

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | MAY 2018

TOASTMASTER®



Shailee Basnet

Nepali mountain climber warms up to onstage comedy

Dealing with
Challenging Personalities

Keep your cool in your club

How to Nail Your
Workplace Presentation

Reignite Your Passion

Jack Welch, the longtime CEO of General Electric, once said, “Good business leaders create a vision, articulate the vision, passionately own the vision and relentlessly drive it to completion.”

We, as Toastmasters leaders, from club president to International President, would be wise to adopt that same philosophy. Passion is the fuel that drives commitment—it’s a fire within. It motivates us and keeps us focused.

Why are you a Toastmaster? Is it just to earn a few certificates, hold a leadership position or tick off a few boxes on your “to do” list? Have you taken time to seriously think through and write down your personal goals? Practically every member I know says Toastmasters is life-changing, but many lack the passion to spread the word or use their newly developed skills outside Toastmasters.

If you believe Toastmasters has changed or dramatically improved your life, tell others about it. If you become a successful Toastmasters leader, use those skills in your personal and professional life. Add some passion to make a difference in your life, and in the lives of those around you. Get involved at school or in your community, volunteer at a local prison or in a troubled neighborhood, conduct a Youth Leadership program or Speechcraft and help others develop new skills.

“Add some passion to make a difference in your life, and in the lives of those around you.”

I recently marveled at Swiss tennis champ Roger Federer, who in January at the age of 36 won the Australian Open, one of the sport’s elite Grand Slam tournaments. The triumph gave him a record 20 Grand Slam titles in his long and storied career. That man personifies passion. He has it all: money, records, fame and a great family. Why keep playing? Because he loves the sport.

To reignite your passion for Toastmasters, or other interests in life, identify your purpose, talents and needs. **Purpose** is the reason for doing something. It is essential. Write down your purpose for Toastmasters, for working, saving, learning and everything else of value you do. Discovering the purpose for doing something makes it more meaningful and easier to sacrifice to achieve it; it keeps you focused on the goal.

Identifying your **talents** is a key to success. We all have talents that make us unique, and Toastmasters enhances them. Our personal **needs** are a strong internal force that helps us improve our lives. Satisfying our own needs first is a common human trait, and one of the best-known theories of motivation.

“Find your passion, whatever it may be,” said American writer T. Alan Armstrong. “Become it, and let it become you and you will find great things happen for you, to you and *because* of you.”

Balraj Arunasalam, DTM

International President



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“What a privilege it is to receive the *Toastmaster* magazine each month. The educational wealth it contains is enlightening, inspiring and transformational.”

—**Shirley Stallworth**
Beacon Toastmasters
Beavercreek, Ohio

Kudos to Mindfulness

I just wanted to tell you how happy I was to read Caren Neile's article on Mindfulness [February].

As technology's impact on our communication continues to speed up our lives, it's fascinating to see the rise in prominence of approaches like mindfulness, HeartMath and other approaches to being more present and in tune with ourselves. They counteract forces that distract, vie for our attention or even bombard us in efforts to persuade us.

Thank you for continuing to tap the pulse of your ever-changing membership to address timely topics. They provide crucial keys to success for communicators and leaders in the 21st century.

Craig Harrison, DTM
Silicon Valley Improvmasters
San Jose, California

Down with the Bell!

Evaluation is the opportunity to point out if a speaker is distracting from their message with too many crutch words. We do not interrupt a speaker mid-speech to tell them their word choice could have been more vivid. We do not bang a gong when a speaker fails to use their hands in a purposeful way. In fact, if someone in the

audience does something to distract the speaker intentionally, we generally considered it poor form.

So why is it that some clubs think it is acceptable to interrupt a speaker with a bell for an errant um, ah or so?

Convention is not a valid reason for doing the wrong thing. It is long past time to permanently ban the “ah bell” from Toastmasters meetings. Save the ah feedback for the evaluation and the Ah-Counter report.

Mike Kelly, ACS, CL
Bill Gove Golden Gavel Toastmasters club
Boynton Beach, Florida

Educational Wealth

What a privilege it is to receive the *Toastmaster* magazine each month. The educational wealth it contains is enlightening, inspiring and transformational. I used Joel Schwartzberg's word “badjective” from the December issue [“Get to the Point”] as the word of the day at our Christmas meeting. I applaud Phillip Yaffe's suggestion in the January Members' Forum for eliminating ums and ahs in speeches. I will implement this technique in the future. Joining Toastmasters is one of the best decisions of my life.

Shirley Stallworth
Beacon Toastmasters
Beavercreek, Ohio

Benefits Beyond the Club

I gained a lot of knowledge and some good ol' leadership tips from Dave Zielinski's [September] article “Flip Your Script: How to Succeed as a First-time Leader.”

I highlighted a lot of this article that I can apply immediately, both at my home club, and in my current role as a project manager of a diverse team. Truly, Toastmasters benefits go beyond public speaking. They help in so many spheres of one's life. Thank you for always sharing valuable articles with each new edition.

Toyin Fatubarin
Testament Toastmasters club
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Continuing the Journey

I am thankful to Mumbai Toastmasters. It came into my life as a new journey to bring me closer to my objective of improving my communication skills and overcoming

stage fear. I read about overcoming barriers in the *Toastmaster* magazine. I've been working in pharmaceutical sales for [the] last 17 years, and my professional life took on bullet-train speed when I spoke confidently to my customers. It requires long hours of practice. This is synonymous with preparing and completing my first two projects in the *Competent Communication* manual. I will be continuing this journey as I say to myself: I am still a student.

Sudhir Makhija
Mumbai Toastmasters
Mumbai, India

Adding Flair

Although I enjoy every issue of the *Toastmaster*, the November issue was particularly helpful—especially Bill Brown's “Say It With Flair.” His article about rhetorical devices was enlightening and directly applicable to the speech I delivered two days after I read it.

I talked about enabling, a serious problem when it comes to drug abuse. Based on my own experience, and recent comments made by medical personnel, I know that too many families enable loved ones to continue their bad habits by making excuses, covering up, and helping them avoid the consequences of their actions.

Because of Brown's article, I saw the need for including a triad during my talk. Although I had rewritten the speech several times, I added this phrase: “Enabling is foolish. Enabling is weak. Enabling can have fatal consequences.” It added flair to my remarks and helped drive home a point. Thanks, Bill.

Ken Walker
Huntington Centennial club
Huntington, West Virginia

“Thanks, Ken, for sharing your example. That is a powerful triad. Great job.”
—Bill Brown

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or less. State your name, member number and home club, and send it to letters@toastmasters.org. Please note: Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity, and may be published in both the print and electronic editions.

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Fast, fun formats like Ignite and PechaKucha help speakers get to the point.

By Dave Zielinski



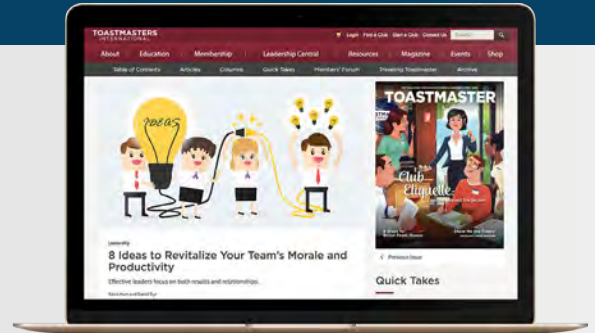
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Toastmaster Magazine Online

See more photos, videos and links online at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

May Online Extras:

- **Traveling Toastmaster**—View more photos of members posing with their magazine in the online gallery. 📷
- **Reaching Higher After Mount Everest**—Discover more about Shailee Basnet through additional photos and video. 📷 ▶
- **25 Ways to Nail Your Workplace Presentation**—Learn how to stay on topic during your next presentation in this exclusive Toastmasters video. ▶



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▶ MEMBER MOMENT



The Path of Perseverance

BY NIA BROWN

A fear of heights didn't stop Lynette Charity, CC, from jumping out of an airplane. The anesthesiologist, professional speaker, humorist, author and retired lieutenant colonel of the U.S. Army Medical Corps had been asked to make the jump in honor of the "Triple Nickles," the first parachute infantry test battalion of black Americans. "Sometimes, you just have to take a leap of faith," she says.

Charity has been following her own advice and taking big leaps since childhood—which began in Virginia, on the precipice of racial integration in the South. Many voices tried to tear her down, saying she (one of the first black students in her area to attend a white school) would never do something like become a doctor. But she did exactly that—and says she always knew that would be her path. However, her path is expanding: the World Championship of Public Speaking semifinalist gives inspirational speeches to audiences across the United States, still practices medicine, is writing and rewriting her memoir and performs stand-up comedy.

When did you join Toastmasters and why?

In 2012 I hit a crossroad in my career as a physician. I had been practicing for over 30 years and watched as technology took away my ability to practice medicine the way I wanted to. After an altercation with the chief of my department, my contract was terminated and then I felt lost and obsolete. I attended a conference called "Non-Clinical Careers for the Retiring Physician" where I met a career coach who suggested I join Toastmasters. I wondered, "How is learning how to toast going to help me become a stand-up comic?" But I decided to try. It was out of my comfort zone but the members were so welcoming.

How did you overcome being told you won't accomplish your dreams?

