

Confidence Builder: Secrets to Give Your Public Speaking More Impact

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Excerpt from “10 Days to More Confident Public Speaking

The secret to a great presentation is to tell a story. Think back to when you were a kid and your mother or father read you a bedtime story. Kids love stories, and so do adults. People love speakers who tell stories that apply to their message. These personal stories help drive your message home. To tell your “story” effectively, follow these steps:

- **Begin at the end of your speech.** As Stephen Covey says in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, “Begin with the end in mind.” Think about that main message you want people to understand. Then gather the facts and information you believe are pertinent to your message. Recall personal stories when you were a kid, a teenager, or a young adult that you might use.
- **Use examples your audience can relate to.** For example, if you are talking about the latest advance in cardiac medicine, you may want to share a brief story of a patient who benefited from the technology or therapy.
- **Practice telling your anecdotes as if you were telling the story for the first time.** As you practice, experiment with different phrases and ways of illustrating your story or example. The best approach is to put yourself in the story and pretend you are the main character of the story. Pretend you are acting in a play, and do some role or character playing. Try to take on the personalities and characters in your story. Use actual names or fictitious names to help define the characters in your story.
- **Practice each of your stories separately and record them.** Get a good idea of how long each story takes. This can vary depending on the level of detail you use.

First develop a long version and then a short version of your story. This will come in handy if you need to adjust your speech time. Figure out what kinds of gestures might be used to add some dynamics to your story, such as a change in your voice, how you will move, or whether sitting or standing would be more effective. I will go into storytelling in greater detail in Day 5, where I will discuss body language and voice.

Remember, *tell them what you are going to tell them*. You can’t do this until you have figured out what you will be talking about. *Tell them*—this is where the meat of your speech is—your stories, and *tell them what you told them*—this is where you do a quick review at the end, telling them what your stories were supposed to tell them, just in case they did not automatically figure it out for themselves.

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