

THE MAGAZINE FOR COMMUNICATORS & LEADERS | JUNE 2019

TOASTMASTER®



THE
MAGIC POWER
OF **HUMOR**

**When Networking
Is Not Working**

**Mortifying
Moments Onstage**
Members share their most
embarrassing stories

Connecting at Home and Around the World



I wrote this column while sitting in an airport waiting for my flight home to Texas. Glad to be returning home after an invigorating trip to World Headquarters in Colorado, I realized that, because of Toastmasters, I feel at home in 143 countries around the world. I am grateful that you, like so many members in countless countries, have welcomed me to your club meetings, districts, regions and—especially—into your hearts.

As we end the 2018–2019 program year at the end of this month, I want to express my gratitude for the priceless gift of diverse, global friendships—a benefit I never expected. I now see this as one of the most valuable assets we offer, the “hidden” gold of our organization. I hope all members can forge similar connections and cherish and nurture them as I do.

From the start of my executive leadership journey in 2015 at District 5 in California to my district visits around the United States and then to France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, South Korea, China, Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Taiwan, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka and Dubai, we have shared countless golden moments together.

During this journey, I have asked myself how we have progressed as an organization since I joined Toastmasters in 1990. How are we stronger? How are we weaker? The most significant positive change in our organization is the phenomenal global expansion.

For the first time in organizational history, most members are now in countries outside North America (51.2 percent). Region 13, for example, in India and Southeast Asia, now comprises 12 percent of global membership, while Region 14 in China, South Korea, Japan and the Philippines makes up more than 8 percent of our members. *We truly are a global organization!*

To continue this growth we all must commit to maintaining club quality: We need to provide a consistent, fun and quality club experience for every member and guest. We need to support each member in achieving their personal and professional goals through skills gained in Toastmasters.

Consider whether your club is stronger as you near the end of this program year than it was on July 1, 2018. A stronger club means a stronger district and a stronger organization.

May and June are our “beat the clock” membership-building months. I like to think of it as the “Be One, Bring One” membership-building effort. How many guests have visited your club this year? Of those, how many joined? It’s important for clubs to follow up on visitor requests and new club leads, and to personally share the educational wealth of the organization with others. Invite your coworkers, friends and relatives to experience the gold of Toastmasters!

Lark Doley, DTM

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We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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An open platform for your tips, tactics, comments and encouragement.

A Speaking Transformation

I have stuttered all my life and it's been incredibly difficult to deal with. Everything collapsed five years ago when I had an embarrassing breakdown during a work presentation, which prompted me to join Toastmasters. There, I crafted my speaking skills, and as I gained confidence in my ability, I was accepted as a Speaker Coach for TEDx Perth, Australia, and delivered a TEDx Talk in December 2018.

Today, I am a public speaking mentor and coach, and I run my own public speaking practice. I have been offered several speaking engagements; I run workshops and host a series of events where people practice their public speaking and share stories. I will forever be grateful to my Toastmasters club, Young Guns, for all their unwavering support in helping me achieve what I have so far. None of my success would be possible without the help and guidance of fellow Toastmasters, and I owe so much to the organization.

Shil Shanghavi
Young Guns
Perth, Australia

Inspiring Efforts

I read the article "The Paths Less Traveled" [February 2019] by Dave Zielinski and *Toastmaster* staff and felt enormously inspired. I recently served as the moderator for a panel interview session at a club open house. One of the questions I asked the panel was how their Toastmasters

"By constantly broadening the scope of where we speak, listen and interact, we can realize our full potential."

— ANNA ZHAO, NYC POWER SPEAKERS,
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

experience helped them reimagine and re-create themselves. Lesley Stephenson's experience (highlighted in the article) is a great case in point for this question. Stephenson joined Toastmasters to enhance her skills as a professional speaker and corporate communications trainer. She amplified the benefits of Toastmasters to support humanity. In the meantime, she added founder, entrepreneur and humanitarian to her résumé.

The core of the Toastmasters club mission statement is to "provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership

skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth." By constantly broadening the scope of where we speak, listen and interact, we can maximize the transformative power of Toastmasters to realize our full potential.

Anna Zhao
NYC Power Speakers
New York, New York, U.S.

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

Write it in 200 words or fewer. 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 online editions.



Members of Les Communicateurs Éloquents de Lanaudière

Distinguished Dedication

Les Communicateurs Éloquents de Lanaudière Toastmasters club celebrates its 600th meeting and the accomplishment of earning President's Distinguished status in 2017–2018—the 11th time it has achieved that honor. The club members are pleased to be on track to earn President's Distinguished status for 2018–2019 as well.

Michel Payment, DTM
Les Communicateurs Éloquents de Lanaudière
Repentigny, Québec, Canada

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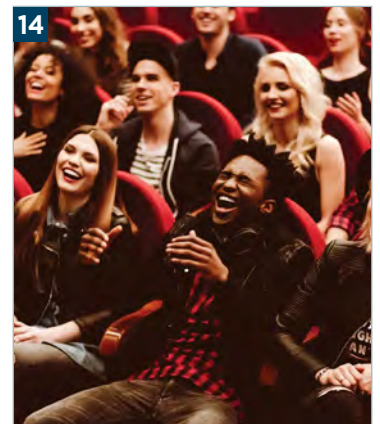
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Learn three strategies to help you connect with your audience and spark laughter.

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About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization teaching public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Membership exceeds 357,000 in more than 16,600 clubs in 143 countries.

Find out more at www.toastmasters.org.



Improve public speaking skills



Build leadership skills



Maximize your potential

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FIND MORE ONLINE THIS MONTH: Log in with your member credentials to view the June issue.



No Passport Needed

Take a virtual trip around the world by viewing photos in the Traveling *Toastmaster* online gallery. See the sights from Hungary to Hawaii—no packing or passport necessary!

Connect in Character



Listen for additional tips from the Toastmasters Toolbox author Bill Brown on how to use expressive dialogue to liven up speeches and bring character voices to life.

WEB RESOURCE

Options for Online

Are you enjoying *Toastmaster* magazine online? Be the first to know when the digital edition is available by subscribing to a monthly email. If you like what you see online, why not go paperless? You can also take this opportunity to opt out of the print edition, or multiple editions if you're a dual member.

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Relationship Rejuvenation

Watch a video to discover how the Strategic Relationships path helps members develop stronger connections and better leadership skills. Share with prospective members, colleagues and friends to demonstrate the value of the Pathways learning experience.



This icon at the top of a page means an online extra is included with the article at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine.

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▶ CLUB PROFILE



Peace Corps Volunteers Bond Over Travel Experiences

Daniel Grundtner, DTM, received one of his first evaluations 16 years before he helped found the Minnesota Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Toastmasters club, now in Roseville, near St. Paul, Minnesota.

In 1985, Grundtner, armed with a fresh college degree in forestry, signed on as a volunteer in the Peace Corps, the international organization launched by the United States in 1961 to foster cultural exchange and assistance to communities all over the world. He joined Jamaica's land conservation department, surveying watersheds and writing detailed reports.

Remembering his boss as a "smart, self-taught Jamaican ecologist," Grundtner benefited from his boss's habit of "showering" him with praise while taking a red pencil to almost every sentence in the report. "He kept saying, 'This is so good,' as he rewrote the whole thing," Grundtner laughs.

Grundtner still appreciates evaluations. It's one of his favorite activities of the club, which was chartered in 2001 with a base membership of returned Peace Corps volunteers. Fittingly, Grundtner notes, Toastmasters and the Peace Corps share similar core values: integrity, service, respect and excellence—on an international scale.

Returned volunteers proved to be exemplary Toastmasters prospects because many returned to the United States eager to merge their experiences with continuing efforts to serve, lead, learn and mentor. Intrigued by the chance to further develop these skills, they were a "good fit" with Toastmasters, Grundtner says.

Through the years, 34 Peace Corps volunteers, representing service in 33 different countries, have joined the club, notes Ruth Alliband, DTM, a founding member and former community development volunteer in India. The club's eclectic, hospitable culture has also drawn other service-minded Minnesotans and immigrants from more than 30 countries.

Mentoring is a club priority and provides the "special glue that binds us," Alliband notes. "New members are assigned a mentor, and even experienced Toastmasters can request one," she explains. The resulting trusting relationships prepare new members to take on challenging meeting roles, volunteer for officer roles, or chair events such as an open house, contest or party.

The club's mentoring stories are compelling. One member, an engineer who fled the war in Bosnia, delved into skills-building through Toastmasters, which helped her earn a top engineering management job with the state. "She said she would never have had the courage to seize the opportunities that presented themselves to her, had it not been for the confidence she gained as a member of our club," Alliband explains.



Daniel Grundtner and Ruth Alliband

A former member, who joined the club as a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Minnesota, loved the club's family feel so much that when she returned home to Sao Paulo, Brazil, she organized the Campinas #1 English Toastmasters club. "She grew this club with ferocious energy, contacting more than 200 referrals to charter within nine months," Alliband says. The Minnesota club participated in the charter party via Skype and the two groups have since held some joint distance meetings, incorporating speakers and meeting roles from both clubs.

As Toastmaster clubs around the world celebrate the "Year of the *Wow!*" Grundtner cites two of his club's strengths: evaluations and a close-knit membership.

The club is diligent in giving sensitive, constructive and frank feedback. Grundtner credits members' shared experiences in traveling the world with their understanding of how easy it is to commit an unintended cultural gaffe. These experiences taught them how forgiving people can be about honest mistakes; it's a mindset the club easily adopted.