During my competition days, my coach Craig Valentine [1999 World Champion of Public Speaking] told me: "Be too good for it to matter." I guess I lived that rule long before I met him. In high school I was told, "No medical school is gonna take a colored girl." I had to prove them wrong. I was in the National Honor Society, a member of the student council and a National Merit Scholar. I received a four-year academic scholarship to college and graduated with honors. I worked in laboratories, nursing homes, disabled children's homes and even as a medical secretary. My greatest



Lynette Charity

assets were my intelligence and the drive to achieve. Hard work, perseverance and resilience will get you there.

How important is support from other people?

You cannot grow in a vacuum of self-absorption. I had so many mentors throughout my life, and I still do. I had the drive, but not the knowledge. My mentors showed me the ropes—how to navigate my journey to get to my success. I couldn't have gotten to where I am without help.

Is it difficult to craft inspirational speeches meant to help people help themselves?

I suggest ways they can resolve an issue causing them grief, say a dream unfilled. Instead of "I'll give that a try," I get "That's not going to work." My response is "How do you know if you won't try it?" And the response is "Because I do!" It is frustrating. No matter how much you try to motivate someone, or shift their mindset from negative to positive, it still takes effort on their part. I can't *make* anyone do anything. Until *you* do something, it remains just a dream.

How do you grow in the face of prejudice?

I have come to believe that all I can do is attempt to change others' opinions of me, and me alone, through my actions. I choose not to be a spokesperson for the masses. My message is how I overcame adversity through hard work, perseverance and resilience. You must be comfortable in your own skin and attempt to treat everyone the way you wish to be treated.

Nia Brown is the editorial assistant for *Toastmaster magazine*.



Connecting in South Korea

Wearing traditional Korean attire, members of South Horizons Toastmasters club in Hong Kong gather in front of Gyeongbokgung Palace in Seoul, South Korea. The club conducted a five-day visit to South Korea's District 93 and held joint meetings with two local clubs, the Gyodae Toastmasters and COEX Toastmasters clubs.

▶ HUMOR

Pratfalls from the Platform

BY ALLEN KLEIN

As motivational speaker W. Mitchell says, “It’s not what happens to you, it’s what you do about it.” If what you do about it is add some humor to those platform mishaps and mistakes, then you are way ahead of the game.

I was hired to do a post-dinner presentation for surgeons and their spouses. After signing the contract, I found out it was a formal event. Since I had no tuxedo, I went to a Costco store and bought one for \$99. The tux, made in Yugoslavia, had some weird side buckles; apparently, I didn’t fasten them too well. During the program, one buckle came undone. Then the other one did too. I leaned to one side and caught the falling pants with my elbow. And that is how I remained during the rest of my talk ... one hand holding the microphone and the other arm holding up my pants.

I was too new in the speaking business to realize I could have shared what was happening with the audience, instead of hiding it. Had I revealed my dilemma, I probably would have had a chance to buckle up again, and maybe even get a great big laugh.

Perhaps one of the funniest comebacks was told to me by my friend and colleague, Karyn Buxman. One day, she was giving a presentation in an unusually dark ballroom. The walls were black, the carpet was black, and the stage curtain behind her was black.

At one point during her talk, she stepped forward, missed the edge of the stage, and found herself flat on the floor. Although she was startled, she realized she wasn’t hurt, just embarrassed. She also realized the microphone had fallen nearby. So, still lying on the ground, she picked it up and announced to the audience, “And now I will take questions from the floor.”

Allen Klein is a professional speaker and author of *The Healing Power of Humor*. Visit www.allenklein.com or reach him at humor@allenklein.com.

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



Bill Vineyard

BY MARY NESFIELD

Bill Vineyard, ACB, ALB, is chief operating officer at a telecommunications company. A longtime member of the Wallingford Toastmasters club in Seattle, Washington, he uses his public speaking skills at work and during community events.

Lara Simmons, CC, works for the Seattle Public School District and has self-published two books. She is enrolled in a graduate program at Seattle University. Although she had no desire to improve her public-speaking skills, she visited a club and joined because of the friendliness of the members.

Why did you choose Bill as your mentor?

He is the heart and soul of our club. He is supportive and encouraging, and is happy to share his wealth of knowledge about Toastmasters.

Why do you stay in Toastmasters?

Once I started giving speeches I realized I lacked confidence and the ability to connect with my audience. I am so focused; I almost forget that anyone is listening. I am not good at responding to the energy in the room and making changes to my speech on the fly, which is important when teaching or speaking to a group about my books.

How does Bill help you?

Before every speech, I try to convince myself to quit. I think, *I feel sick. This is not for me.* Then, afterward, I feel great. *This is the best thing ever! I love this!* These extremes are sometimes hard to weather and I find Bill's steadfastness comforting and inspiring.

▶ SPEAKING OUTSIDE THE CLUB

Main Street Motivators Heads Outside!

Fall, we decided, would be a great time to have an outdoor meeting. Our Main Street Motivators club meets at noon in downtown Richmond, Virginia, in a skyscraper with a large courtyard. Resplendent with food trucks, we'd have a ready-made and ever-changing audience!

An unseasonably warm October day, coupled with inspiration from previous *Toastmaster* magazine articles, set us in motion. We discussed how the meeting would unfold, took our just-created "Don't Fear the Speaker" poster and handouts outside, found an unoccupied bench and jumped right into an impromptu version of Table Topics.



FROM LEFT: Lara Simmons and Bill Vineyard.

He helps me remember how showing up, volunteering and supporting my fellow members is as important—and meaningful—as giving speeches. It helps me focus less on my nervousness and more on being a good club member.

How do you apply what you've learned in the club?

Being a Toastmaster has given me a quiet confidence that affects every area of my life. I am more comfortable putting myself out there and inviting feedback. For example, as part of the application process for my graduate degree I had to do a group interview and volunteered to go first—I accepted the challenge, and I believe the moderator was impressed. I trust in my ability to speak my truth in the moment, in an articulate way, much more than I did before becoming a Toastmaster.

Mary Nesfield is associate editor of *Toastmaster* magazine.

NOMINATE YOUR MARVELOUS MENTOR!

Do you know an exceptional mentor who has positively influenced you? Send a 200-word description and photo (1 MB or larger) of you and your mentor to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.



Julie O'Connell doing Table Topics.

PHOTO BY ELLI MORRIS

The Toastmaster barked out the invitation to "come up and give a one- to two-minute talk. We'll provide the questions!" To our

delight, we had takers! One even stuck around long enough to respond twice, receiving two evaluations.

Members had a grand time. No fearing the reaper, or the speaker, at all!

Translations Expand the Education Program

May marks a milestone in the life of Pathways, the innovative and expansive learning experience launched by Toastmasters a little more than a year ago. The program has been rolled out in phases, being unveiled in regions around the world. This month is the final stage in that rollout, with Pathways arriving in the last two regions: 8 and 9. (The learning experience will also be released in all undistricted and online clubs this month.)

One of Pathways' greatest attractions is the availability of translated educational materials. All materials in the new program have been translated into Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese. Members across the globe have been thrilled to read content in their native languages.

Members around the world volunteered their time and effort to serve on translation-review teams, to ensure that all Pathways translations were accurate and authentic to the local culture. The teams reviewed the professional translations, helped develop Pathways glossaries and made sure the materials are true to the Toastmasters experience.

Team members say they have been gratified by the extensive undertaking.

MORE TRANSLATION NEWS

A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats, a valuable manual on meeting roles, has been given a multi-language update. In addition to English, it is now available in Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese.

The organization's volunteer translation-review teams around the world provided support on this extensive project. *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats* features essential information on the various roles members fill during club meetings. It outlines in detail what to do when you are a speaker, evaluator, grammarian, Ah-Counter, timer and Toastmaster of the meeting. It also delves into Table Topics, offering guidance for the Topicsmaster as well as Table Topics speakers.

You can download *A Toastmaster Wears Many Hats* from the Resource Library on the Toastmasters website.

"I enjoyed working on a huge project that will shape the future of this worldwide organization and a place we think of as *home*," says Jack Luo, a member of the Simplified Chinese translation-review team.

Toastmasters International's translation efforts represent a breakthrough achievement in the organization's 94-year history—as does Pathways itself.

Latest Languages

When the new education program launched in regions 4 and 13 in April, Pathways materials in Traditional Chinese

and in Japanese became available to members there. Thank you to members of:

The Traditional Chinese Translation Review Team

Chief Reviewer Grace Shih, lead reviewers Jeffrey Huang and Solomon Chen, and reviewers Mike Yang, Sigrid Chen, Jorie Wu, Bright Huang, Janice Cheung, Eric Liang, Teresa Chang, Fu-Mei Chen, Fiona Tseng, Haishuo Lee and Howard (Te-Hao) Chien.

The Japanese Translation Review Team

Chief Reviewer Bunzo Suzuki, lead reviewers Shin Ohinata and Sachiko Morikawa, reviewers Shigeto Negi, Harumi Ueda, Yumiko Otsuka, Yukiko Nakashima, Maki Kai, Daijiro Shinohara, Hirohiko Kashiwagi, Yuka Aihara, Akihiro Ando, Noriko Nishida, Hiroyo Kitamura, Masako Hino, Michiko Hirabayashi, and past reviewers Keiko Miyake, Midori Hirota, Hiroyasu Tanabe, Masako Saneshige, Shoji Kumagi, Rie Ishida, Kyoko Kawano and Futana Sumiko.

