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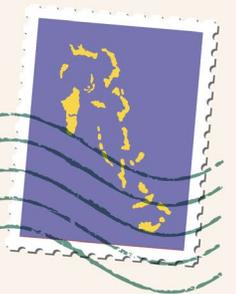
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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE

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Shake Up the Ice Breaker

What can we do to help new members get the absolute most out of their Toastmasters experience? We spend a lot of time, energy, and effort helping people become members. We advertise our clubs. We invite prospective members to meetings. We help them through the application process. Hopefully we assign a mentor to guide them once they become a member.

But are there other things we can do?

I'd like you to consider a couple. One is reserving time on your club calendar for Ice Breaker speeches—the first speech every new member gives. I've talked to many clubs that leave two or three spots open for Ice Breakers every month and won't allow longer-term members to select those speaking spots until a week before the meeting. This ensures that new members get an opportunity to speak without having to wait three or four months to get on the schedule.

Now, when should they deliver their Ice Breaker—before, or after, they choose their first path? Pathways was designed for you to log in to the Toastmasters website, complete your assessment, select your first path, and then start working on your Ice Breaker. However, since that is the first speech in every path, does it really matter if you choose your path first?

Encourage new members to complete their Ice Breaker as soon as possible, and then help them select a path.

What I've heard from clubs around the world is that many of them have decided to reverse the process. They encourage members to complete the Ice Breaker right away. Their message is: "Don't worry about selecting your path yet. Let's have you do your Ice Breaker. Then, we'll help you select your path." How can members complete an Ice Breaker without being in a path? The simplest way is to send them to the digitized version of the [Ice Breaker](#), which is available to anyone.

I know completing the Ice Breaker before selecting a path may be a bit controversial, but what these club members and officers have told me is that it works because new members are getting to speak sooner, and they're more confident when they go and select their path.

This month, I'd like you to consider those two things. First, look at your upcoming calendar and reserve some open slots every month for Ice Breakers, and don't make those speaking slots available to longer-term members until you know they're not going to be filled by new members. Second, encourage new members to complete their Ice Breaker as soon as possible, and then help them select a path. This will help ensure that our new members get the most out of their Toastmasters experience—which will also make them far more likely to renew their membership.

Matt Kinsey, DTM
International President

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News

Make Your Vote Count

Soon you will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates at the Annual Business Meeting during the 2023 International Convention. See page 10 of this issue to learn more about the nominees.

Newly Translated Pathways Projects

You can now download and use Level 3 Pathways projects in Hindi! Visit the [Resource Library](#) for guides on how to access them.

Printed Marketing Materials

Some previously printed marketing brochures and fliers are being discontinued. These include the free sets of: “Find Your Voice,” “Your Path to Leadership,” “Develop Your Leaders From Within,” “From Prospect to Guest to Member,” and “The Benefits of Toastmasters Membership.” Toastmasters will continue to offer these items in digital format, but the printed sets will no longer be available once the current supply runs out of stock.

Resources

Promote Convention With These Tools

Encourage members and nonmembers to stir up excitement for Toastmasters 2023 International Convention by using these promotional tools:

- Convention [Zoom Backgrounds](#)
- Convention [Presentation Slides](#)
- 2023 Virtual Convention [Social Media Graphics](#)

2023 International Speech Contest Semifinals

Following the region quarterfinals in the International Speech Contest, two winners from each region will be assigned to a semifinal

contest. The four semifinal contests will be held in August at the 2023 International Convention. (The region numbers in each semifinal are randomly selected.) The top two contestants from each semifinal advance to the finals: the World Championship of Public Speaking®.

Both the semifinal contests and the World Championship will be conducted in a hybrid format—speakers can participate onsite in Nassau, Bahamas, or online from their home countries. Be on the lookout for updates regarding the winners from your region who will participate in the semifinals!

Tune In! Podcast Hosts Reminisce in 225th Episode

Distinguished Toastmasters Greg Gazin and Ryan Levesque [share their experiences](#) as the co-hosts of *The Toastmasters Podcast*. Learn how the series began, its partnership with the *Toastmaster* magazine, the show’s raison d’être, and more. Gazin and Levesque also look back at lessons learned, memorable episodes, and miscues. Want to know more about Toastmasters’ official podcast series? [Read](#) the accompanying article.