"That lesson was not lost on us in evaluations," he adds. "I feel that's why ours are so supportive and constructive. We understand that feedback is best received in a warm, understanding environment." Grundtner adds that his club also reaches the "wow status" with its close-knit culture and frequent after-meeting socialization. He likens the practice to employees talking around the water cooler, a practice some business experts say may be more productive than conventional meetings.

"That's the time when problems are discussed and solutions hashed out with astonishing results," Grundtner notes. "That's been happening since inception with our club. We don't hear from one person. We can discuss what each of us thought and brainstorm how to make it better."

To learn more, visit www.mnrpcv.toastmastersclubs.org or the club's Facebook page.

Stephanie Darling is associate editor of the *Toastmaster* magazine.

▶ MEET MY MENTOR



A London Legend: Alan Thomas

At 91, Alan Thomas is a legendary figure to many Toastmasters in London. He dedicated years of service to clubs in the area and mentored countless members, including Robert Moores, a 37-year-old software engineering program manager. The pair first met at Trojan Speakers Club in Ealing, a district of London. Alan assisted Robert with three *Competent Communication* speeches, and Robert quickly discovered his mentor has a knack for preparation and providing direct feedback—characteristics that truly benefited Robert as he worked through the manual. During his career, Alan worked as a lecturer and writer, and served as associate professor in thesaurus construction, a topic of expertise he uses with his mentees in terms of vocabulary and editing speeches. “You have to see his scripts to believe it,” Robert says of Alan’s talent. “He is to Toastmasters what Ben Hogan was to golf: the godfather.”

What is the best piece of advice Alan ever gave you?

Prepare. We know it’s important and have our own interpretation of what preparation means, but Alan showed me how to successfully prepare for a speech. Preparing a speech takes time, many iterations, practice, consideration for dramatic and impactful moments, structure and, ideally, finding someone to listen to it before you deliver to an audience.

What characteristics does Alan possess that you hope to emulate?

He believes in himself and possesses great confidence. Alan has tried some pretty bold speaking techniques onstage but never has appeared embarrassed or regretful of trying them. He believes in what he says and wants the audience to absorb his message—the thought that he might look silly doesn’t seem to bother him at all.



Robert Moores and Alan Thomas

How would you describe Alan?

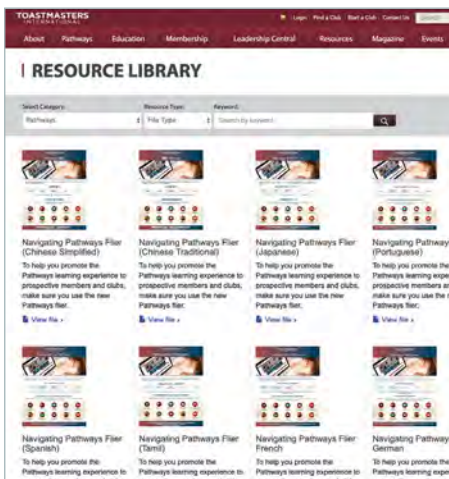
Alan is a great speaker, coach and person. He is driven, kind, passionate and brutally honest, but always has the best intentions and a focus on making me better. It felt like his success was always dependent on mine and that we were in this together. My Toastmasters journey is still in its early stages but, without Alan’s help, I’d be a lot further behind than I am now.

Laura Mishkind is editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.

Want to nominate an exceptional mentor? Nominate your mentor by emailing your story and a photo (1MB or larger) to MentorMoment@toastmasters.org.

LOOKING FOR A MENTOR IN YOUR CLUB?

Ask your vice president education who is available to mentor you. To start a mentoring program in your club, order the Club Mentor Program Kit (Item 1163) at www.toastmasters.org/Shop.



▶ NEWS FROM TI

Download Marketing Materials

Marketing materials are available as free digital downloads in the Resource Library on the Toastmasters website. The full-color brochures *Find Your Voice* and *Your Path to Leadership*, and the flier *Navigating Pathways*, are excellent materials to promote the benefits of Toastmasters to club guests and prospective members. They are offered in nine languages besides English: Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Traditional Chinese and Tamil. (Eventually they will be available in Korean as well.)

The Resource Library includes many other free translated items you can search for by selecting a specific language, or Translations, in the category box at the top of the webpage. Most marketing materials are available in both A4 and letter size. To access the Resource Library, go to www.toastmasters.org/Resource-Library.

▶ **SNAPSHOT** 



Members of Khimji Toastmasters in Muscat, Oman, participate in the Muscat Marathon. More than half of the club members combined the love of running with their love for Toastmasters and ran the race together.

▶ **PATHWAYS TRANSLATIONS**

Korean Materials Coming Soon

About 80 million people around the world speak Korean. Toastmasters members will soon have access to Pathways materials in that language.

All materials in the Pathways learning experience are currently available in Arabic, French, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese. Korean and Tamil—an official language in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia and Mauritius—will now be added to the mix. Materials in those two languages will be rolled out two paths at a time. The first two, Presentation Mastery and Leadership Development, will be available around September this year. The remaining paths in Tamil and Korean will become available every few months, with all paths expected to be completed by late 2020.

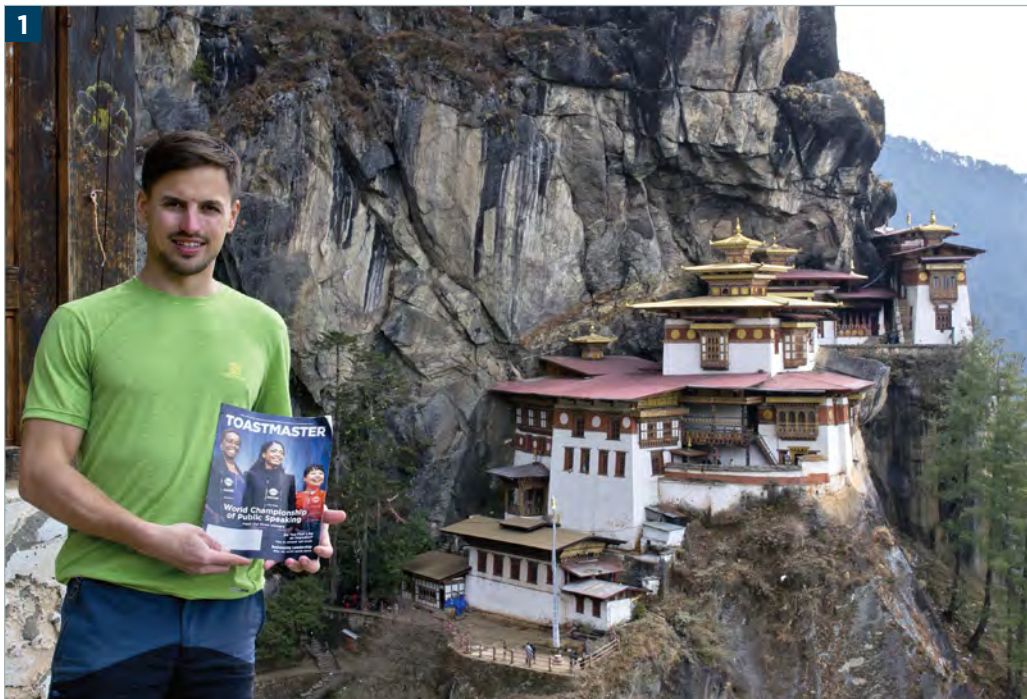
The availability of Pathways materials in so many members' native languages is one of the new education program's highlights. Toastmasters around the world volunteer their efforts to serve on translation review teams, who ensure that all Pathways translations are accurate and authentic to the local culture. The teams review the professional translations, help develop



Pathways glossaries and ensure the translated content reflects the Toastmasters experience.


Thank you to members of the **Korean Translation Review Team**: Chief reviewer Andy MinSeok Kim, lead reviewers Jaekun Cho, Sonia SoonJa Kim and Yeonghee Lily Lee, and reviewers Seungyoung Oh, Taeryeon Jung, Kyusun Choi, Elliot Chung, Jaejoong Kim, William Wonhyuk Chung, Hyewon Yun and Jeong-mee Robin Park.


Visit www.toastmasters.org/Translations to learn more about the team members, as well as other translation review teams. For more information, please email the Translations Team at World Headquarters at translations@toastmasters.org.



- 1 | **JAKUB KUNAT** of Pardubice, Czech Republic, climbs to the Tiger's Nest Monastery, a Buddhist sacred site in Bhutan.
- 2 | **CLELIA AYALA-WHITE, DTM,** and **PAUL WHITE, DTM,** of Washington D.C., celebrate their first wedding anniversary in Barcelona, Spain, after meeting through Toastmasters.
- 3 | **NOEL ANN CRAWFORD, DTM,** of Mountainside, New Jersey, vacations in Sint Maarten, an island in the Caribbean Sea.
- 4 | **AGOSTINHO CAJETAN BARRETTO** of Springfield Gardens, New York, takes his Toastmaster underwater while scuba diving in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. His hand sign is a universal scuba diving code informing those in the water that he is safe.



 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 print or online. Send images 1MB or larger to photos@toastmasters.org. Bon voyage!

Overcoming a Speech Impediment

Nigerian researcher beats odds to compete in 2018 International Speech Contest semifinals.

BY OMEI BONGOS-IKWUE

The word I couldn't seem to utter stood suspended in mid-air, halted between quivering lips. With dismay, I watched my director at work lumber toward me. My jaw dropped even lower. It was a disconcerting sight. He was a man who wore his emotions on his sleeve. When he was happy, he was ecstatic. When he was angry, he was livid. On this morning, he was infuriated. His irritation was clear as he whispered, "Omei, talk to *us!* You are talking to your slides and nobody can understand you. Just try, OK?"