Visit www.toastmasters.org/Translations to learn more about the team members.

For more information, please email the Translation Team at World Headquarters at translations@toastmasters.org.

Paul Serman is senior editor of *Toastmaster magazine*.

CHECK OUT THE PATHWAYS WEBPAGE

If you have questions about the new education program, or want to learn more about its background, visit the Pathways webpage at www.toastmasters.org/pathways. It has a wealth of information and resources, including videos, a look at Base Camp (the program's learning management system) and an extensive FAQ section.

There are also sections about education awards in Pathways and the crucial role that member volunteers have played in the development and launch of the learning experience.

"How Pathways Began" is a series of short videos about the program: why it was created, how it was developed and why it is valuable to you. In addition, the Testimonials page features a video of District 33 members talking about their Pathways experience (www.toastmasters.org/education/pathways/pathways-testimonials).

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1 | COLM ROE, DTM, from Dublin, Ireland, takes a dive in Fethiye Bay, Turkey.

2 | FARZANA CHOCHAN, DTM, a 2018–2019 region advisor from Chesterfield, Missouri, meets a peregrine falcon during a desert safari in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

3 | RONI MITCH, CC, from Plains, Montana, floats in the Dead Sea near Ein Bokek, Israel.

4 | SIDDHARTH VEDULLA, CL, from Hyderabad, India, poses after trekking Mount Batur in Bali, Indonesia, with Mount Agung in the background.

2



3



4



View additional photos in this month's *Traveling Toastmaster* photo gallery at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.



PICTURE YOURSELF HERE! Pose with the *Toastmaster* magazine during your travels and submit your photos for a chance to be featured in an upcoming issue. Visit www.toastmasters.org/Submissions. Bon voyage!

You Gotta Wow 'Em

Want more members? Learn the art of making guests feel welcome.

BY BRENT STEWART, CC

Shortly after joining my club, Chungli Toastmasters in Taiwan, I became aware of a worrisome challenge: We had no guests. So when I was asked to take over as vice president public relations, I jumped at the chance. Fast forward a few months and our club had a new Facebook fan page, its own Meetup and LinkedIn groups, and an official LINE account (a communication app with free messaging). Within months, our social media presence led to a steady flow of club meeting guests, and with that, new members.

With this influx of guests, however, came new challenges. We were unprepared for the amount of people showing up, so we watched them disappear shortly after each meeting. With no guest book, we had no way of following up with them. It was clear we needed to invest in taking better care of our guests. In effect, this meant “wowing” them: treating them in much the same way we ourselves expect to be treated as diners, hotel guests, or guests in another’s home. By doing so, the chances of our next guest becoming our next new member will increase. Equally possible, that same guest could become our club’s next president. I’m living proof of it!

After six months, nine new members had joined. They regularly bring their own guests to meetings. Even guests bring guests. Some even show an interest in attending club officer meetings and member training workshops. All of this has unfolded in mere months, and with only a little effort from each of us.

Allow me to share five tips that have made a big difference in our club.

1 When guests reach out for the first time, we acknowledge them, and thank them. We provide resources to teach them more about Toastmasters and our club. We also send a message to every

single person who “likes” our Facebook fan page—a simple “Thanks for liking our page,” followed by an invitation to communicate with me directly. So far, this has resulted in immediate replies from approximately 30 percent of the visitors who “liked” us, including thanks for acknowledging them, and questions about Toastmasters and our club.

2 Standing at the front door 30 minutes before each meeting is a senior member who serves as a greeter.

This member warms guests with a smile, provides them with our guest form, and offers refreshments and a name tag. The guest is also introduced to items on display in the reception area, including copies of our manuals, club trophies and the *Toastmaster* magazine.

3 Each guest is then paired with a member who “befriends” them throughout the meeting. As a recent first-time guest myself, I know this helps put the visitor at ease. It’s a friendly face they can chat with and from whom they can get immediate answers to their questions about the meeting, the club and Toastmasters.

4 We invite guests to join us for a social hour following our club meeting. We typically socialize for about an hour at a nearby teashop or café. It is during these social functions when most of our guests announce their interest in joining our club.



PHOTO BY TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

5 A few days after the meeting, each new guest receives a personalized e-card sent from the club president.

It thanks them for visiting and provides our club’s annual calendar, as well as links to our social media channels and the club website—ensuring they can easily follow club news and information about future meetings and events.

Yes, taking these steps requires effort. But it’s immensely rewarding to receive direct feedback from guests who express thanks for a card or for answers to their questions on Facebook. Most importantly, it’s evidence that we are indeed treating our visitors as valued guests. With a little teamwork, I’m confident these little touches will make a difference in your club and to your future members. **T**

BRENT “BRENTLY” STEWART, CC, ALB, is a writing coach and managing editor of The Writing Clinic, and serves as president of Chungli Toastmasters club in Taoyuan City, Taiwan. Learn more at www.thewritingclinic.com.tw.

Reaching Higher After Mount Everest

Nepali mountain climber warms up to onstage comedy.

BY MISSY SHEEHAN

For many, climbing the world's highest mountain might be the pinnacle of achievements—but not for Shailee Basnet. Since the Nepal native climbed Mount Everest in May 2008, she's reached even higher points in her life. After conquering Everest, Basnet helped form the Seven Summits Women Team. Four and a half years later, she and her teammates became the first women's team in the world to climb the highest peak on each of the seven continents: Everest in Asia, Mount Kosciuszko in Australia, Mount Elbrus in Europe, Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa, Mount Aconcagua in South America, Mount Denali in North America and Vinson Massif in Antarctica.

Between ascents, Basnet accomplished other goals such as becoming a motivational speaker and stand-up comedian. Today, the 35-year-old gives speeches at conventions, seminars and schools all over the world. In 2017, she spoke at the Toastmasters International Convention in Vancouver, Canada, about her experiences climbing some of the tallest mountains on earth, the challenges she and her teammates faced, and the lessons they learned.

Basnet's experiences—both on and off mountains—are central in her comedy as well. "I want to ... use my comedy to share the incredible journey I've been on, to share the power and joy of all these amazing female superheroes, my wonder women, that I work with," she says.

Comedy isn't all about laughs for Basnet, though. "I see the power of stand-up comedy. I see the power of mainstream entertainment," she says. She aims to harness that power to bring representation of women in the rural, developing world to mainstream entertainment. "And comedy

is the language of my choice," she says. Her priority is "to present a first-world versus third-world contrast," and poke fun at it. "And then, from that, I build on the developing, rural narrative and the female narrative. I think that's really missing in mainstream entertainment right now," she says.

Basnet has been producing and performing her own comedy shows at restaurants, hotels and other venues in Nepal since 2011. She also performed at comedy showcases and clubs in Colorado—where she and her husband live for part of the year—and most recently in New York.

**"If you want something,
you need to invest in it.
You need to invest in
yourself."**

—SHAILEE BASNET

Basnet, CC, says her Toastmasters training helped her become a motivational speaker and gave her the confidence to pursue stand-up comedy. "If I didn't have the Toastmasters platform, I don't think I would have had the courage to write a script and go onstage and invite people to watch me," she says. "Toastmasters is like the complete foundation—my base for my stand-up journey."

Climbing the Seven Summits

Before Basnet was cracking jokes onstage or climbing mountains, she was a journalist covering youth and social issues in Nepal. While she says writing is her first love, she always longed to do something more active. "Basically, all my childhood, I



Shailee Basnet stops to pose for a photo at Mount Everest Base Camp.

did not play any sports, because my school did not have any, particularly for girls," says Basnet, who grew up in Kathmandu. "So one of my childhood wishes was to be physically active."

When Basnet heard about the First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition, an all-Nepali female expedition to climb Mount Everest, she was intrigued. At first, though, her inexperience in sports caused her to doubt whether she should join. "I asked myself whether I was qualified even to go near a mountain," she jokes. Fortunately, the expedition was the culmination of a nearly yearlong program that included 45 days of intense mountaineering training in the Himalayas. "Once I found that out, I was in," Basnet says. "I went for that training and never looked back."

The goal of the women's expedition "was to open up access to mountaineering for Nepali women—to encourage more Nepali women into mountaineering,"



Last year, Shailee performed her stand-up comedy routine at Gotham Comedy Club in Manhattan, New York.

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Basnet says. At the time, only seven Nepali women had climbed Mount Everest, while hundreds of women of other nationalities had, Basnet says. “In Nepal, because of serious social economic factors, [mountaineering] is definitely an unconventional and very nontraditional path for women.”

As such, the expedition was frowned upon by many. “We were called a lot of different names,” Basnet says. “We were told this is an over-ambitious project, a suicide mission, that a few of us were going to die for sure, that not more than one or two of us would make it ... and it was difficult for people to accept and understand that a group of women could do this.”

Basnet says attitudes changed after she and her teammates became “the most successful women’s team to be on Everest,” with all 10 members making it to the top—a feat Basnet says is rare in mountaineering. “Everybody was like, wow, this is amazing, and society needs to learn from it,” Basnet says. “When we came back, the scene had definitely changed. Since then, almost every year, there has been at least one or two young Nepali women going up Everest.”