Reminders

Celebrate the New Program Year

Next month marks the start of Toastmasters International’s 2023–2024 program year! If your club is looking to add some excitement to its meetings, try using the new Toastmasters year as an overall theme. Some ideas include:

- Ask everyone to dress their best or wear a certain color, put on a funny hat, or show off a ribbon, certificate, or plaque to celebrate the past year’s achievements.
- Pick a Word of the Day that fits in with talking about the past or future.
- Provide Table Topics® questions that incorporate the new year theme.
- If you are the speaker at a meeting, give a speech about something you’re proud of from the last program year, or something you look forward to this next year.
- Take photos with your club to celebrate and send them to photos@toastmasters.org for a chance to be published in the *Toastmaster*.



Find and Share Articles

The [Explore](#) page on the *Toastmaster* magazine website is a tool to help you find articles by category, author, or month and year. Select a category on the left-hand side of the page to easily track down the topic you’re looking for. Once you find it, don’t forget to share the article link with a friend or coworker who could use some tips or inspiration.

Snapshot



The Executive Committee of Tampines Tamil Toastmasters in Singapore gather at the Club President's home for an officer meeting. The committee members began this practice of meeting at each officer's home to help them bond, and to stay engaged and motivated to reach the club's goals in the Distinguished Club Program.



Traveling Toastmaster



DAN AND ANJA GANGUR of Guelph, Ontario, Canada, share their passion for Toastmasters with fellow ship passengers as they cruise along the Antarctic Peninsula.



NAGESH SHETTY of Muscat, Oman, rides a camel while observing pyramids in Egypt.

The Jokes Are In!

Members from around the world show off their sense of humor.

By Shannon Dewey



The *Toastmaster* magazine recently asked for your best jokes, one-liners, puns, or funniest speech openings. Get ready for some laughs, giggles, and groans from fellow Toastmasters.

Seeing Red

While driving home from my Toastmasters meeting, I was stopped by the police. The officer accused me of going through a red light. I explained to the officer that I'm a Toastmaster, so I have a 30-second grace period after the red.
Susan Schulz, DTM • Melbourne, Florida

So Punny

What do you call a sheep who makes pancakes and waffles? A battering ram.
Michael S. Cohen • Commack, New York

Fear of Being Called On

I believed that the scariest person in the world was my wife ... until I met the Table Topicsmaster.
S. Krishanthan • Doha, Qatar

Mother Knows Best

My 80-year-old mom said to me: "When going out, go to a pub where they have Wi-Fi."

I said: "How come?"

She said: "It is like in the old days ... in those types of pubs they have a 'Wireless Interest For the Individual.'"
Ivan Letar • Hasselt, Belgium

Food for Thought

What do you call friends you like to eat with? Taste buds.
Joey Thai • Washington

Class Is in Session

When I was teaching middle school, one of the math teachers told me about a recent class. She was explaining that a negative number plus a negative number always equals a negative number. A negative number plus a positive number always equals a negative number. A positive number plus a positive number always equals a positive number.

Then she got off track. She told the class that in linguistics, a double negative remains a negative. And a positive word plus a positive word, in any language, will always equal a positive word. There was a long pause, then someone from the back of the room said ... "Yeah right."
Angie Collier • Floresville, Texas

A Couple of Groaners

If I made videos about potatoes and yams, I'd be a YouTuber.
and

I was scrolling through news articles and read this headline: "Researchers Discover Best Way to Avoid Procrastination." I haven't gotten around to reading the article yet.

Tova Morrison • Goleta, California

Toastmasters on the Silver Screen

- *12 Angry Toastmasters*: A classic film from 1957 about the aftermath of a speech contest.
- *The Devil Wears Prada and Speaks For More Than 7m 30s*: Now that's pure evil.
- *Star Wars: The Grammarian*: It's a lot like *The Mandalorian* but with no dangling participles or crutch words.

Mike Proudlock, DTM • Caledon, Ontario, Canada

Setting the Stage

What did the director say to the stage? "You are holding up the show!"
Clifford Bishop • La Mirada, California

Kids Say the Darndest Things

There are some questions that don't have any answers, specifically when kids ask. I love watching the comedy talk show *The Kapil Sharma Show*. Most of the time I watch in my kitchen just before I go to sleep. One night, my 5-year-old son asked me a question that shocked me to the core.