The audience tried to smile but their discomfort was evident. The man with the red tie loosened and tightened its knot. The older woman with the designer eye-glasses gave me an encouraging smile.

I was presenting a training session on the effects of malaria during pregnancy. The PowerPoint was flawless and my blue dress matched its color scheme. But the session turned into an awkward reading of slides—a lukewarm affair that stalled after I stuttered on the word "cycle."

"I think I can shed some light on this." The low voice in the back of the room came from my manager, an eminently patient man. If he had not taken over, the poor audience might have never gotten past the life "c-c-c-cycle" of the malaria parasite.

My job as a behavior change officer for the Society for Family Health Nigeria plagued me with anxiety, because I was often required to train groups of community health workers on topics related to the treatment and prevention of malaria. During these presentations, it wasn't a question of *if* I would stammer but more of *when* and *how*. Would the audience notice? What word would be my Achilles' heel? Would a synonym spring to mind in time to disguise it?

In search of a solution, I joined Toastmasters in January 2013. The first few



Omei Bongos-Ikwue

months, I continually plotted my escape; self-inflicted public speaking was *not* my cup of tea! My club at the time—the Aso Rock Stars Toastmasters in Abuja, Nigeria—was lavish with its encouragement, but I still detested speaking in public. I took on few roles, content to watch from my seat.

Recently, Toastmasters International invited members to find their "why," calling on us to share our reasons for joining this organization. This inspired me to ask myself, *Why have I stayed?*

I should first explain my Toastmasters turning point. During one club meeting, Teresa Nwachukwua, a petite physician with spellbinding storytelling skills, shared these words from Toastmasters' speaking champion Darren LaCroix: "A speaker never turns down stage time." I realized that every time I rejected a speaking opportunity, I lost an opportunity to improve my speaking and inspire others.

When I think back to that agonizing training session I presented all those years ago, I shudder. If I am in a similar situation again, I know I'll handle it better,

thanks to my time in Toastmasters. So why, then, have I stayed? I like to think it's because of three things, which sum up the value of Toastmasters: the possibilities, process and people.

The Possibilities: From the traditional education program to the Pathways learning experience, the educational possibilities in Toastmasters are innumerable. Meetings are brilliantly designed to teach us to listen and learn from others. Whether I've been an observer, a role player or a speaker, every club meeting has left me informed and in high spirits.

The Process: In August 2018, after a series of wins from club level to district level, I competed in the semifinals of the International Speech Contest in Chicago. I prepared for more than six months. But in retrospect, this isn't what prepared me for the big stage. The process of showing up to each meeting and facing the audience in any capacity—timer, Table Topicsmaster, speaker or simply receiving feedback—fortified me for the semifinals.

The People: I have forged unlikely friendships with unlikely people. The best thing about my friends is their commitment to excellence. Toastmasters has given me the courage to commit to both an organization and the people who serve it. Therefore, I stay.

Once in a while, the words still get stuck, but I now have tools to better overcome those unruly syllables. I stay because the journey is far from over: Possibilities remain to be explored, stories remain to be told and friendships remain to be forged. **T**

OMEI BONGOS-IKWUE is now a member of Grand City Toastmasters club in Abuja, Nigeria, and serves District 94 as area director. She was a semifinalist in the 2018 International Speech Contest and works as a freelance editor and qualitative researcher.

Storytelling in the Age of Video

A social media influencer in India credits use of authentic stories with strong audience engagement.

BY MARY NESFIELD

With so many people and organizations churning out content—posting, reposting, tagging, hash-tagging and live-streaming—it’s worth noting when one person discovers a formula that consistently captures and maintains the interest of social media users. Why does one post go “viral” while another on the same topic flops?

Annesha Dutta, DTM, a corporate trainer and consultant from Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, is one of the clever content creators who seems to know the answer to that question. Her expertise in storytelling connects her to her audiences. “It’s all about [having] an authentic, engaging story,” she says. Dutta has created social media viral videos and articles on topics like “Why Leaders Must Be Readers,” which garnered more than 25,000 interactions on LinkedIn. In fact, her online popularity and content on communication, storytelling and professional growth led Dutta to be named one of LinkedIn’s “Top 15 Video Creators to Watch” in 2017 and a “LinkedIn Influencer” for India in 2017 and 2018.

Dutta joined Salt Lake Toastmasters club in Kolkata, India, in 2015 and is now a member of the BTM Toastmasters Club in Bengaluru, India. In addition to curating her social media sites, she works as a business consultant for colleges and corporations. She says her work on an advanced Toastmasters project, “Communicating on Video” (from the Advanced Communication Series), triggered the rise of her virtual visibility. Dutta, a former

English and business communication teacher, was encouraged by her Toastmasters colleagues to launch her “Ask Annie” YouTube channel in 2016.

Tell us about the concept behind “Ask Annie.”

It began as a way to help my students, who are undergraduates and MBA students from across India, to learn about communication anywhere, anytime. I also work with mid-career professionals in the 24-to-30 age group looking to transition into their dream jobs.

“I have an ear to the ground about the issues that students and professionals discuss.”

Most of my online advice is built around how to share personal stories with power and confidence. For example, students often approach me about their struggles displaying confidence onstage, so I created a video series on the topic. Interest from my business communication students led to my subsequent videos on job interviewing skills.

How do you decide on relevant topics for your social media content?

I have an ear to the ground about the issues students and professionals

discuss; when traveling, I often hear IT professionals, and even managers, talk about challenges they face: personal productivity, work-life balance, dealing with a difficult boss or teams, fear of speaking up and time management. Podcasts and books also give me ideas about common issues, and I turn those into video topics too.

Subsequently, I created 30 videos on topics like how to make a video résumé, how joining Toastmasters can help your skills, how to answer the question *Tell me something about yourself* during an interview, how to have “positive” body language and how to network if you are an introvert.

Your most popular post to date focuses on the value of reading. Why should leaders be readers?

Leadership is dynamic. True leaders remain updated and stay 10 steps ahead. They have to grasp a multitude of subjects and communicate with purpose, confidence and clarity. Reading helps develop these abilities. Fiction, non-fiction, subject-specific books—what leaders read doesn’t matter as much as the habit of reading and its applications.

Leaders often need to address and motivate their teams—they need a story bank to draw from. Reading helps with





Annesha Dutta

inculcating a diverse range of stories. It helps leaders to reflect on different perspectives in order to see the world through a wider lens and experiment more boldly.

Why do you think that specific post went viral?

As busy as we can be, many people are still focused on self-development, and leading through reading turned out to be an appealing approach. I compiled a list of classic and new thought-leadership books for my followers who shared the list with their friends and coworkers, especially in the United States. Readers added their own book lists, shared their reading habits and debated the value of reading. [See Dutta's post and reading list at bit.ly/TI_LeadAndRead.]

How does it feel to be recognized as an "influencer" for two consecutive years?

It is an incredible honor. I have been making YouTube videos since 2016, but I found my community on LinkedIn. The other influencers are eminent business personalities, politicians, entrepreneurs and artists, and many reached out to me. Suddenly I had a powerful network of mentors. It was almost like Harry Potter suddenly learning to create spells with a wand!

How did you hone your storytelling skills?

I started telling stories as a way of reaching out to my students. When I taught second and third grade during my Teach For India fellowship between 2011 and 2013, I explained difficult concepts using stories. Reading aloud and enacting stories really engaged my students. The more animated I was, the higher the engagement and learning levels became. Comprehension levels increased rapidly, especially when students started telling their own stories.


The same holds true for adults. In my current workshops I teach students, professionals and marketing leaders about the power of storytelling for personal and business purposes—how to craft an amazing message to make others fall in love with what you represent.

How does your online and in-person guidance inspire others?

In Toastmasters, I mentor women specifically for club leadership roles. Seeing them take on the roles of club president,

area director and above is the biggest win for me. And I encourage women to speak at the district level and beyond.

"I want to see girls speak up and share their stories with the world."

I'm proud to be one of many strong Indian women breaking glass ceilings. However, there is still peer pressure and a general mindset that women should put marriage, children and family first—careers happen only when they are balanced with household work. I want to see girls speak up and share their stories with the world. I want to be the voice that highlights the stories of how women are breaking barriers in India, despite the challenges. 

Mary Nesfield is a freelance writer and editor. She lives in Columbia, South Carolina.

9 TIPS TO CREATE SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS WITH VALUE

Interested in making your own shareable video content? Annesha Dutta provides suggestions to get the most mileage from your efforts. Before you begin, you'll need: a noise-canceling lapel mic, a high-quality smartphone camera, a selfie stick and a tripod.

- ▶ Choose a specific topic (e.g., personal finance, eating healthy, sharing your daily journey as a small-business owner).
- ▶ Research what top creators have done on the same topic.
- ▶ Choose the time limit and the medium (Will you live-stream or pre-record a video for Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram or all?).
- ▶ Write a script.
- ▶ Shoot in daylight or in a place where light illuminates your face.
- ▶ Build two- to three-minute videos.
- ▶ Once the shoot is done, edit your videos. (Learn to do this with video editing software or apps, or hire a freelance video editor.)
- ▶ Research optimum view times for different social media platforms and post accordingly.
- ▶ Ask your friends to share and comment.

To watch Annesha Dutta's videos, go to her YouTube channel "Ask Annie."

The Magic Power of Humor

Learn three strategies to help you connect with your audience and spark laughter.

BY NICK JACK PAPPAS

Laughter is magical. For a speaker, it has the power to impart confidence. Nothing feels better than receiving a roar of approval from an audience after delivering your punchline. It can provide a boost of energy and propel you into the heart of your speech.

For a listener, laughter has the power to ease tension. Speeches that tackle serious and important subjects can be difficult to process. Lightening the mood helps the audience relax and pay more attention to your next point.