After the expedition, Basnet and some teammates founded the Global Inclusive Adventure Organization (GIA), a non-profit non-governmental organization. Wondering what else they could achieve

together, they set their sights on conquering the rest of the world’s tallest mountains, and the Seven Summits Women Team was born.

Basnet and her teammates completed their mission in December 2014, when select team members scaled the final summit: Mount Vinson in Antarctica. Basnet personally climbed to the peak of Everest, Kosciuszko, Elbrus and Kilimanjaro. “Our goal was even if one person makes it to the top in each of these continents, we were a successful mission,” she says.

Finding New Paths

After the First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition, Basnet and her teammates began receiving invitations from schools, organizations and corporations to speak about their experiences. She realized that others wanted to hear about her experiences and lessons learned.

Supported by the United Nations, which was one of the expedition’s major sponsors, the women visited more than 150 schools in Nepal and more than 200 schools abroad.

“Toastmasters has been one of the best investments I ever made.” —SHAILEE BASNET



In 2014, Shailee addressed more than 16,000 Lions Club members at their international convention in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.



As part of an all-Nepali female expedition, Shailee reached the summit of Mount Everest in May 2008.

“That was, after climbing, the second-best experience—to be able to share our experience and lessons, flaws, faults, mistakes, achievements ... with young minds who are still figuring out what they might want to do with their lives,” Basnet says.

While Basnet initially saw motivational speaking simply as a platform to share her stories and lessons of empowerment, over time she saw it as something from which she could build a career. She followed a similar path with stand-up comedy.

When she first became interested in stand-up, Basnet wasn't sure whether people would find her funny. In 2010, she joined the Everest Toastmasters club in Kathmandu to test her material.

Nepal doesn't have much of a stand-up comedy culture, says Basnet, so Toastmasters meetings gave her a weekly platform where she could crack jokes. “Seeing if people found me funny was my biggest motivation,” she says.

Training for Higher Altitudes

Although she was an experienced speaker prior to joining Toastmasters, Basnet realized how much she still had to learn. “I

“I want to ... use my comedy to share the incredible journey I've been on, to share the power and joy of all these amazing female superheroes.”

—SHAILEE BASNET


was a little bit full of myself,” she admitted. “I love speaking; I love being on stage.” Basnet's story, rather, is of a dynamic speaker who, through hard work, became even better, a sentiment echoed by those who've watched her grow. Richard Ragan is a United Nations diplomat who supported the First Inclusive Women Sagarmatha Expedition. He says, “I've put her in a movie, given speeches standing beside her, and watched her stand in front of scores of people and talk passionately about her dreams and accomplishments. I've seen her grow from being good to

great. She is a natural leader and someone who is going to achieve tremendous things throughout her lifetime.”

Maya Gurung, one of Basnet's Seven Summits teammates, praises Basnet's ability to connect with audiences. “She is a master at deep connection, whether it is through her motivational talks or as a comic,” Gurung says. “I've heard her share my own story several times, and it still gives me goosebumps and makes me tear up even after 10 years.”

Basnet credits her four years as an active Toastmaster with helping her get to where she is today. “One of the lessons I learned along the way is if you want something, you need to invest in it. You need to invest in yourself,” she says. “Toastmasters has been one of the best investments I ever made.”

Missy Sheehan is a freelance writer, copy editor and proofreader. For more information, visit her website at www.sheehanwriting.com.

 **ONLINE EXTRAS:** Discover more about Shailee Basnet through additional photos and video.



Should I Join a Second Club?

Consider the benefits of multiple club memberships to reach your goals.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

You don't have to be a Toastmaster for very long to realize that some people are members of two or more clubs. The question you might ask is: "Should I follow their example? Should I join a second club?"

Not necessarily, but strong reasons may motivate you to consider it.

One obvious benefit is the chance to increase your speaking opportunities. If you joined Toastmasters to improve your speaking, the more you speak, the better you get. And if you plan to compete in speech contests, belonging to more than one club gives you more chances to practice.

But it doesn't stop there.

Another key benefit of speaking in more than one club is being evaluated by different groups of Toastmasters. Although we all evaluate speakers based on the same guidelines, each one of us notices different areas for improvement. Different evaluators may give you a different perspective and, hence, a richer growth experience to help you improve.

Perhaps you are focused on the leadership aspect of Toastmasters. Two clubs give you more opportunities to serve—not to mention the additional networking possibilities.

More opportunities to speak and serve will, potentially, help you progress through the program much quicker. While that may be your objective, I will reiterate what I wrote in my first Toastmasters Toolbox article: This is not a race. Proceed at a pace that promotes growth.

You may have other reasons for considering membership in a second club.

There may come a time in your Toastmasters involvement when you say, "I would like to be pushed to grow more." You might even be ready for an advanced club, where most, if not all, members are higher-level speakers. Advanced clubs challenge you to get better.

Another type of club to consider is a specialty club; Toastmasters offers lots of them. There are clubs for humor, improv, storytelling, dining and even wine-tasting. I've seen them for writing, photography and specific ethnic groups. And if you are in business for yourself, see if your local Chamber of Commerce has a club.

"More opportunities to speak and serve can help you progress through the program quicker."

If you have a specific interest and don't see a club for your topic, talk with members from your area leadership team. They are always looking to start a new club.

Personally, I have some specific requirements. I use the stage a lot when I speak. A venue with a good speaking area is important to me. I also videotape all my speeches (some clips even make it to the internet), so I need a professional setting, and one that is bright enough to get a good recording.

I found a club that fits those requirements and I joined.

Another reason to attend an additional club is one that I have used extensively.

I have competed in Toastmasters speech contests many times. If you are a member of one club, you have one chance of participating. You may be fine with that. I have found for myself, however, that competing at the higher levels pushes me to become a better speaker. I am therefore highly motivated to make it to the area contest, and beyond. Being a member of more clubs gives me a greater chance of winning at the club level and moving on to the area competition.

Let me give you an example. I was once a member of two advanced clubs. Competition, as you can imagine, was high. In fact, in one club, I didn't finish in the top three. I had, however, joined another club whose speakers were not as strong. I won its club contest. By working hard, I improved to the point where I took second at the division level. I created a contestant opportunity for myself by joining an additional club—and I became a better speaker in the process. That is one way to use multiple club memberships to achieve your speaking goals.

As you can see, there are many reasons for joining a second club. Or a single club may be perfect for you. If you are ready for an expanded experience, take a look at what is available in your city. You just might find what you are looking for. **T**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of two clubs—Pro Toastmasters and Powerhouse Pros. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.



Dealing with *Challenging* Personalities

How to keep your composure around members with maddening traits.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM

We all know them: the club members who irritate, agitate and aggravate others. Maybe it's their strong personality or annoying behavior. Maybe they create conflict that pollutes the culture of your club. They are maddening! How do you handle these difficult members?

Some of us respond poorly. We fume quietly, or we criticize, ostracize or polarize, causing more division and angst. Sometimes we confuse “different” with “difficult” and mistakenly expect others to match our own expectations. A.A. Milne quotes from his iconic *Winnie the Pooh*: “The things that make me different are the things that make me.” We can't, and shouldn't, change people. True peace comes from accepting others.

Kind Confrontation

But what about the people with *really* maddening traits who disrupt meetings, cause disputes or create chaos? What can you do about them? Before we explore specific solutions, consider adopting these general principles:

- ▶ Don't take their behavior personally.
- ▶ Realize there's always a backstory that led them to where they are now. Have compassion, because you may not know the whole story.

- ▶ Control your emotions. The world's top achievers have this in common: They control their emotions under stress—even when dealing with difficult people. Count to 10 before saying something you may regret, or say nothing at all.
- ▶ Realize that everyone wants to feel safe and accepted, but some of us just go about it in different ways.

Great leaders know that the place to start is by developing the skill of “kind confrontation.” In the book *Crucial Conversations*, authors Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler explain how developing the finesse of graciously handling difficult conversations can further your career and improve your relationships, organization and even your health. At the core of that skill is to “start with heart.” Identify what you want for yourself, the other person and the relationship. Clarify what you don't want, which is usually conflict or anger. Then dig deep to find a way to accomplish all that. Create an atmosphere of safety by speaking kindly and preserving everyone's dignity. You don't need to choose between candor and kindness. You can use both.

Seven types of maddening members and how to respond to them

Here are suggestions to handle seven specific maddening member-types in your club:

1 The Over-talker: They talk endlessly, barely stopping to breathe in conversation, unaware that their listener has zoned out and lost interest. They can come across as opinionated, disrespectful and extremely self-absorbed. When they give a speech, they consistently go overtime.

Solution:

Most over-talkers are simply thinking out loud or are afraid they're not being heard. Be patient and listen without letting them crowd out everyone else. You can't eliminate their behavior, but you can minimize their impact on the club by putting appropriate boundaries in place.

If you are talking with a conversation-monopolizer, try to politely redirect the conversation to a different topic, or invite another person to join in. Or exit by saying, "Excuse me, I must get going." Give your biggest, kindest smile, and then walk away. Or try humor. Smile and say, "Time's up! My turn to talk!"

If their speeches consistently go overtime, they probably don't notice the timer's cards or lights. The timer can be more animated by waving the card or flashing the light. If you evaluate a frequent over-timer, be kind but firm. Stress the *impact* of the action, not the action itself.