Son: "Mom, you love watching Kapil so much, right?"

Me: "Yes dear, I love." (I said with a light smile in my eyes.)

My son's face looked worried, and he whispered in my ear, "Does Dad know about this?"

Bhuvi Bubachandran • Kuala Belait, Brunei

Yea or Neigh?

Once there was a little pony who joined Toastmasters. He had to go onstage, but his throat was bothering him. With encouragement he went onto the stage, and looking at the audience he said ... I'm a little hoarse.

Rasana Boyal • Fresno, California

Shannon Dewey is digital strategy and engagement editor for the *Toastmaster* magazine.

Vocal Rejuvenation

How Toastmasters helped me rediscover my passion as a voice artist.

By Sneha Sharma, Ph.D.

It all started back when I was still a media student at Devi Ahilya University, in Indore, a city in Madhya Pradesh, India. As senior-year students, my classmates and I collaborated on writing a Hindi radio drama, based on a story by the famed Indian writer Premchand.

When it was time for the first recording session rehearsal, we arranged the microphones, stands, and mixing console in a studio surrounded by acoustic walls. The voice artists who lent their skills to the characters we had created started arriving one by one. To our dismay, we discovered that one of the artists—the female lead—had a sore throat and couldn't record. Someone had to fill in. That someone was me.

I went to a microphone and put on headphones. I began voicing my character's patches of dialogue. After some initial jitters, I became totally immersed in the performance, as if the story of the rebellious woman Gangi was my own.

I realized how much fun we can have with our voices and how they can be such a meaningful tool of expression. There was rhythm in the way the dialogue flew from the pages. After several more rehearsals, hearing my voice on playback filled me with excitement.

There was no looking back. I wanted to be a voice artist. I started doing freelance voice-over projects for documentaries, radio segments, and television commercials. I worked as a disc jockey for the university's radio station. Even after I completed college, I kept working in Mumbai as a voice-over artist for corporate videos and IVRs (Interactive Voice Response)—an automated phone-system technology.

And then marriage happened. My attention shifted to my new home, and I soon felt my passion for voice work fading. My career went on standby. Years later, I joined the university as a lecturer, teaching media management to undergraduate and post-graduate students. My communication skills had grown rusty, but I



Sneha Sharma, Ph.D.

realized that to be an effective teacher, I needed to boost my confidence onstage. My husband suggested Toastmasters.

I joined Impact Toastmasters Club of Indore, and slowly but consistently I completed my Pathways projects. One of the Level 4

technology. This was when COVID hit the world, and I couldn't access recording studios physically. So with some technical assistance from my friend Sourabh in setting up a home studio, I created a YouTube channel and made podcast videos for my children's classmates.

I played five- to 10-minute podcast segments for my Toastmasters club and received important feedback about translating the English stories into Hindi, to help the native Hindi-speaking children enjoy them more. The feedback helped improve my podcasts. Here I was, reliving my passion, adding drama to my story, rehearsing, and living the characters all over again, just like I did in college!

A Toastmaster friend, the mother of a 7-year-old, suggested I conduct some online sessions for children based on the stories I had uploaded. I could narrate the stories live and organize vocabulary and grammar games for children. My experience participating in our Toastmasters club meetings over Zoom gave me confidence and a comfort level handling the technological and presentation aspects of conducting the online classes.

Through Pathways, I had rediscovered my love for voice performance. The whole

I realized how much fun we can have with our voices and how they can be such a meaningful tool of expression.

electives was "Creating a Podcast." I pictured myself taking the mic again, lending my voice to story characters.

On my mobile phone, I recorded a few stories that I had written for my children and played them for my Toastmasters mentor. He suggested I record them on a high-quality microphone and upload the recordings on YouTube.

While I have been praised for my voice modulation in my Toastmasters speeches, what I missed was the technical aspect of voice recording. I needed to embrace the new

experience gave me the insight that, just like the lotus flower, we all have the capability to rise from the mud, bloom out of darkness, and radiate into the world.

Sneha Sharma, Ph.D., is a member of Impact Toastmasters Club in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India, and two online clubs: San Jose Toastmasters Club and Professionally Speaking Club. She has her doctorate in media management, and is a voice artist, an adjunct professor, and a published writer. For more information, visit drsnehasharma.in.