If you want to spark laughter, these three types of humor can unite you and the audience: (1) **Relatable humor** relies on a reference the audience understands. It allows them to relax and feel like they're listening to a friend; (2) **Self-deprecating humor** is an option if you're willing to make fun of yourself—it shows you are human and contributes to your likeability; Finally, (3) **humor that leaves you vulnerable** can help you bond with an audience, because if you speak from the heart and help the crowd laugh about serious topics, your message will be clearer in their minds.

Using these three humor strategies helps ensure the best chance of connecting with the audience.

Be Relatable

A shared experience bonds the speaker and audience. Listeners feel like you have a hidden insight into their everyday lives, and that's delightful. You may not feel like you have relatable experiences to draw

from, but you do. Audiences love to hear about embarrassing things your children have done, because their children have done the same things. Everyone has a crazy story about a commute to work, so talk freely about belting out songs in traffic jams or being crammed like sardines on a subway train.

“Being vulnerable in your comedy is powerful because it not only spurs the audience to laugh, it allows them to laugh in a sometimes difficult world.”

Boost the impact of humorous, relatable stories by acting out funny conversations you've had. Change your voice to portray other people. Use your body and take up the stage; be bold! The more engaged you are in the stories, the more engaged your audience will be. Comedian Jerry Seinfeld is a master at using observational humor, focusing on the funny aspects of everyday life. Witness his observation about children: “A 2-year-old is kind of like having a blender, but you don't have a top for it.” Parents the world over can relate to that.

If you can make the audience laugh by pointing out common experiences and feelings, they'll want to hear what else you have to say.

Be Self-Deprecating

Comedians have made entire careers out of self-deprecating humor, which is the ability and willingness to make fun of yourself. If you're short, have fun taking time to move down the microphone stand. If you're bald, ask the audience if they're distracted by the glare coming off your head. Being able to laugh at yourself is courageous.

American comedian and actor Rodney Dangerfield was known for his self-deprecating one-liners and his “I don't get no respect” catchphrase. Joan Rivers fired off zingers about her own marriage. Irish/British stand-up comedian Jimmy Carr makes fun of his distinct laugh, and American comedian Jim Gaffigan jokes about his weight and unhealthy eating habits. (He speaks lovingly of bacon, french fries and chocolate cake.) Audiences love speakers who don't take themselves too seriously.

An important disclaimer: Don't make fun of your expertise. If you're giving a presentation about marketing, don't tell a joke about being a bad marketer. Find something universal but more trivial. Example: “Are you someone who stays a little too long at the hotel buffet? I've known some great marketers who can't say no to those waffle machines.”

Be Vulnerable

Here, we're delving into the highest level of humor: revealing things about yourself in a funny way. The biggest mistake I've seen speakers make onstage is trying



“Audiences love to hear about embarrassing things your children have done, because their children have done the same things.”

to seem like Superman. They make fun of the audience, but they’re bulletproof to any comedic barbs. Being vulnerable in your comedy is powerful because it not only spurs the audience to laugh, it allows them to laugh in a sometimes difficult world.

The best way to unite yourself with an audience is sharing your challenges in life. The simple act of being vulnerable will make the audience feel like you trust them. In return, they’ll trust you.

One of the best examples of a comedian showing vulnerability to powerful effect was a 2012 set performed by Tig Notaro, an American stand-up comic, writer and actress. In it, she revealed to the audience that she had cancer. Notaro used her signature dry, deadpan humor to actually talk about the idea of dying, and her audience loved her for it. She used sarcasm to give a voice to the often ambiguous nature of God. “Rest assured, God never gives you more than you can handle,” she said, wryly, “I just picture God going, ‘You know what? I think she can handle a little more.’” What seemed like a taboo subject instantly connected her to the crowd.

We’re all in this together. Give yourself to the audience and they’ll give back to you.

Always Punch Up

Humor, by its very nature, is meant to go after a target. You’re “making fun” and often, you’re making fun of a group of

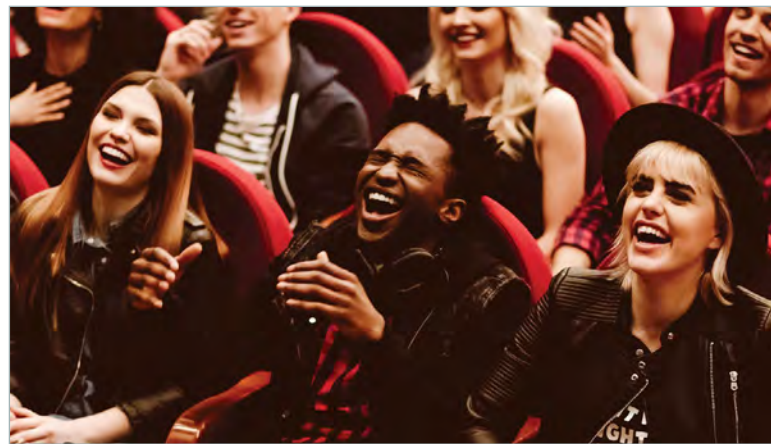
people. Sure, universal humor can take on big topics, like business, religion or politics, but all of those mean targeting people as well.

“Punching up” means using elements of humor when talking about someone who is in a higher level of power than you or your listeners. Does this mean you can’t tackle serious issues like income inequality, racism or mental illness in your speeches? No, but it does mean you should pay close attention to who the target is. For example, it can be funny to skewer the obscenely wealthy, but it’s in bad taste to target a specific individual who is rich. Use hyperbole whenever you can, which is writing a punchline that moves the conversation to an impossible level. Exaggerate. “The hot sauce was so spicy I thought I would need a fire extinguisher for my mouth.”

Find Unexpected Connections

Maybe the most difficult way to engage the audience is finding a way to get them to relate *to each other*. Political and social viewpoints can feel polarizing, making some speakers reticent to draw on controversial subjects when adding humor to their speeches. Yet the best way to unite the audience is with humor that resonates.

Sometimes it feels that we have to worry about offending everyone these



days. For example, cross-cultural humor sometimes doesn’t translate, and gender-based humor can raise the ire of some. The most important thing you can do is find people you can trust and ask their opinion if you’re worried your material might offend. Testing your speech works across all spectrums. Surround yourself with friends of other races, cultures and beliefs. The more diverse your inner circle becomes, the less likely you’ll be to offend a wide audience. Diversity not only informs your comedy, it helps you better understand the world around you.

We all want the same things. We want to feel loved, we want to feel safe and we want to feel understood. If you can use different forms of humor that show your audience that you care for and understand them, you can get laughs from anyone, regardless of their background. **T**

Nick Jack Pappas is a stand-up comedian and comedy writer in New York City. He’s one of the founders of **Comedywire.com**, a startup that helps businesses, brands and individuals find the funny.

MORTIFYING MOMENTS

Describing dental disasters and shifting lecterns, members share their most embarrassing stories.

ON STAGE

BY LAURA MISHKIND

Speaking in front of an audience takes courage, but doing so after tripping on your shoelaces or fumbling with your props takes a whole different kind of bravery. Public speakers experience embarrassing moments regardless of their level of experience. Below, Toastmasters share their most cringe-worthy stories—and how they can laugh at them.

Close Call

The speech topic was “Breaking the Shackles.” The gimmick was that I was handcuffed behind my back. No trick cuffs. I rehearsed many, many times, but when the big moment came, I couldn’t get the cuffs off. Finally, I did it, but I was sweating! Learned my lesson: Always have a backup plan.

Marty Gallagher, DTM

2 ChangeU • Plano, Texas, U.S.

Mocha Mishap

When I served as area director, I visited a club located in a building that had a coffee shop in the lobby. Since I arrived early, I treated myself to a mocha latte. Then I went to the meeting, where I introduced myself to the group, talked about how great their club meeting was and how I looked forward to getting to know them all during the year. I felt incredibly energized afterward and headed back to my car. When I looked in my rearview mirror I was horrified! My mocha latte had sprayed out of the tiny hole in the lid of my cup and covered my nose in mocha freckles! Let my embarrassment be a warning to you: Check a mirror before you step in front of an audience.

April Romero

TGL Toastmasters • Arrington, Tennessee, U.S.

Hair Dye Disaster

Before participating in an International Speech Contest, I decided to dye my graying hair. I tried a new product, and my hair turned bright orange! I still wanted to give my speech, so I tucked my hideous hair under a cap and performed. I showed my hair to a couple of people and hightailed it for home to dye it again.

Susan Friesen

Pinta Club and Santa Maria Toastmasters • Santa Maria, California, U.S.





Breaking Barriers

During a Toastmasters meeting held in a hospital, I leaned on a flexible wall that had a door to the next room. The door was not secure, and I fell through to the next room where a class for expectant parents preparing for childbirth was taking place. Needless to say, we were all very surprised!

Susan Brooks, DTM

Talk of Monmouth and No Limits Toastmasters • Tinton Falls, New Jersey, U.S.

A Bagpiper and a Blooper

On the 25th of January every year, our club hosts a Burns Supper—the traditional birthday celebration of Scotland’s national poet, Robert Burns. The evening begins with a ceremony to welcome in the “haggis,” the traditional supper dish. Two years ago, I was the first woman in the club to recite Burns’s humorous poem, “Address to the Haggis,” a long poem written in old Scots.

The kilted bagpiper entered the room, followed by the haggis-bearer holding the haggis aloft on a silver platter. The music stopped and I began “the address.” Using all my Toastmasters skills, I recited the poem with verve and vigor. Then, during a particularly dramatic part, out of my mouth popped a very rude English word. Twenty-five startled faces looked at me. Then, in a heartbeat, my

Toastmasters training took over. I smoothly glossed over the word and carried on as if nothing had happened.