"Joe, when you go overtime, the meeting goes long. It's better if we end on time because people have commitments after the meeting."



2 The Recruiter is the one who uses the club meeting as a personal networking or proselytizing event to market their own business or evangelize their own faith. Every conversation, speech and comment is sprinkled with a thinly veiled attempt to gain more clients or converts. If it goes beyond practicing their pitch or sermon, members become uncomfortable.

Solution:

Show respect. The recruiter's work ethic and passion are admirable, even if their method is pushy. The club president or vice president education can privately ask their intent. "What brings you to Toastmasters? What skills would you like to improve?" If they simply want to sell, explain how Toastmasters is indeed a place to practice a sales pitch, but let them know that their speeches don't sound like practice at all. Promotional pitches with intent to close a sale are not in the spirit of Toastmasters. Encourage them to shift the focus from sales to education to teach club members about their industry instead of pitching

them a product. If their true focus is sales, and members don't buy, they probably will choose to leave.

3 The Googler is the "know-it-all," the self-proclaimed (and often prideful) keeper of all knowledge—especially Toastmasters knowledge. They usually have a long Toastmasters history, having held several club officer positions or won many contests. They may know a lot of people. They may be name-droppers. They may have memorized every contest rule and every aspect of Robert's Rules of Order. They protest incorrect procedures, or pontificate about "why we must do this." They can come across as pretentious and inflexible.

Solution:

Engage them. They may be looking for an ego stroke, but most likely they are simply excited about something they learned, and love sharing with others. Often, they genuinely want to help. Let them. Affirm them with "That's wonderful information," "You sound like an expert!" or "I didn't know that." A little attention goes a long way.

If their information is crucial to the operation of the club, welcome it. Toastmasters runs well because of policies. If a member knows them well, they're a valuable asset to the club, helping to preserve organizational integrity. However, don't always accept everything they say as truth. "Made-up" rules and long-standing traditions that seem like rules are not uncommon. Perform due diligence to research and understand the policies and rules yourself.

4 The High-conflict member is particularly toxic to the club. They exhibit behavior consistent with narcissism and histrionic, borderline and antisocial personality disorders. They argue, debate, even intimidate. They often initiate, escalate and perpetuate conflict, usually with themselves at the center. They blame others, and will not take responsibility for their part in a conflict. They think people are either with them or against them, or 100 percent good or 100 percent bad. If anyone is against them, they're forever against them. They can be explosive and unpredictable, and will try to gather allies in their conflicts, often creating division in a group.

Solution:

This is one of the toughest personalities to deal with, but deal you must because the damage they can do may be extensive. You cannot change their behavior, but you can change your reaction to it. If you confront them about the behavior, you'll likely

create a new conflict or exacerbate an existing one. Bill Eddy, the president of High Conflict Institute, is an award-winning author, lawyer, therapist and mediator, and an international expert on managing high-conflict disputes. In his book *BIFF: Quick Responses to High Conflict People*, he describes a four-point response. He says if you must interact with this problematic person, keep your response BIFF: Brief, Informative, Friendly and Firm. Be brief and concise. Give only the facts and not emotions. Be friendly, polite, firm, clear and direct. If conflict escalates, consider engaging your district or regional leaders. Make it a priority to resolve or mitigate conflict.

5 The Latecomer is consistently late to meetings. When on the agenda, their tardiness causes last-minute role shuffling. Even if they are not on the agenda, their arrival is disruptive and distracting.

Solution:

Check your room logistics. An entrance in the back of the room is less distracting. Still, a chronic latecomer may disrupt the meeting. The best approach is in a private conversation. Publicly calling them out is usually counterproductive. Start the meeting on time to show respect to the members who are punctual. The General Evaluator can comment on the importance of punctuality, without mentioning latecomers by name.

In private, ask the latecomer if there is a particular reason for their consistent tardiness, and suggest ways to help. Gently point out how being late inconveniences everyone. Remind them of how they are hurting themselves if their role is reassigned because they won't get credit or the experience of performing the role. Seek their agreement and commitment to be on time.

6 The Gossiper delights in passing along "juicy information" about someone else. The information may be true, but it's rarely flattering. Gossips speculate, criticize and divide. Their words take on a life of their own, spreading throughout the club or district like a pervasive weed.

Solution:

If you hear gossip, don't engage. Shut down the conversation by walking away, remaining silent or offering kind words of contrast

such as, "Maybe she did that because she was tired" or "I need to see that for myself before I believe it." Always model the behavior that you wish to see. If you are the club president and the gossip is particularly divisive, you may need to speak privately with the offender to explain the detrimental effect on the club.

7 The Eccentric is unusual, quirky or peculiar. They just seem out of step with conventional standards. Maybe they dress differently, have an unusual habit, or are hyperfocused on a specific topic. Others may think they are mentally deficient, but they are not. In *Eccentrics: A Study of Sanity and Strangeness*, American-born and British-educated psychiatrist David Weeks writes how eccentrics are often physically healthier and significantly happier than "normal" people. He says they typically exhibit five similar characteristics: they are nonconformist, creative, intensely curious, idealistic and unconcerned with how they contrast with conventional culture. Yet, their presence in a Toastmasters setting can be unsettling to some.

Solution:

Eccentrics aren't really difficult; they're just different. As long as they don't obstruct club operations or cause conflict, let them be. Accept them as they are, and extend a warm hand of inclusion. Enjoy the diversity they bring to the club.

Seek to Influence

John Hancock, the American Revolution statesman, wrote, "The greatest ability in business is to get along with others and to influence their actions." Maddening members will always be around us, but we can learn strategies to help us react to them. Conflict is not bad. *Unresolved* conflict is. An excellent resource is the *Resolving Conflict* module of the Toastmasters Leadership Excellence Series. It is filled with practical advice. Embrace the chance to develop these skills. The beauty of Toastmasters is mingling with a fascinating kaleidoscope of people from different backgrounds, with different perspectives and on different journeys. When your path intersects with another's, consider it an opportunity to impact your world. *Winnie the Pooh* sums it up with more wisdom: "A little consideration, a little thought for others, makes all the difference." **T**



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The Cultural Nuances of Communication

It's all in the way you say it.

BY EVA NERTINGER, CC

When you speak in a foreign language, you want to appear authentic to the local culture. So it's important to know what is regarded as "normal" in that culture. But that can be tricky—because even when the majority of people in a cultural group agree on certain values, plenty of exceptions and deviations still exist.

In addition to being a conference interpreter and a translator, I also teach intercultural communication and business English. In this role, I'm often aware of the potential for miscommunication between people from different cultural groups. It's important to understand diverse communication styles—and the need to be culturally aware and sensitive when we speak to people from cultures different than ours.

For example, Americans are perceived as engaging in "ping-pong" conversations: They speak in short bursts, and the "ball" is then "hit" to the other person in the form of a question or tag such as, "isn't it?" This communication style is reactive, with one person reacting to what the other says. Longer monologues, or pauses in the conversation, are uncommon.

In contrast, you could describe the "normal" communication style in Japan as "bowling." People speak more deliberately, carefully considering their words before talking, and then speaking in longer

sequences. Interruptions are considered impolite (just as you wouldn't jump into the bowling lane and try to grab the ball!).

"I'm often aware of the potential for miscommunication between people from different cultural groups."

The potential for miscommunication is obvious. It is easy to understand, for example, that a Japanese person speaking in English would not necessarily change their conversation style simply because they are speaking in another language. They probably aren't even consciously aware of their communication style and might only notice the awkwardness of a conversation if the other person speaking English is American.

The Issue of Context

Asian and Western cultures also differ considerably in what Edward T. Hall, a renowned American researcher on cross-cultural communication, defined as "high vs. low context."

According to Hall, high context is when the most crucial part of information

being relayed is not mentioned, and must be read between the lines. Members of the same high context culture will understand what is meant in such a conversation (even if it is not explicitly said). The following workplace example shows what can happen when two people from different cultures use high context.

Boss: It seems we will have to work through the weekend.
 Employee: OK.
 Boss: Can you be here on Sunday?
 Employee: Yes, I guess so.
 Boss: That'll be a great help.
 Employee: Yes. Sunday is a special day.
 Boss: What do you mean?
 Employee: It's my son's birthday.
 Boss: How nice. I hope you all enjoy it very much.
 Employee: Thank you. I am grateful for your understanding.

The boss will probably be angry when the employee doesn't show up to work on Sunday, and the employee won't understand the anger because he told the boss about his son's birthday. Both here use high context in different ways. The boss does not explicitly tell the employee to show up on Sunday and the employee does not explicitly say that he won't show up. This might be an extreme case, but it

is a good example of what can go wrong in such situations.

In low context cultures, such as Germany, communication is direct and explicit and people will clearly state what they think and want. For people with other communication preferences, this might be perceived as harsh, rude and impolite. But this is not the intention of the low context speaker. In a German-to-German context, this style is considered efficient and time-saving, and small talk is often seen as a waste of time. Speaking figuratively and beating around the bush leave an impression with the German listener that the other side is not sincere or honest.

I sometimes have a hard time helping my Business English students understand that “I would like” definitely has a better

sound to it than “I want,” which would be the direct translation of how Germans would express the thought. My German students also need to be persuaded to accept phrases like “Would you please be so kind” to make conversation less confrontational.