Develop a Reputation for Being Funny

Gaining laughs begins with believing in your own humor.

By Bill Brown, DTM

How many times have you heard it? “You need to add humor to your speech.” But all too frequently, that is easier said than done.

Whether I am looking for laughs in a speech or in casual conversation, I have found it easier to do if I have developed a reputation for being funny—not only in the minds of my audience members, but also within my own mind. It helps if I believe that I am funny.

How do you do that? By being funny as often as you can. “What if I’m not naturally funny?” you might ask. I suspect that you do have a sense of humor, no matter how buried it may be. You need to identify it and develop it.

I have attended humor workshops where I studied the structure of jokes and other topics for stand-up comedy. I discovered that is definitely not my style. I am more of the quick one-liner type. Mine is what I call situational humor. I don’t need to set up a punch line, the basic conversation or situation does that for me. And that, I would submit, is the perfect type of humor for a speech.

My humor is spur of the moment. For this style of humor to be successful, I need to quickly recognize opportunities for a joke. Puns have trained me to do that.

You might be saying, “Puns? Oh, no!” Yes, puns can be groaners, but they are frequently funny. The more you tell puns, the more you will learn which ones have comedic value.

Puns have taught me two skills—how to sense humor opportunities and how to take advantage of them. Both skills are helpful in adding humor to your speeches.

Another benefit of using puns is that you can bring out the punster in others. If you tell a pun, a punster will respond with one themselves. Immediately start thinking about your own comeback. That is good training.

If you’re looking for another way to develop your funny, Table Topics® is an incredible place to do it. Sometimes the question that you are asked is quite serious, but many times the question can be moved in a humorous direction.

A club member had just returned from a trip to Alaska. While there, he encountered skate fish. My task was to describe that fish.



If a statement can be taken two ways, go with the wrong way.

I had no idea what a skate fish was, but I had to say something. I asked myself, what comes to mind when I say “skate”? Ice skating and roller skating. So, I began by saying, “There are actually two kinds of skate fish, ice skate fish and roller skate fish.” I then developed a story from there.

Many times my humor takes the form of taking a comment in a way that it obviously

doesn’t mean. If a statement can be taken two ways, go with the wrong way.

Sometimes you can have a funny one-liner by understanding what the audience is expecting, and then saying something different. I once heard a speaker talk about how she revitalized a struggling Toastmasters club. She told us that, when she joined, she was given the choice of any officer roles that she wanted. All were available. She said, “So, naturally, I chose President.” I suggested that she say, “So, naturally, I chose Sergeant at Arms.” That got a big laugh.

In a contest speech, I talked about an incident that happened one day when I was on the radio. I was a news reader and read a story about the Paris rapid transit system. I knew this title would sound really boring to my audience, so I paused and then said, “I sense your excitement.” That brought the house down.

As you practice, you will get a good feel for which one-liners will be funny and which ones will fall flat. But the more that you develop that reputation for being funny, the more people will laugh, even if it isn’t one of your best punch lines. That will give you confidence and the courage to tell more jokes. Which, of course, will enhance your reputation as a funny person.

Don’t wait until you have a speech to work on. Develop that reputation for humor, especially in your own mind. That is when adding humor to a speech becomes much easier.

Humor is “funny” like that. (Oh, no! Not another pun!)

Bill Brown, DTM, is a speech delivery coach in Gillette, Wyoming. He is a member of Energy Capital Toastmasters in Gillette. Learn more at billbrownspeechcoach.com.

Official Notice of Vote

Vote for the
Board of
Directors
Candidates.

Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2023-2024 Board of Directors

At the Annual Business Meeting in August, you will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice. The meeting takes place on Friday, August 18, at 7 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT)/Universal Coordinated Time (UTC) -4, in Nassau, Bahamas, and online.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International 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 nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#).

Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

International Officer Candidates



INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT-ELECT
Radhi Spear, DTM



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT
Aletta Rochat, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Karen Lucas, DTM



SECOND VICE PRESIDENT
Stefano McGhee, DTM

International Director Candidates

Region 1

George Marshall, DTM
Sondra Nunez, DTM

Region 3

Chris Raneri, DTM
Violetta Rios, DTM

Region 5

Farzana Chohan, DTM
DaWane Wanek, DTM

Region 7

Perry Neal, DTM
Dana Richard, DTM

Region 9

Kimberly Dueck, DTM
Ronald Servant, DTM
Jocelyne Vezina, DTM
Cyndi Wilson, DTM

Region 11

Sujit Sukumaran, DTM
Frank Tsuru, DTM

Region 13

Pawas Chandra, DTM
Sudash Liyanage, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote, either through their representatives at the Annual Business Meeting or by proxy. Delegates may make additional nominations from the floor for International Officer and Director candidates.