Moira Beaton, DTM

Waverly Communicators • Edinburgh, Scotland

Jingle Bell Remix

Last December, I signed up to speak at our Toastmasters district holiday party and wrote a short, humorous speech about the lack of snow in our area of Southern California. I made it into a rhyme to sing to the tune of “Jingle Bells.” I practiced for weeks and included comical motions and facial expressions.

When the day came, the director led the audience in group singing for 10 or 15 minutes, so when I was called up to speak, my fellow Toastmasters mistakenly thought I was leading another sing-along. As

I began belting out my humorous lyrics, their voices overpowered mine with the actual words to “Jingle Bells.” All I could do was smile as I continued to sing my short, original song. When I was almost finished, the crowd realized they were singing over my performance and stopped. I ended with a quick bow and raced back to my seat.

Carolyn Bolz

Talk On Main Toastmasters • Riverside, California, U.S.

Bad Timing

Every Toastmaster at some stage in their career experiences a moment of embarrassment. It comes with the territory! Mine came when I was vice president public relations for my club and I was responsible for managing the club Facebook page. I came home late one Wednesday night after our usual club meeting and, before I went to bed, I posted about an event our club was to host. I was feeling tired at the time but didn’t realize the mistake I had made until the comments started to fly in from club members with great hilarity: I had posted that the event was to take place at 2 a.m.! Needless to say, a swift retraction took place.

Gemma Costello

Vox Populi Dublin Toastmasters • Dublin, Ireland



Dentures Debacle

I am 56 years old and have upper dentures due to an accident. I forgot to glue them in one night and the next day I gave a speech in front of 50 people. During my speech, they came out! I caught them and hurriedly put them back in without missing a beat—but what a nightmare.

Bud Rigoulot

Success Speaks • Spanaway, Washington, U.S.

Nerves Get Moving

For my Ice Breaker speech 25 years ago, I was very nervous. I stood behind the lectern and held on tight so the audience could not see my knocking knees. I thought I had done a good job of hiding my nervousness until I saw the green light. I stopped mid-sentence and went to sit down. As I left the lectern, I discovered that the lectern and I had traveled across the front of the room until it was against the wall. The heavy, wooden lectern did not have wheels. It was a difficult lectern to move when done intentionally! I was horrified when I realized what had happened. I knew the audience knew about

Before They Became Champs

Even World Champions of Public Speaking have embarrassing stories of starting out.

They have reached the pinnacle of the public-speaking world. They have won the Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking. But they weren't always champs.

At one point, these masterful presenters were novices, just like every other speaker. Future title winners, too, stumble and slip up, feel overwhelmed, experience embarrassment and make mistakes as they gain experience and skill. Here Toastmasters World Champions share some of their awkward learning experiences. Let this be an inspiration to all of us who stumble and falter, yet keep moving forward.

Stretching Your Skills

In 2009 I was sitting in the back of the room at my very first Toastmasters meeting. I was watching, trying to understand how everything worked. It was time for Table Topics, and the Topicsmaster asked for volunteers from the guests. I didn't sleep well the night before, so I was stretching—but the Topicsmaster thought I was raising my hand and called me onstage.

He asked me the Table Topics question, and I started talking and sweating at the same time. It felt like I talked for hours. Then I stopped and went back to my seat. Later, the timer announced the length of each speaker's Table Topics answer. Apparently, I had spoken for 11 seconds.

It has been 10 years now, and I still hold the record for the shortest Table Topics answer in my club.

Mohammed Abdullah Qahtani

2015 World Champion of Public Speaking
Northpark Toastmasters • Dhahran, Saudi Arabia

An Un-presidential Performance

During my junior year of college, I was elected president of my fraternity. My first big event was Parents Day. As president, I had the responsibility to deliver an opening speech that would honor both the members of my fraternity and their parents. I knew exactly what to say and knew that once everyone heard my message, a Nobel Prize would be considered!

my nervousness. My evaluator was very kind and supportive in the feedback she gave me. If she had not been, I might not have given another speech in Toastmasters.

Mary Swanson, DTM

Minnesota River Valley and Super Speakers • Jordan, Minnesota, U.S.

Man Almost Down!

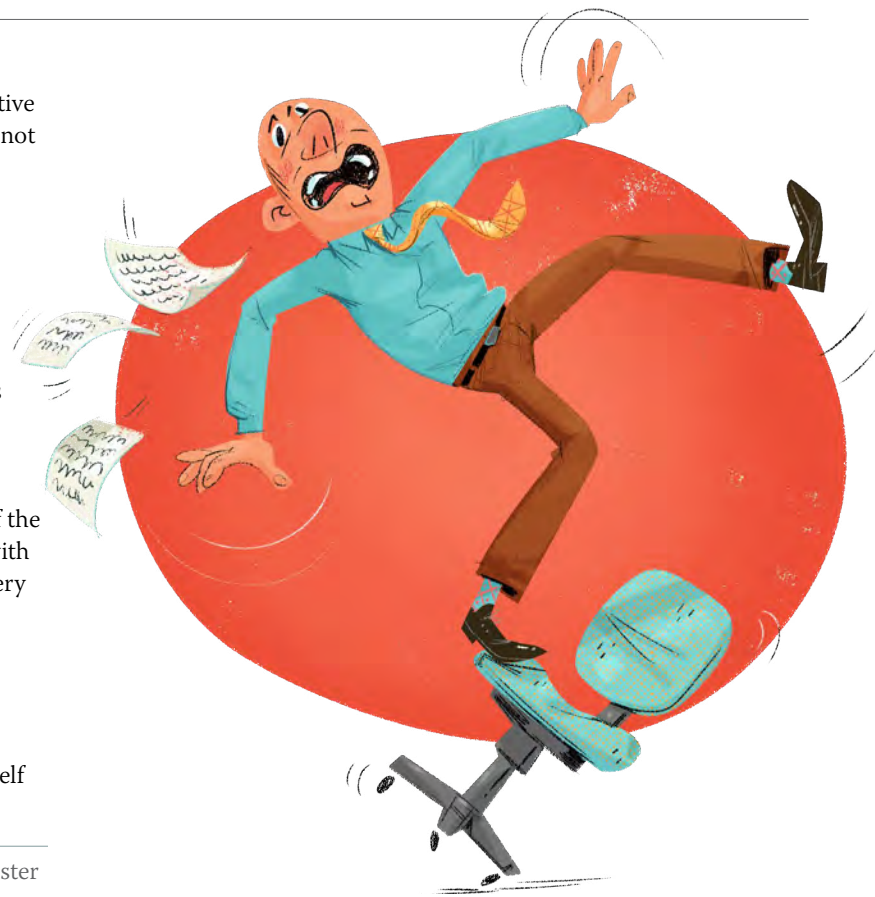
During a retelling of a folktale, I gestured wildly as I described the story of a man who unfairly lost a bet and had to cook a feast for his friends. In the story, the man is spotted standing on a table in his kitchen, stirring a pot of stew hanging above a lit candle. At the last moment, I decided to act it out by standing on a nearby office chair with wheels. I waved my arms like a maniac to not fall off the chair. Luckily, I managed to stay upright and continued with the story. I ended up with a few strained muscles and a very funny evaluation.

Chuck Field, DTM

Gator Club and Talking Gators • Gainesville, Florida, U.S.

All public speakers are bound to stumble, fumble and try things that fail from time to time. Learn to laugh at yourself and the audience will laugh along with you. **T**

Laura Mishkind is editorial coordinator for the *Toastmaster magazine*.



I stood at the head table, dinged my glass with my spoon to silence the room and began to speak. And then my nerves took over: The air left my lungs, my pulse reverberated against my eardrums and my words incoherently tried to escape my lumbering tongue. The head of the Mothers Committee had to stand and rescue me.

It was not only an embarrassing and humiliating moment for me, it was an embarrassing and humiliating moment for each of the fraternity members who had put their trust in me. While I never faced impeachment, I am sure it was discussed privately!

Lance Miller, DTM

2005 World Champion of Public Speaking
Renaissance Speakers • Hollywood, California, U.S.

Wake-up Call

Five years ago, I was invited to speak at a showcase event promoting Toastmasters. By 7:30 in the evening, the big room was filled to the brim with members of the public, most of whom had come after a long day at work. Of the three Toastmasters selected to speak, I was given the coveted last slot because I was considered a rising star.

The first speaker was good. The second speaker enthralled the audience. By the time I took the stage, it was 9:30 p.m. “The

moment we have been waiting for!” said the master of ceremonies in introducing me. He spoke about my accomplishments and built up the audience’s expectations. Then I started my speech—and it wasn’t long before I could see that the audience members were visibly disengaged, sluggish and almost falling asleep.

When I had given the same presentation before, I had received adulation. What was wrong? Then it dawned on me: When I previously gave this presentation it was daytime. I hadn’t adapted the speech to a tired and sleepy audience.

The experience was embarrassing, but it was helpful later in winning the 2017 Toastmasters World Championship of Public Speaking. In 2017, for the first time ever, the championship was held at night. When I took the stage at 9:30 p.m., I could sense that people in the room were tired and sleepy—but I had come prepared for that. The prior embarrassment was a blessing in disguise.

Remember this: Stretching yourself and making mistakes is what grows your speaking competency.

Manoj Vasudevan

2017 World Champion of Public Speaking
Toastmasters Club of Singapore • Singapore



The Path to Strategic Relationships

What members are learning about leadership in this popular Pathways path.