Criteria for Good English

English teachers continue to debate what criteria should be used for effective international English. Criteria include comprehensibility, appropriateness and politeness, with the caveat that these terms do not have one universal definition. The following situation is an example.

Someone asks the question, “Would you like something to drink?”

First person answers, “No, I wouldn’t.”
Second person answers, “You are very nicely, but no thank you.”

From a purely grammatical point of view, the first answer is correct while the second one is not. But is answer number one appropriate and polite? Does it lead to good communication? Probably not.

This gives us a glimpse of the different aspects of communication. My goal is to continually improve my communication skills—it is one reason why I joined Toastmasters 20 years ago. **T**

Eva Nertinger, CC, is a member of the Danube Sparrows club in Ulm, Germany. She is a publicly sworn-in conference interpreter, translator, intercultural trainer and certified international business English trainer.

THE INTERPRETER’S CHALLENGE

BY EVA NERTINGER, CC

In my job as a conference interpreter, I’m often a witness to misleading communication. This is particularly true when the speaker must communicate in a language other than their mother tongue. Please note there is a linguistic difference between a conference interpreter and a translator, although the term “translator” is often—incorrectly—used to describe both activities. “Interpreting” means to verbally transfer something from one language into another language, be it simultaneously or consecutively. “Translating” only refers to the written transfer of text from one language to another.

The complex task of the conference interpreter requires intensive training—usually a university degree in applied linguistics. One example of the role of a conference interpreter in Europe today may involve simultaneously interpreting into German everything a businessperson from Spain pre-



sending in English says to an international audience.

One requirement in conference interpreting is to stay as close as possible to the original.

Years ago, I witnessed a situation in a German court. I had been summoned as the publicly sworn-in interpreter for English speakers and a woman was there to interpret for Spanish speakers. A Spanish-speaking witness was testifying using “colorful” language. Although my Spanish definitely has room for improvement, it was clear that the

witness used coarse language. After several minutes of name-calling and slandering by the witness, the Spanish interpreter interrupted the witness and “interpreted,” saying only: “The witness does not agree with what the defendant said.”

Because the interpreter’s summary was so disproportionate, the presiding judge delivered a warning, advising her to express the same type of language as spoken by the witness.

Interpreting accurately, to the word, implies that one does not filter what has been said. The conference interpreter must help the listener form their own opinion about the character of the original speaker, even when what has been said is racist, or in any form normally unacceptable.

The challenge for interpreters is to distance themselves, because sometimes they are forced to say things that do not reflect their own opinion.



TICK-TOCK, TIC

Fast, fun formats like Ignite and PechaKucha help speakers get to the point.

BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

On the surface there might seem to be little redeeming value in a speech that lasts about as long as it takes to retrieve your daily mail, but millions of speakers around the globe would beg to differ. In what continues to be an international

phenomenon, presenters are gathering in cities from Beijing to Boston to hone their craft, build community and learn how to “make every word count” by participating in tightly timed presentations known as “Ignite,” “PechaKucha” and “lightning talks.”

These fast-paced events place presenters on an extreme speaking diet by giving them only five to six minutes to deliver slide-based presentations, allowing 20 slides with just 15 to 20 seconds to address each one. The defining feature of the format is that slides advance automatically outside of the speaker’s control,



as a way to give design professionals a more compelling way to present and to increase the number of speakers who could present in one evening. Speakers are given 20 seconds to show each of 20 slides, for a total of six minutes and 40 seconds. PechaKucha (Japanese for “chatter”) grew so popular that by 2016, events were held in more than 1,000 cities worldwide. Each event is hosted by a local organizer and is held in venues like restaurants, bars, private homes, universities, churches and even prisons.

Ignite talks, founded by Brady Forrest and Bre Pettis in Seattle, Washington, use a related format. Ignite events take the concept of PechaKucha a step further by eliminating five seconds of speaking time from each slide, giving speakers just 15 seconds to address each of 20 slides. While that reduction may not seem significant, speakers say it can make a crucial difference in a setting where every second counts.

A third, lesser-known format is the “lightning talk”—a presentation of five to 10 minutes typically used in conference settings, with a multitude of presenters giving their speeches one right after another. Lightning talks are a way for speakers to quickly cover an array of topics or research for audiences with expertise in a given field. Formats can vary, and the use of slides is discouraged in some cases and allowed in other instances (typically, the 20-slide rule applies)—with a caveat that speakers avoid reading directly from them.

K-TOCK

forcing presenters to refine their messages and delivery approaches in ways they’ve rarely had to do before.

Ignite and PechaKucha (pronounced pe-chak-cha) have a beat-the-clock kind of competition that many find engaging, with audiences often cheering speakers on to meet time limits and post-speaking events that help participants create a sense of community. But the bottom line, according to those who have participated in or coached others preparing for these micro-presentations, is that the format teaches valuable lessons on speaking that can be applied to a variety of communication scenarios, regardless of the time given to speak.

A Movement with Momentum

The movement began in 2003 with the launch of PechaKucha, devised by Tokyo-based architects Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham

“Most audiences wish speeches were shorter, not longer, and that speakers they’re listening to would get [to] the point much faster.”

What Micro-Presentations Can Teach You

Garr Reynolds, a Japan-based presentation skills coach and author of the best-selling book *Presentation Zen*, has written about the Japanese concept of *hara hachi bu*, which means “to eat until you’re 80 percent full.” Reynolds believes speakers should apply the concept to presentations as well as to meals, leaving their audiences “satisfied but still hungry for a bit more.” Ignite and PechaKucha, when well-executed, honor that idea.

All these rapid-fire presentation formats have one overriding benefit for speakers, say communication experts. They force presenters to refine messages, content and speaking style to their essence, usually to the benefit of the audience.

“If a person can’t hold your attention for five minutes, why would you want to give them 30 minutes or an hour for a speech?” says Scott Berkun, who coaches Ignite presenters.

TAKING ITS CUE FROM HAIKU

Popular slide-design software stresses poetic simplicity.

Just as some speakers use alternative presenting formats like Ignite and PechaKucha to improve certain parts of their craft, some also go beyond using tried-and-true presentation-design software like Microsoft's PowerPoint or Apple's Keynote to enhance their supporting visuals.

One such tool increasingly favored by many speakers is Haiku Deck (www.haikudeck.com/), design software that helps bring new simplicity and discipline to slide creation, while also amplifying the emotional impact of messages. One guiding principle of Haiku Deck is "constraints lead to creativity," illustrated by haiku poetry, which inspired the software's name. That's a theme also shared by PechaKucha and Ignite. Some presentation-design software operates on the belief that more is better, but Haiku Deck's founders believe that less is more—fewer options, features and choices. A mobile-first approach to designing the software also means it's easy to create slide content on tablets like the iPad.

"I'm a big fan of Haiku Deck," says Michelle Mazur, a Seattle-based speech coach. "It forces you to use a format that doesn't allow a lot of text, and you can search and use a treasure trove of quality images within the software. It's also a good tool if you have to design a presentation quickly."

Noted keynote speaker and author Scott Berkun also uses Haiku Deck. "I tend to be a skeptic when it



BY DAVE ZIELINSKI

comes to presentation-design software, but Haiku Deck is all about simplicity and it has a wealth of good, royalty-free images," Berkun says. "It also helps you avoid some of the problems you can get into with other software, like being too text-heavy or focusing too

much on transitions or animation at the expense of your message."

Here are other tenets of Haiku Deck:

There should be only one idea per slide. To encourage this practice, the software deliberately limits the amount of text users can put on a slide. To those who believe the concept leads to creating too many slides, Haiku Deck's creators respond this way on their website: "Trust us, it's not the number of slides that matters. It's how clearly those slides communicate your message."

Use pictures to tell stories, not as decoration. Pictures connect with emotions and make ideas more memorable. Haiku Deck's keyword search allows users to explore over 40 million free Creative Commons images, plus additional content from Getty Images.

Focus on the story. It's easy for speakers to get consumed with things like text formatting, building transitions or refining animations when using design software. Haiku Deck believes it's not those things that make a presentation memorable—it's simply the narrative. The software is designed to help speakers keep a laser focus on crafting their message.

He has given many Ignite talks himself and is the author of the best-selling book *Confessions of a Public Speaker*. "A lot of people think they can speak or write well, but this time frame is the ultimate test and constraint. It forces you to distill down exactly what your message is and what you want to communicate, with no fluff or wasted seconds."

When speakers who have delivered an Ignite or PechaKucha talk return to their Toastmasters clubs or their jobs to prepare longer presentations, notes Berkun, they've often built up new muscles for how to edit and reduce messages to their most meaningful core. "And what audience won't appreciate that?" he asks. "Most audiences wish speeches were shorter, not longer, and that speakers they're listening to would get [to] the point much faster."

Berkun says the format helps presenters make their spoken messages stand out, with images playing a supporting role. "Inev-

itably, in many standard presentations a speaker's slides—which should be a prop to support or amplify a message—instead become the center of attention and the speaker becomes the prop," he says.

When coaching Ignite speakers, Berkun suggests a standard slide design isn't necessary. "Speakers could just project a black background as one option," he says. "Poorly designed visuals can be distracting, and the other thing Ignite speakers don't want to do is end up chasing their slides, because they won't catch up. What they say and how they say it matters most." Berkun even encourages speakers to put up the same slide twice if they feel they need more time to make a point.

