen to you give your speech. Stand in front of a mirror and give your talk. Videotape yourself and play it back while watching with a critical eye.

Revise, redo and keep trying to find that presentation sweet spot. The more you practice, the more comfortable you'll feel during your talk. When you feel like your speech is as familiar as that comfortable, well-worn flannel shirt you own, you know you're at the right spot.

Listen to what Les Brown, among the most sought-after motivational speakers in the world, has to say about preparation: Be Unstoppable; Prepare for an Opportunity

S is for Speech

Speech, as in speaking, as in using your voice effectively – as in using your voice as a tool to connect with your audience. Understand the effective use of your voice. As part of your preparation, you must learn how to speak with effective modulation, tone, pacing and ... the proper use of pausing for effect.

One of the most effective speakers I've ever heard was Jim Rohn. He had such a way of modulating his voice for effect and throwing in very calculated pauses in some very unusual ways and in unexpected places as he spoke. His voice rose, almost in question; it dropped very low when making a point; it paused often, to great effect.

It's very hard to write about it, but you certainly can hear him and perhaps better understand what I mean by checking out this video of him speaking. This is a great talk on the need to have discipline in your life:

Jim Rohn | Habits of the Wealthy: Discipline

You can use the links that populate with that video to springboard to other links of him speaking. Listen to how he modulates his voice, how he slows down his words, then speeds them up, almost staccato-like. Pay attention to the pauses he places in his talk – very effectively. Listen to him repeat his key points.

Remember to repeat. And repeat often to drive home key points. There's so much you can learn from listening to great speakers.

As far as my speaking engagements go, here's a clip that contains a compilation of a handful of appearances I've made: Keynote Speaker: Dr. Sudip Bose

I enjoy giving back and educating others. I frequently speak at corporations and take the skills I learned in combat and in the emergency room to teach leadership lessons and how to apply them to everyday life – it’s probably my favorite topic to speak on. Through my lectures and media appearances throughout the country, I’m able to raise awareness and funds for TheBattleContinues.org. The Battle Continues Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization aimed to raise awareness and help veterans who have returned from war; 100 percent of money donated to the organization goes towards assisting and supporting veterans. I also promote healthy living and awareness on health care issues so that people can make better-informed decisions regarding their health. I’m a firm believer that our health is our single most important asset.

So remember the acronym “**CHIPS**” when it comes to public speaking; and remember, as my motto proclaims, to “keep your inner Army strong.”

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