BY SHAELYN BERG

In a world where connection with others is a skill that's intuitive and constantly evolving, it comes as no surprise that meaningful relationships require more thought and tact than ever. Connecting to the people you influence or lead involves care and thoughtful consideration.

Leadership is not done from afar or in a vacuum; individuals in positions of power flourish when they understand those they lead and facilitate relationships that foster better communication. This applies to all leadership roles: in Toastmasters, at work or in one's personal life.

The Strategic Relationships path in the Pathways education program helps members grow and succeed in this area. The path offers insights on how to network, develop a public relations strategy and apply skills practiced in the path to lead in a volunteer role.

Your ability to connect and communicate with others (and to understand these connections take time and personalization) can lead to stronger relationships, better leadership and more successful outcomes.

Adapting Your Style

As with other paths in the Pathways education program, Strategic Relationships helps members develop speechwriting, evaluation and public speaking skills through five levels of increasingly complex projects. In this path, participants gain insight on how to lead and best communicate with others. Kaushik

Balasubramanian, DTM, of Portland, Oregon, embarked on Strategic Relationships to grow in his career. "Life is all about strong connections," he says. "In a career it's important to form allies who can cheer, collaborate and contribute to success."

"I was the one at the networking events talking to the potted plants in the corner or onstage performing."

As a technical lead with the technology company Intel, Balasubramanian was asked to run a work group that included several colleagues. As the group leader, he was responsible for moderating and then distributing communication throughout the company. Early in the path, he completed "Understanding Your Leadership Style," an assignment that helps

participants adapt their leadership styles to a given situation or team.

Balasubramanian says the Pathways project helped him recognize the need to constantly learn, unlearn and relearn his leadership and work preferences to better relate to his colleagues. "I used to have a more rigid expectation from those I work with," he says, highlighting that before completing the project, he often expected coworkers to conform to his expectations. "To improve my chances of collaborative success, I have had to be more accommodating of other work styles while not compromising on quality."

Projects such as "Cross-cultural Understanding" and "Public Relations Strategies" not only help you communicate better with diverse individuals and audiences, but also go beyond surface-level connection.

Balasubramanian took what he learned from projects focused on interpersonal communication to make more meaningful connections with senior technical leaders at his work at Intel. He says sharing enthusiasm for their accomplishments and expressing a desire to learn from them helped him forge new relationships and built trust. "Relating with them on a level that was genuine and not for any ulterior motive made the experience satisfying for me as well as my contacts."

Networking with Others

When James Wantz, DTM, of Beaverton, Oregon, started in Pathways, he first

LEARN MORE

For more information about the Strategic Relationships path, go to www.toastmasters.org/Pathways. The webpage also provides an overview of the Pathways program, with history, videos and answers to frequently asked questions.



“I am now the go-to person in the office to meet with the clients and discuss projects.”

— JAMES WANTZ, DTM



worked in the Presentation Mastery path. But he later realized he had been avoiding a path that would force him to work on the activity he feared most: networking. “I was the one at the networking events talking to the potted plants in the corner or onstage performing,” he says. “I break out in boils when forced to have a conversation in a crowd!”

So he switched to the Strategic Relationships path. As a 3-D computer detailer for a structural steel company, Wantz primarily works alone. “My job is 99 percent behind a computer,” he notes. However, once he began receiving requests to interact with customers, he knew he needed to expand his networking skills.

The “Make Connections Through Networking” project at Level 3 helped Wantz do just that. The assignment requires developing a networking strategy and putting it to use at an actual event. Wantz went to a friend’s company holiday party to network with guests. It put him far out of his comfort zone. “The events

when I don’t have something to do—or go completely alone—are the worst,” Wantz says. “The self-critical voices in my head make me a very unpleasant individual to be around.”

However, planning for and pushing himself into an uncomfortable situation has made subsequent events more palatable. “Biggest surprise: I can actually interact with others at a social or network event and survive,” says Wantz. (For more on networking and connecting with people, read Maureen Zappala’s article on page 22 of this issue.)

Learning from Leading

The Strategic Relationships path culminates in a leadership project at Level 5: “Leading In Your Volunteer Organization.” It requires you to serve in a leadership role for six months and also to use a 360-degree evaluation, which results in feedback from close colleagues about areas of success and areas for growth.

While Wantz has not yet arrived at this particular project in Strategic

Relationships, he did complete it as part of the Presentation Mastery path, drawing on his service as a Toastmasters district public relations manager. He says the 360-degree evaluation helped him realize he needs to spend less time doing everything himself and more time communicating and delegating.

Not only did the evaluation open his eyes to areas where he could improve as a leader, Wantz says it also helped him become a better team player. His progress through the path has even earned him more responsibility at his job. “I am now the go-to person in the office to meet with the clients and discuss projects.”

And even though networking events still aren’t his favorite setting, he says he now has the tools, strategies and confidence to tackle them. **T**


Shaelyn Berg worked for the Pathways development team and is now a content producer at Kaplan Professional, an educational-services company.



Building Meaningful Connections

Techniques to try when networking is not working.

BY MAUREEN ZAPPALA, DTM



Professional networking. People either love it or loathe it. To some, it's a chance to socialize. To others, it's an overwhelming, even scary process. For these people, networking is *not* working.

But what if, instead of “networking,” professionals could learn to think of it as “building connections”? Building connections aids professional development, but it's more than that. Most networking goals are business-related: build a clientele, get referrals, find a job prospect. Building more meaningful connections can accomplish these things while filling a deeper need as well.

Importantly, there's more than one right way to do it. Whether you prefer hosting over-the-top events for anyone who'd care to attend, or sending carefully written emails to old friends and new, one method is not better than the other. If you're growing your sphere of influence—with an eye to maintaining the connections you already have—you're on the right path.

Health Benefits of Connections

There are biological benefits as well. In the book *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections*, authors Ori Brafman and Rom Brafman describe results of research conducted by neuroscientists from the U.S. and Australia. Using functional MRI scans, the researchers observed that the brain has a dramatic reaction correlating to either the presence or absence of human connections.

Warm, supportive and enjoyable connections cause the brain to be flooded with the stress-reducing neurotransmitter dopamine. In the absence of connections, the brain's pain center, the anterior-cingulate cortex, was noticeably more active. Stress has been shown to adversely affect digestive function, coronary arteries, insulin regulations and the immune system. In short, connections make us feel better, and disconnection hurts.

Professional Benefits of Connecting

Statistics show that building personal relationships is essential to growing your career. A 2017 survey of almost 16,000 LinkedIn users worldwide indicates:

- ▶ 70 percent of respondents were hired at a company where they had a connection.
- ▶ 80 percent of professionals consider networking to be important to career success.

“The business of business is relationships; the business of life is human connection.”

—AUTHOR ROBIN SHARMA

- ▶ 61 percent of professionals agree that regular interaction with people they are connected to can lead to possible job opportunities.

In Toastmasters, business opportunities abound, if you're observant and responsive. Rena Weikle, DTM, of The Battlefords Club in Battlefords, Saskatchewan, Canada, says, “Someone who was in my club for just one year later called me with a job offer. It was outside my expertise and comfort zone, but I took it. I'm still there 18 years later!”

Linda Anger, DTM, of Rochester Hills, Michigan, says, “While visiting another club, I heard an interesting speech by a clinical psychologist. I suggested a different opening for him. Now I am working with him as the editor of his forthcoming book.”

Distinguished Toastmaster Rebecca Fegan of River City Speakers in Bellevue, Nebraska, discovered her internal entrepreneur and accomplished a goal as a member of a group of authors. Accredited Speaker Sheryl Roush, DTM, was speaking at the District 24 conference, challenging aspiring professional speakers to write books they could sell at their speaking engagements. Fegan recalls, “My group and I knew we couldn't do that. Then we read one of Sheryl's books and discovered that we didn't have to do that individually—we could collaborate! Our group of nine to 12 authors has published four books in two years.”

Making Stronger Connections

With all these benefits of making connections, let's get to *how* to make them. Whether you are attending a Toastmasters conference, a neighborhood party or a business mix-and-mingle event, these tips can help you develop a quicker, more meaningful connection with new people.

- ▶ **Relax.** Remember that most people are there for the same reason you are and welcome new friends and conversation.
- ▶ **Arrive early.** Arriving late could mean that some conversation groups are already established, making it a bit harder to find someone to talk with.
- ▶ **Smile** and make eye contact.
- ▶ **Listen more than you talk.** When you do speak, ask questions.
- ▶ **Ditch the sales pitch** or elevator speech. Let your profession come up naturally in conversation.

- ▶ **Don't strive to be “Mr./Ms. Perky Networky”** whose sole purpose is sprinkling business cards around like candy.
- ▶ **Don't work the room. Meet the room.** Focus on genuine, rich conversations with a handful of people instead of a fleeting few sentences with every person. Those rich conversations are what spark a deeper connection, which can lead to longer-lasting friendships.
- ▶ **Bring a friend.** This is especially helpful for introverts and shy people. Knowing at least one person in the room is a huge stress-reliever.

Maintaining Existing Connections

Making a connection is step one. The real work comes in maintaining and deepening them. Make plans to meet for coffee or dinner. Invite people to your home. Take time after a Toastmasters meeting to chat with someone. Share stories, explore common interests and get to know people better.

Author and former editorial director at Twitter Karen Wickre is an expert on networking for introverts. She knows that introverts may resist the work it takes to invite someone to coffee or have a houseful of guests. In



“People are wired for relationships. Both quantity and quality matter.”

her book, *Taking the Work Out of Networking: An Introvert's Guide to Making Connections That Count*, Wickre offers a practical, doable approach to cultivating connections, appropriate for everyone, not just introverts. She calls it “keeping in loose touch.”