Because slides are only visible for 15 seconds, speakers have to be more "visually concise," Berkun says. "You can't use an elaborate flowchart because there isn't enough time for the audience



to process it,” he says. “Ignite teaches about concision in use of visuals as well as in words.”

Michelle Mazur, a speech coach based in Seattle, also has worked with clients to create high-impact Ignite talks. “Ignite forces you to get crystal clear on the message you want audiences to take away from your talk,” Mazur says. “It makes you eliminate anything that is superfluous to your one big idea. I personally love the challenge of achieving that level of clarity and succinctness. Ignite also encourages you to come up with a unique and compelling title for your speech.”

Toastmasters who give Ignite or PechaKucha talks can apply valuable lessons from those experiences to their professional lives, Mazur says, particularly when it comes to presenting to senior leaders in their organizations.

“Those in the C-suite [e.g., chief executive officer, chief financial officer] are often impatient and just want you to cut to the chase and tell them your recommendation or make your pitch,” Mazur says. “Ignite forces you to leave out all the nuanced arguments or justifications and get right down to it. Top executives want presentations that follow a format of ‘very short intro, here are my findings, here is how you can apply them to make the organization better.’”

Ignite and PechaKucha also give Toastmasters an opportunity to get out of their comfort zones, experience a new speaking challenge and be introduced to a new community—often having fun along the way. “It puts you up on a bigger stage than a club setting and pushes the boundaries of your speaking style,” Mazur says.

These short, fast-paced sessions also can help speakers who are faced with presenting large amounts of data transform that information into more digestible and engaging content, says Greg

Owen-Boger, vice president of Chicago-based presentation-skills coaching firm Turpin Communication.

“We work with a lot of professionals in information technology, the sciences and health care who often have to communicate a lot of data in presentations,” says Owen-Boger, co-author of the book *The Orderly Conversation: Business Presentations Redefined*. “We help them trim that content down into just the most crucial and compelling points. Ignite and PechaKucha formats help speakers do much of the same thing.”

Avoiding Pitfalls

If there are drawbacks to these micro-presentation formats, it’s in placing the competition aspect of the talk—beating the clock in slide countdowns—over and above building other communication skills, say speech coaches.

“The danger is putting too much emphasis on the performance and not enough on having a conversation with the audience,” says Owen-Boger. “Speakers work so hard to fit the format, with the audience often cheering them on to get the words out before the slide advances rather than because of the quality of content they’re delivering.”


“It creates a lively and fun environment, but there is some question as to what kind of communication goals are being met.”

Berkun says one of the biggest problems new Ignite speakers have is trying to fit too much material into five or six minutes. “Some are under the impression that the higher the density of information, the better the talk will be,” he says. A good Ignite talk, he adds, “may only touch on 20 percent of the information they know.”

“If a person can’t hold your attention for five minutes, why would you want to give them 30 minutes or an hour for a speech?”

—SCOTT BERKUN

Ignite speakers also need to understand they don’t need to abandon the power of the pause to accommodate the format. “Within a minute or two of practice sessions, many new Ignite speakers already are out of breath,” Berkun says. “They’ve created no audible ‘white space’ between their sentences. They need to practice breathing when they rehearse, and even consider creating slides designed just for helping them catch up and take a breath.”

Ultimately, events like Ignite, PechaKucha and lightning talks help speakers develop the one skill most audiences around the world want more of—getting to the point as quickly as possible. “With all of these formats, the sooner you establish that you know what good material is, the more attention you’ll have from your audience,” Berkun says. “The same concept holds true for most of the presentations that we all give.” 

Dave Zielinski is a freelance business writer and editor in Minneapolis and a frequent contributor to the *Toastmaster*.

25 Ways to Nail Your Workplace Presentation

Tips for delivering a memorable message to staff members.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZBERG, CC

If you're an outstanding performer or leader at your workplace, you may be asked to give a presentation as part of an internal meeting, or "Town Hall." The prospect might strike fear into your heart, but it's a unique opportunity to make yourself even more valuable to your organization—to be seen as someone who can not only do the job, but also effectively communicate organizational and team priorities. That's a key leadership quality.

As someone who routinely coaches staff for internal meetings, I can say that succeeding at this hinges less on a person's innate public speaking skills than on the ability to organize thoughts and prepare. So how can you ensure your internal presentation will be memorable for all the right reasons? See the 25 critical recommendations below.

Before the Presentation

1 Arrive early to familiarize yourself with the room and its technology, including the position of the lectern, the viewing screen, the microphone set-up and the clicker.

2 Know your biggest point—the one key message you most want your audience to receive and retain. The best points convey a "why" or a "how" as opposed to a "what." All of your examples, data points and slides should support your point in some way, and you should explain those connections.

3 Memorize your starting and concluding sentences so you can start with a strong impression and end with an equally strong conclusion or call to action. (Don't memorize anything else).

4 When you practice, do it out loud and in real time. Effective practice is about training your mouth and mind to work together to create and convey clear ideas. No camera, mirror or live listener is required.

"Your role is to deliver the information to your audience, not to an index card."

5 Time yourself, but be more concerned about going too long rather than going too short. If you're running long, cut content; don't speed up. The content you cut won't be missed, but speeding through your presentation can have a disastrous impact on audience retention.

6 If you create a word-for-word manuscript, practice as much as possible so you can speak to your audience and not read your words.

7 Also, use a large font, insert frequent paragraph breaks, number your pages and leave plenty of blank space at the

bottom so you're not looking too far down the page and showing the audience the top of your head.

8 If you use notes, they should look like a sparse outline using as few words as possible. Think of your notes like a rock band's set list, keeping you aware of your progress and reminding you of important details like names, dates or statistics you might otherwise forget. If you're using PowerPoint, you probably don't need notes at all. Just practice speaking from the slides.

During the Presentation

9 Remember: Your audience needs twice as long to digest what you say as you need to say it, so slow down and use pauses frequently.

10 Avoid making excess noises at the lectern, such as pounding it or shuffling papers. The microphone may pick up those noises.

11 If you use notes, don't speak while looking at them. Your role is to deliver the information to your audience, not to an index card. Look at your notes, remind yourself of the next thing you want to say, then look up and say it.

12 Be louder than normal, even if you're presenting remotely over

“Know your biggest point—the one key message you most want your audience to receive and retain.”

a conferencing system. In addition to making you more audible, volume conveys confidence and authority, and keeps you from speaking too quickly.

13 Look at the audience as much as possible. The more eye contact you make with them, the stronger your connection will be. If looking at strangers makes you nervous, focus on a friendly face.

14 Don't be afraid to pause. If you get lost, stumble or are unsure of your next point, simply pause for a moment to reset yourself and move on. Apologizing or acknowledging a stumble only draws more attention to the moment, so it's best to make no mention of it.

15 Share stories, personal experiences and case studies. We all know the power of storytelling, but be explicit about how those stories illustrate or prove your point. A story without a point is just a story.

16 As you do with stories, express the relevance of each presentation slide by saying, “This is critical because ...” or “What this means for us is ...”

17 If you show a video during your presentation, pause for a beat or two after it ends to allow the audience to digest what they've just seen.



18 Don't suffer from “Last Slide Syndrome”—ending your presentation with the last piece of information on your final slide or saying some version of “Well, that's all I've got.” End by restating your key point and adding a call to action, if you have one.

19 Make sure to thank everyone in the organization who played an important role in the success of your project.

20 If you transition to another presenter, know the person's name and how your presentation thematically connects to the next one. Also, don't rush into your transition statement. Your audience needs a moment to digest your concluding statement, so pause before introducing the next presenter or initiating a Q&A.

For Remote Presenters

21 When you're talking, look into the camera as much as possible rather than at your notes or screen. Yes, it's tempting to look at the room or at other remote participants on your monitor, but if you do, you're not looking directly at your audience—you're missing an important opportunity to connect.

22 To help keep your eyes on the camera, place your notes as close to the lens as possible so you aren't looking too far away when you refer to them.

23 Adjust the frame to fill most of the screen with your full face—not your surroundings. No one needs to know the color of your couch. Also avoid having bright sunlight behind you, which will make you appear too dark.

24 Test your technology—audio and video—well in advance to ensure your meeting software and device settings are as ready as you are. In particular, be keenly aware of how to mute and unmute yourself.

25 Remember: You're always “live”—even when not speaking—so keep your eyes on the camera or screen and stay focused on the discussion. **T**

Joel Schwartzberg, CC, CL, is senior director of strategic and executive communications for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and vice president education for ASPCA Toastmasters in New York City. His book, *Get to the Point! Sharpen Your Message and Make Your Words Matter*, was re-leased in October 2017.

How Do You Define Leadership?

In Toastmasters, you learn to lead. You do it by giving feedback to speakers, serving as a club officer or mentoring other members. With the leadership skills you gain, you empower others to accomplish their personal goals.

Leaders run businesses and inspire employees. They coach teams and guide people in need. They step into leadership roles, like planning Toastmasters speech contests or leading club meetings. The world needs such people. As populations grow and cultures become more diverse, strong, competent leaders are more vital than ever.

How do you define leadership? Here is how others define it.

“It’s hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse.”