Lengthen the List of Filler Words

Why you should avoid more than just “ums” and “ahs.”

By Will Neuman, DTM

Not long after I joined Toastmasters, I realized just how important the grammarian and Ah-Counter roles could be in helping to improve the way I communicate with others. I learned that words such as “um” and “so” should be eliminated because they serve no useful purpose, distract from what we are attempting to communicate, and cause us to appear less than professional.

That’s when I started thinking about how, with the help of Toastmasters, I needed to improve my level of communication, not just when I was giving a speech, or replying to a Table Topics® question, but always.

With that in mind, I suggest we expand the list of what we think of as “filler words.” Shouldn’t *any* word or combination of words that are unnecessary be considered fillers?

Here’s an example: Occasionally you will hear a speaker say, “Having said that,” or “As I said before.” Is that necessary? Don’t we *know* what they just said? Do they think we forgot?

You can train yourself to spot words and phrases that are superfluous. More importantly, you can make sure you never say them, whether in a speech or in conversation.

The list goes on. “At this time ...” “I would like to ...” “Without further ado ...” “All in all ...” The sentences that

Some speaking techniques, when used effectively, can keep audiences engaged and maybe even persuade them to follow your call to action. However, when used incorrectly, they are nothing more than a distraction.

For example, enumeration—when someone is trying to make a point and begins by saying, “Number one ...” I have heard many speakers continue to explain what number one is without then going on to number two. I get so distracted waiting to hear what number two is that I begin to lose focus.

What about reiteration? You may have heard someone say, “I told him over, and over, and over, and over again.” Really? Limit it to just a couple, or maybe a maximum of three repetitions and then move on to the point.

Have you noticed how often someone begins speaking by saying, “Well ...”? In nearly all cases, the sentence would be just fine without this word. Therefore, let’s add “well” to our list of filler words or expressions.

Well, yeah, okay then, let me, if you will, ask you this. (Oops, sorry, I just couldn’t resist, but you get the idea.)

How can your club start looking beyond the usual filler words? One of my clubs uses the grammarian role to supplement the Ah-Counter. While the Ah-Counter tracks how many times speakers use the standard filler words, the

Shouldn’t *any* word or combination of words that are unnecessary be considered fillers?

contain phrases like these would be just fine without including these unhelpful expressions. You can make your speeches and conversations more succinct and to the point by omitting them.

Taking it a step further, there are also some filler words or expressions that are not just unnecessary, but offensive. What do you think when someone says, “I’ll be honest with you”? I restrain myself from blurting out, “Does this mean that you haven’t been honest with me up to this point in our conversation?”

The same could be said about “with all due respect.” Shouldn’t I just assume that you are being respectful without you having to remind me?

How do you like it when someone begins a sentence with, “Listen ...” or “Look ...”? Why are they telling me what to do? Don’t they think that I am already listening?

grammarian focuses on words that are unnecessary and take away from the speech or cause the audience to lose focus.

When you expand your list of filler words, consider including these unnecessary words or phrases as ones to avoid in speeches, as well as everyday communication. (And add in a few of your own!)

- At the end of the day ...
- Quote, unquote ...
- That sort of thing ...
- And so on and so forth ...
- ... and stuff.

Will Neuman, DTM, joined Toastmasters in 2013 and is a member of Talk of the Town Toastmasters in Batavia, Illinois, and Fountain Hills Toastmasters in Fountain Hills, Arizona.



3, 2, 1—Engage!

A clown shares four tips for making an unforgettable connection with your audience.

By Don Colliver

Sweat streamed down my face as I desperately tried to elicit laughs from the stone-faced students and instructor in my Intro to Clown class. I was attempting the terrifying exercise called “Save the Show,” where the student must enter the stage and get genuine laughs with zero preparation. Oh, and I forgot to mention, the instructor had also directed the audience to offer absolutely no “pity” laughter.