Wickre suggests taking a few minutes every day to make regular contact in a quick text, short email or postcard to people in your circle. There's no obligation for any reciprocal action, or even a face-to-face meeting. It's just making the effort to pop up on their radar.

Eventually, the habit of reaching out to your contacts will make you feel more like—and come across as—a giver rather than a taker. Consider how you'd feel after receiving an out-of-the-blue note from an old friend or colleague. You'd likely be grateful to count that person among your friends. Consistently tending and



nurturing your network will alleviate any awkwardness when you do need to call on a friend for help.

Connecting in the Club

Many members meet their best friends in Toastmasters. Others find lifelong partners. Nusrat Huda, from Chittagong Toastmasters club in Chittagong, Bangladesh, says that not long after joining a club, she received a biodata (a document with information about a person's background and personal beliefs) from a fellow club member, along with a marriage proposal. Golam Dastagir expressed his feelings through a fellow member who acted as matchmaker.

"In our culture, this is how marriages are arranged," says Huda. "Golam and I married a few months later. Now, five years later, together we achieve even greater things." The meaningful connection between the two inspired both members to press onward in Toastmasters; Dastagir served as area director in District 41 in 2018–2019 and Huda won the division Humorous Speech Contest in 2018.

Strong personal connections also soothe some of life's toughest, most painful times, as Cynthia Osborn of Speak-IT in Memphis, Tennessee, attests. She found solace in the connections she forged in her club after her husband was killed in July 2016. "My club became my family, as they laughed and cried with me on my journey of widowhood. My club is my family."

The Unique Club Setting

Better technology, flexible software and faster internet connections have changed how we interact, share and learn. But social media still isn't as social as the name indicates. Polls indicate that most people still prefer face-to-face business meetings over virtual meetings. They build stronger, longer relationships and allow for better problem-solving. No software can replace that. Face time should be a priority when seeking to develop meaningful relationships.

The Toastmasters community provides these focused face-to-face interactions for people all over the world. Not only do people build leadership and communication skills, but they are spurred on by nearly constant applause and celebration of every milestone. That's rare outside of Toastmasters, which makes it so magnetic. Maya Angelou famously said, "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." The connections made in Toastmasters make people feel good.

These connections often spill to other areas of life. Jette Holten Lutzhoft of Esbjerg, Denmark, joined two clubs while living in Spain and two more when returning to Denmark: the Esbjerg Toastmasters Club and the Toastmasters Club Kolding. She notes her strong ties to all four clubs. "There is a tight relationship among our two (Denmark) clubs, with many visits back and forth. I am

forever grateful for having joined Toastmasters, and when I go back to Spain twice a year, I always visit my two former clubs. Last year, we even met in Athens during our joint District Conference."

"Face time should be a priority when seeking to develop meaningful relationships."

Kristi Beres, DTM, of Capital Communicators in Sacramento, California, met Sadika Kebbi of Beirut, Lebanon, at the 2015 Annual Toastmasters International Convention in Las Vegas, a friendship that led to a dream trip. Beres says, "Three years after we met, Sadika gave me a three-week tour of her country, Lebanon, a country I'd wanted to visit for 25 years. It was the trip of a lifetime thanks to her and her family's kindness and hospitality."

Even visitors notice it. At a recent Toastmasters meeting in Medina, Ohio, a visitor remarked, "I've been to so many professional networking events and meetings, and they're not like this. You are so friendly, and I feel like I could be friends with all of you. This is what meetings should be like!"

People are wired for relationships. Both quantity and quality matter. Make daily efforts to stay in touch, reach out and engage with others, and you'll enjoy a more satisfying life for your efforts. As author Robin Sharma puts it, "The business of business is relationships; the business of life is human connection." **T**

Maureen Zappala, DTM, is a former NASA propulsion engineer. Today she's a professional speaker, author and presentation skills coach, as well as founder of High Altitude Strategies, a coaching and speaking service. She belongs to the Aerospace Toastmasters club in Cleveland, Ohio. Visit www.maureenz.com to learn more.

Official Notice of Vote

On Friday, August 23, 2019, you will have the opportunity to vote for the international officer and director candidates of your choice while attending the International Convention near Denver, Colorado, United States.

The International Leadership Committee nominated officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President and Second Vice President. International director candidates were nominated for Regions 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 13. The Committee's selection is presented in accordance with the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII.

TOASTMASTERS
INTERNATIONAL

2019 Annual Business Meeting
4:30 p.m. Friday, August 23, 2019
Gaylord Rockies Resort and Convention Center
Aurora, Colorado, United States

Your 2019-2020 Officer and Director Candidates

Officer Candidates

To view details of each officer nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at: www.toastmasters.org/officercandidates



INTERNATIONAL
PRESIDENT-ELECT
Richard E. Peck, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Margaret Page, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Russell L. Drake, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Magnus Jansson, DTM



SECOND
VICE PRESIDENT
Matt A. Kinsey, DTM

Director Candidates

To view details of each director nominee's qualifications, please visit the Toastmasters International website at:

www.toastmasters.org/directorcandidates

From Region 1

Karen Knight, DTM
Naomi Laura Takeuchi, DTM

From Region 3

Enid Moore-Cranshaw, DTM
TK O'Geary, DTM

From Region 5

Mohamad A. Qayoom, DTM
Monnica B. Rose, DTM

From Region 7

John Lesko, DTM
Subbi Mathur, DTM

From Region 9

Thomas G. Goodwin, DTM
Stefano S. McGhee, DTM

From Region 11

Aletta Rochat, DTM

From Region 13

Sudha Balajee, DTM
Pawas Chandra, DTM

It is the right and duty of all clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the convention or by proxy.

If you are attending the Toastmasters International Convention this August, you will have the opportunity to meet and talk with all the international officer and director candidates before the election. Additional nominations for officers and directors may be made from the floor at the Annual Business Meeting.

2019 Proposals

Make your voice heard.

In August, at the 2019 Annual Business Meeting, every Toastmasters club will have the opportunity to vote on proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution.

Proposal A

Modernization and Consistency of Language

The Board proposes that the following series of amendments be applied to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution for the purposes of consistency, clarity and conformity to current real-world practices.

1. Minor grammatical and language changes throughout to improve readability and clarity of thought, in instances where it is found to be difficult to understand the intended meaning of a passage.
2. Numbering Conventions:
 - a. Any number between one and nine is rendered as a word, followed by a parenthetical number—e.g., “one (1) year.”
 - b. Any number greater than or equal to ten is rendered as a number only—e.g., “10 members.”
 - c. Percentages follow the same convention for rendering numbers as words or in numerical form; when rendered as a number only, the percent symbol is included—e.g., “five (5) percent” or “25%.”
3. Replace gender-specific language with nongendered language.
4. Replace the title “Executive Director” with “Chief Executive Officer” in line with current practice. Chief Executive Officer is the title that has been in use within the organization since August 2013.
5. Capitalize all Toastmasters International role titles (e.g., Club President,

- District Director, etc.), as well as the names of administrative units (e.g., Member Clubs, Areas, Districts, etc.).
6. Clarify the use of the term “member” in the governing documents and specify when it refers to an “individual member” or a voting member of the organization. The voting members of the organization are the “Member Clubs” and the “Delegates at Large.”
 7. Amend all references to the international officer role of “Vice President” to specifically denote “First” and “Second” Vice Presidents, with the intent to tie various responsibilities more directly to those specific offices.
 8. Replace the term “presiding officer” with “chair” for consistency across the documents.
 9. Remove references to “alternate(s)” as this is a term no longer used in current practice.

Proposal B

Redundant Language

A single statement will be added into the Toastmasters International Bylaws, Article V, Section 2, that comprehensively affirms the Board’s right to perform its authorized duties at any time of its choosing, except where otherwise noted.

The Board proposes the removal of the phrase “from time to time” in most instances.

Proposal C

Start/End Times for Terms of Office

Terms of office begin on July 1 and end on June 30 for district and club officers serving annual terms. Club officers serving half-year terms either commence their term on July 1 and end on December 31 or commence on January 1 and end on June 30. The Board proposes amending the start time to midnight and the end time

FOR



The Board of Directors asks for your support and recommends that your club vote in favor of the Proposals.

To view the full text of the proposed amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and Club Constitution, visit:

www.toastmasters.org/2019Proposals

to 11:59 p.m. on the respective dates for terms of office for district and club officers.

Proposal D

How Members are Notified About International Dues Changes

The Board proposes amending the Bylaws of Toastmasters International and the Club Constitution to emphasize with greater clarity that changes in dues must be announced in either the *Toastmaster* magazine or on the Toastmasters International website before their effective date. Furthermore, the proposed amendments more clearly express that the “financial obligations” of clubs are the international dues.

Please note, this is not an increase in dues, only a clarification of how changes are announced.

Proposal E

Change to the Term “Board Members”

In the Bylaws of Toastmasters International, the term “director” has historically been used to refer to any voting member of the Board of Directors. As the Board includes

Proposals

both international officer and international director roles, this leads to some confusion. The Board proposes using the umbrella term “Board Members” to enhance clarity when referring to the international officers and directors collectively.

Proposal F

Introduction of the Term “Charged Member”

The governing documents use a number of different terms to describe members, including “paid member in good standing,” “active,” “inactive,” and “honorary.” The Board proposes the introduction of the term “charged member” to describe a member being accused of violating a provision of the Toastmasters International governing documents.

Proposal G

Definition of the Term “Active Membership”

Individual club members are referred to as active, inactive, or honorary. While inactive and honorary members are defined and described, there is no such entry for active members.

The Board proposes including a definition of “active membership” in the Club Constitution.