—ADLAI E. STEVENSON II

“The well-balanced, intelligent speaker is the natural leader in any group of which he is a part.”

—RALPH C. SMEDLEY

“There are leaders and there are those who lead. Leaders hold a position of power or influence. Those who lead inspire us.”

—SIMON SINEK

“A good leader takes a little more than his share of the blame, a little less than his share of the credit.”

—ARNOLD H. GLASOW

“The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly.”

—JIM ROHN

“Average leaders raise the bar on themselves; good leaders raise the bar for others; great leaders inspire others to raise their own bar.”

—ORRIN WOODWARD

“Leadership is the art of giving people a platform for spreading ideas that work.”

—SETH GODIN

“Before you are a leader, success is all about growing yourself. When you become a leader, success is all about growing others.”

—JACK WELCH

“Outstanding leaders go out of their way to boost the self-esteem of their personnel. If people believe in themselves, it’s amazing what they can accomplish.”

—SAM WALTON

“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.”

—NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF

“There are three essentials to leadership: humility, clarity and courage.”

—FUCHAN YUAN

In the Beginning

How to create a winning first impression.

BY WILL NEUMAN, ACG

In psychology class, I learned that when someone first meets you they form an impression of you in the initial *12 seconds*. And once they have formed that impression, *they typically never change their opinion*, even after knowing you for a while.

When delivering a speech, the timer starts the clock with your first word. But if you think the audience's first impression begins with your opening words, you're missing something important. You actually create a first impression *before* you open your mouth to speak.

Let's consider your next speech. After you determine the *theme* of your speech, you formulate its beginning to give it "punch." If you come up with just the right combination of words, coupled with meaningful physical gestures and the perfect amount of vocal variety, there's a good chance you will set the tone for something close to a contest-winning performance. However, you also have several seconds from when someone introduces you to the time you begin speaking. These are "free seconds." How can you use them to your advantage?

Don't Speak Prematurely. You've probably seen speakers start talking as soon as the Toastmaster withdraws from the handshake. This does nothing to enhance your image; it may even give the impression you are trying to rush things.

Look at Your Audience. Some speakers look down at the floor for a second or two before beginning their speech. The first time I saw someone do this, I thought he might have dropped something and I spent the first part of his speech trying to see what it was! I have also seen a speaker look up before beginning to speak. It makes me wonder if he is beseeching the heavens for divine guidance. Both are distracting, and the speaker misses an important opportunity to *connect with the audience*. Use this time to engage your listeners.

Now let's break down the whole process step by step.

1 The Approach. In two of my clubs, we get up from our seats as soon as the introduction ends. In my third club, Chats Toastmasters in Scottsdale, Arizona, we enter the stage area from an adjoining room. In each case, we have a choice: We can rise from our chair unpretentiously or spring up energetically and enthusiastically. We can enter the room casually or put a little "hustle" in our stride as we make our appearance.

"Be sure to smile warmly to indicate you couldn't be happier to present your speech."

We also have the choice to walk calmly or put a lively bounce into our step. The latter says, *I can't wait to get up there and give you the very best of what I've got!*

2 The Greeting. This is when you shake hands with the Toastmaster right before she turns the podium over to you. Extend your hand first by reaching out a few paces before you connect with the Toastmaster. This creates an impression that you are eager, prepared and in control of the moment, and of everything that will happen from this point forward. Be sure to smile warmly to indicate you couldn't be happier to present your speech.

3 The Lectern. This is the barrier between you and your audience. It may seem like a safe harbor to hide behind when you are nervous and unsure of yourself. You can place your notes there and refer to them, if necessary. You can hang onto it for support and keep your hands from trembling and your knees from



PHOTO BY TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL

quivering. This is OK when it's your first or second speech, but make it a goal to get rid of the notes, and the lectern—push it aside in a deliberate and determined manner that says, *I don't need this. I am in control up here. I can stand alone and face all of you with confidence and pride.*

4 The Final Five Seconds. These few seconds are essential. How you use them may create the impression that gets you one more vote to earn you the Best Speaker award. What should you do in these important five seconds?

Keep smiling—not just any smile, but one that exudes confidence. A smile tells your viewers you are about to deliver something remarkable—you are a professional who is well prepared to share your story with them. How do you do this? By practicing. Look in the mirror and determine what look best accomplishes this purpose. Actors can move their audience with their facial expressions without speaking a word, and so can you. Also, make eye contact. Connect with as many people in the room as possible. Get their attention.

Now, go ahead and speak, and let the pearls of wisdom come tumbling out. **T**

Will Neuman, ACG, ALB, is sergeant at arms of *Talk of the Town* club in Batavia, Illinois, and a member of *Chats Toastmasters* club in Scottsdale, Arizona, and *Fountain Hills* club in Fountain Hills, Arizona.



Slippery Slope

To all those who learn English as a second language, you have my great admiration and my sincere sympathies.

BY JOHN CADLEY

I would like to begin by applauding all of you who have learned English as a second language. I struggle with it as a *first* language, and if it were not my mother tongue I can assure you I would not have learned it at all. It's impossible! It's absurd! It makes no sense! Everybody laughs when you say, "In America we park the car in the driveway and drive the car on the parkway." Ha, ha, ha. Really? What's so funny? It's embarrassing, and yet for some reason English has become the *lingua franca* of modern times.

My heartfelt apologies to the rest of the world.

Take a simple English word like "slip." One syllable, four letters, and more meanings than an octopus has tentacles. For example: "I slipped coming down the street before I slipped into the bar for a drink." For a non-English speaker it would be perfectly reasonable to interpret that as: "I slipped on the street and kept slipping right into the bar." But, as we natives know, it doesn't mean that at all. The former usage is a literal description of a physical event, and the latter is a figurative expression for making an unobtrusive entrance. (Obviously, sliding into a tavern on your backside would be anything but unobtrusive.) So we have two separate meanings for the same word. So far. We're not finished yet.

As our friend (let's call him Bob) "slips" into the bar he meets a colleague and has a conversation:

"How you doing, Fred?"

"I'm supposed to meet Joe and I'm a half-hour late. He's not here."

"You're always right on time. You must be slipping."

Now imagine a fellow from, say, Germany (we'll call him Hans) overhearing this and reaching out to grab Fred's elbow.

"We have two separate meanings for the same word. So far. We're not finished yet."

"Can I help you?" asks Fred.

"Your friend said you were slipping," replies Hans. "I was trying to help."

"Thank you, but that's just an expression. I'm fine."

Bob and Fred continue talking.

Fred: "I don't blame Joe for not showing. He probably knows I'm going to give him a pink slip."

Hans: "I gave my wife a pink slip. She loved it."

Fred: "No, that's just an expression."

Bob: "Well Fred, if Joe knows you're giving him a pink slip he's probably giving you the slip."

Hans: "So your friend is giving you a slip, too?"

Fred: "No, that's a different expression."

Hans: "I'm sorry, I don't understand."

Fred: "I know it's confusing. I have to fire a co-worker and I think he's avoiding me."

Hans: "By disguising himself in a lady's undergarment?"

Bob: "No, no. That's a *real* slip. A slip you wear."

Hans: "You wear a slip?"

Bob: "No! Women wear them. But it's not the same as a pink slip. I mean, there *are* pink slips for women..."

Hans: "So this is just when a woman gets fired?"

Fred: "No! There's no pink slip. There isn't a slip at all."

Hans: "Yet you call it a pink slip? Yes?"

Fred: "It's a euphemism."

Hans: "Gesundheit."

Fred: "I didn't sneeze but thank you. A euphemism is a nice way of saying something that's not nice. When a person gets fired in America they get called into the human resources office while uniformed security personnel throw their belongings into a box, confiscate their hard drive, and escort them from the building like a criminal in full view of their co-workers."

Hans: "And this is a pink slip? I don't think I will tell my wife. She'll think I'm divorcing her."

Fred: "I don't like firing people but Joe's performance was slipshod. By that I mean his numbers were slipping. I have a lot of apathy for him. I'm sorry, I meant empathy. It was a slip of the tongue. I certainly hope it wasn't a Freudian slip."

Hans: "Bartender, may I please have another glass of beer?" **T**

John Cadley, a former advertising copywriter, is a freelance writer and musician living in Fayetteville, New York. Learn more at www.cadleys.com.

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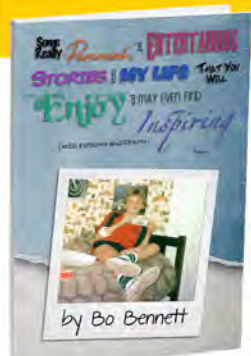
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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM



You might know Bo as the creator of FreeToastHost, the host of the Toastmasters Podcast, or the Founder of eBookIt.com. Or perhaps you never heard of the guy. Either way, you will enjoy his latest book, *Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring*.

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes are part of a normal childhood such as sibling rivalry, eccentric parents, doing stupid things, and frequently preventing one's parents from literally murdering each other.

Although some of the subject matter is not something one would generally laugh at, you have my permission to laugh. Social rules don't apply here; my rules do. It works for me, and who knows, after reading the stories from my past, you might be inspired to see your own screwed up past in a more humorous light.

Some Really Personal, Yet Entertaining Stories From My Life That You Will Enjoy and May Even Find Inspiring by Bo Bennett is available in ebook, paperback, and audio, at 

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