Proposal H

International Dues and Fees Versus Club Dues and Fees

The Board proposes that the Club Constitution be amended to give greater clarity and differentiation to the terms “Toastmasters dues,” “club dues,” and “club new member fees.”

The specific changes proposed are:

- ▶ Change the title of Article III to “Club Dues and New Member Fees.”
- ▶ Include an introductory paragraph that indicates where in the governing documents the Toastmasters

International dues and fees are defined and described.

- ▶ Insert the word “club” to be more specific about the dues and new member fees being described.
- ▶ Re-order the sections to address dues first.

Proposal I

Outdated Materials and Committee Designation

The Board proposes that references to outdated programs, materials, and committees that no longer align with the current practices of Toastmasters International be amended as appropriate.

Materials no longer distributed by World Headquarters, such as the “new member kit,” would no longer be referenced. The “club nominating committee” would be renamed the “Club Leadership Committee” to bring it in line with the District Leadership Committee and International Leadership Committee, which serve similar functions at other levels of the organization.

Proposal J

Club Management of Individual Memberships

To be admitted into the membership of a Toastmasters club, an individual must complete and submit a membership application. The club members then vote on whether to accept the individual’s application. If accepted, the application and applicable dues and fees are submitted to World Headquarters. Currently, the steps in this process are described as being handled by the club secretary. The same is true for the transfer of an individual’s membership from one club to another.

The Board proposes that the Club Constitution be amended to allow a membership application to be filed with and by any club officer.

Proposal K

Speech Contests and Inactive Members

When a member has been absent from a club and the Club Executive Committee has conferred inactive status on the member, the inactive member loses many of the rights and privileges of an active member. The Board proposes amending the Club Constitution to disallow the participation of inactive members in all speech contests rather than only in the International Speech Contest.

Proposal L

Simplification of Structural Handling of Officer Positions at the Corporate, International, and District Levels

The Board proposes several amendments to the Bylaws of Toastmasters International to address structural concerns regarding the officer positions at the corporate, international and district levels.

Corporate

Each year the Secretary-Treasurer of Toastmasters International delegates the treasurer responsibilities to another employee of World Headquarters. To simplify this process, the role of Secretary-Treasurer would be divided into the Secretary and Treasurer components.

International

Individual members may be elected to and serve on the Board of Directors based upon the qualifications described in the Bylaws, Article IX, Section 2. In order to enhance general understanding of the qualifications and term limitations for individuals elected to the Board, the language of this section has been clarified.

District

All current districts maintain a divisional structure, and for many years no district has exercised its right to operate without divisions. As such, the optional nature of divisions has become antiquated and division directors have become an integral part of the district structure. **T**



Bringing Characters to Life

Liven up your speeches with expressive dialogue.

BY BILL BROWN, DTM

Would you rather listen to two people having a conversation or would you prefer hearing a summary of what was said? Listening to the actual dialogue is more interesting, isn't it? And that is true in our speeches as well.

If you relate a conversation between two people, doing it with dialogue adds a vivid, engaging quality to your speech. It's a valuable tool for a variety of presentations: By adding characters, real or imagined, you give your speech a real-life dimension and draw in your audience.

Yet presenting dialogue has its challenges. The audience needs to know there are two distinct characters and be able to recognize who is talking at any given time. All too often, our characters sound so much alike that it is hard for listeners to tell them apart. In addition, our characters need to sound realistic in the minds of our listeners.

I look at character development as a three-step process. The first step is *mind-set*. To be a character, we must be willing to step outside our normal personality. We typically limit our expressiveness because we are concerned what our listeners will think. Instead, we need to be willing to be far more expressive than we think prudent. Don't worry, you may think you are over the top, but your audience won't. Give yourself permission to have some fun, and go for it.

The second step is *portrait*, our mental picture of each character. Start with one character. What does he or she look like? What do they sound like? How do they stand? Do they have an accent? How are

they dressed? And what is their attitude? These are some questions to ask yourself.

Let's say my character is a butler. I picture him as standing rigidly tall. He is wearing formal clothing and talking in an equally formal, reserved manner. And, of course, he has an English accent. A couple of years ago I performed one of my tall tales at a local community theater. The show had a Western theme and I was "Cactus Bob," a cowboy. I pictured Bob as bow-legged, wearing jeans, boots and a cowboy hat. And speaking in a down-home drawl.

"By adding characters, real or imagined, you give your speech a real-life dimension and draw your audience in."

For both a butler and a cowboy, the voice I used was critical. This vocalization brings the differentiation between characters to life. The key to remember, though, is that precision isn't necessary here. A caricature—an exaggerated imitation—is fine.

Now that we have a clear portrait of our characters, let's move to step three: *mechanics*—how to make those characters happen. Mimic the voice you envision for your character. Next, assume the physical characteristics you imagine. In addition to giving your audience a picture of the character, it actually makes your character's voice more realistic. Why? Because you become that character in your mind.

If you speak for some time as one particular character, you can make this portrayal pronounced. If, however, you have a quick back-and-forth dialogue between two people, you have to make the physical and vocal changes less pronounced. If you make radical changes every 15 seconds, you create more of a distraction than a distinction.

One difficult aspect of character differentiation is varying the pitch of your voice between characters, especially if they are the same gender. By learning a simple technique, speakers can use a larger vocal range and better distinguish between characters. We can actually position where in the mouth and throat we speak from. It can be from the lips all the way to deep in the throat. And this positioning easily changes our pitch.

I give some instructions about this technique in the audio recording that accompanies this article in the digital edition at www.toastmasters.org/Magazine. In the recording, you will also hear some of the character voices I have created.

Using dialogue in your speeches is a valuable tool for engaging your audience, and bringing your characters to life multiplies its effectiveness. I encourage you to explore the outer reaches of your voice. And to have fun in the process. **■**

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach from Las Vegas and a member of Pro Toastmasters and Ahead of the Curve Toastmasters. Learn more at www.billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Dear Journal

Could this be the answer to stress, illness, insomnia and this nasty cold sore on my lip?

BY JOHN CADLEY



Dear Journal, Well, this will be a new experience for me. I've been reading about the positive effects of journaling and they're pretty amazing. It can decrease symptoms of asthma (which I don't have but you never know), improve cognitive functioning, boost the immune system, reduce stress, help you sleep better and supposedly even make wounds heal faster! (I've had a nasty cold sore for a week. We'll see.) That seems like an awful lot just for scribbling a few words on a piece of paper, but apparently there's a lot of real scientific research that says it's all true. They say journaling is particularly good for anxiety and depression because it's like talking to a therapist without having to read old copies of *People* magazine in the waiting room, fight with your insurance company and get a three-week visit from old Mr. Separation Anxiety when your therapist goes on vacation.

So here I am—my first day of journaling. Actually, that's not true. I started a gratitude journal at the beginning of 2018 and stopped at January 19, not because I'm not grateful but because I started repeating myself. On January 1, I was grateful for my wife, my children and my health. January 2, I was grateful for my friends, my house and my financial security. January 3, I was grateful for my food (except for kale), my PepsiCo stock increasing by 25 cents a share and my programmable thermostat. It went on like this, with my entries seeming more and more trivial. By January 17, I was really forcing it, saying I was grateful for the beautiful

snow that had fallen the night before (which I would have to shovel, so maybe not so much), the majestic pine tree in our front yard—which I'm always afraid will fall and crush our house—and ... and ... I couldn't even think of a third one, so I said I was grateful my cats didn't have feline leukemia. That was it. On January 18, when I went back to being grateful for more important things, like my wife, my children and my health, I realized I was repeating myself and wrote on January 19, *Look, I know I'm a lucky guy. When I have something new to be grateful for, I'll let you know.* So I ended my gratitude journal.

“Journaling is particularly good for anxiety and depression because it's like talking to a therapist without having to read old copies of *People* magazine in the waiting room.”

But this is different. This will help me understand myself better. Jungian analysts say there's a 45-minute window between the time you wake up and the time your ego kicks in to police your thoughts. So if you start writing as soon as you get up, your unconscious—where all the answers supposedly reside—will be free to speak without interruption. So here it is: 7 a.m. What's on my mind? Let's see ... I'm thinking of ... my

fourth-grade English teacher, Mrs. Stanton. I had a crush on her, but her husband was a policeman and I got scared he'd find out and put me in jail. (I was 9 years old.) Maybe that's why I get hives around authority figures! Wow! A breakthrough insight already! What else? Well, I'll just write stream of consciousness-style ... Let's see ... I pretend I like kale but sometimes I spit it in my napkin ... I still feel guilty about reading my sister's diary when I was 9... I think *Anna Karenina* is actually a little contrived (wow! where did *that* come from?) ... there's a blue jay squawking in the tree outside—beautiful to look at but irritating to listen to—sort of like the Kardashians ... oh no, I'm thinking about the Kardashians! Maybe I should stop reading the *National Enquirer* at the checkout counter. Another insight!

They say your journal entries don't have to be long—they can even be just one sentence—and here I've already filled a page. Do I talk too much? Maybe that's another insight. Wow—four new discoveries about myself in 45 minutes. What else? I wonder why I'm so anxious about ... about ... no, I don't want to think about *that*. But I should. Why can't I? I know—my ego just woke up and is repressing the bad stuff. Guess I'll have to wait till tomorrow morning to start again before my ego wakes up. Maybe I'll find out why I'm afraid of tuna fish. **T**

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

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Online Course

Take our online course to learn the strategies that will help make your book a best seller. For each strategy, a detailed audio and/or video explanation of the idea is included.

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 that 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 

We are happy to speak with you about your publishing needs.
Call us at 978-440-8364 or visit us at <http://www.eBookIt.com>.

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