After what seemed like hours of frantic effort and cringey silence, I surrendered. I threw up my hands and honestly asked the audience, “What do you want?!” To my surprise, the entire room suddenly erupted in laughter! Relief swept over me as I realized that authentic engagement with my audience was far more compelling than my best comedic efforts. As time went on, I continued to utilize this power of engagement to connect with audiences while in the performance art troupe Blue Man Group and as a professional touring clown. Now I use it as a trainer, coach, and speaker for Fortune 500 companies around the world.

Pioneering clown teacher and French stage actor Jacques Lecoq explained that clowning actually requires authentic engagement with the audience to even exist. This engagement is a two-way conversation as the audience and clown discover the twists and turns of the performance together. As a Toastmaster, you too can use this power of engagement to establish a dynamic, unforgettable connection with your audience. Here are four engagement techniques to add these back-and-forth patterns to your presentations.

1 Make it about them.

My solo clown acts often occur in a pitch-black theater where I'm illuminated by a single spotlight. Sometimes, during a quiet part of my act, an audience member will sneeze out in the darkness. If I simply pause and playfully look toward the sneeze, I always generate a favorable giggle not only from the sneezer, but also from the entire audience. Acknowledging just one single audience member can actually engage an entire audience! But remember to always acknowledge your audience members in a positive way rather than calling them out negatively, which can turn them against you.

Your Turn

In your next speech, keep an eye out for nonverbal responses from your audience, like someone nodding affirmatively during one of your points. To add some engagement, pause and emphatically state, “Yes! I saw that nod! This person knows what I'm talking about!” followed by an exaggerated nod in response. Chances are you'll receive a smile not only from the nodding audience member but also from the rest of the audience. Engagement achieved!

2 Make it in the present.

Asking the audience to engage in some kind of physical activity is a common technique in successful clown acts for good reason—it works! Having people interact with their immediate environment reminds them that your presentation is not a recording. Activities like sharing information with neighbors, switching seats, or passing around a prop reminds your audience that you're all together in the moment. Encouraging them to engage with their other senses besides just hearing and seeing will keep them focused on your message.

Your Turn

Keeping your audience in the present is especially effective as an engagement technique during virtual presentations. Next time you find yourself delivering a speech online, consider adding some audience engagement that encourages your viewers to interact with their immediate environment. Perhaps script an audience check-in during your intro by asking them to look out of a nearby window and then type their local weather into the virtual meeting chat. Reminding your virtual audience that they are actively participating in your speech will pull them into active engagement with you and your content.

3 Make it personal.

A clown is often tempted to stop and share with the audience even when it gets them in trouble, and the audience usually can't get enough! Personal stories are a well-known tool in effective presentations because they create engagement through vulnerability and rapport.



Personal stories are a well-known tool in effective presentations because they create engagement through vulnerability and rapport.

Don Colliver clowns around with the audience at a Toastmasters Leadership Institute workshop. Photo credit: John Brainard

As you tell your personal story, your audience relates to your wants, needs, and fears, and can't wait to learn what happens next. Additionally, by using a personal story as an "aside" during your presentation, your audience will feel like you're breaking out of your rehearsed presentation just for them, engaging them in an even more immediate way.

Your Turn

Try building an "aside" into your next speech. Stories about a time that you learned something or felt awe or wonder work particularly well in engaging an audience because they show courageous vulnerability. Use the following Setting-Problem-Decision story-launch I developed to get your audience hanging on your every word.

Setting

Vividly describe the environment you were in and the emotions you felt to transport your audience back to the moment of your story. For example, "This reminds me of a time back in 1997. It was a cold and snowy winter in Philadelphia, and I was feeling very nervous and fearful about an upcoming work presentation."

Problem

Explain the relatable challenge that you faced and what was at stake. For example, "My boss had encouraged me to take on a quarterly

presentation to our Board of Directors. My pride was at stake and my job was on the line!"

Decision

Clarify the intentional decision you made to address your problem. For example, "As I sat worrying in my apartment one night, I thought, *I've got to do something about this.* That was the exact moment I decided to join my local Toastmasters club!"

Once you've launched your story with the Setting-Problem-Decision framework, you will have your engaged audience in the palm of your hand.

4 Make it physical.

Prior to the start of circus shows, clowns often circulate through the big top to get the crowd energized for the upcoming extravaganza. These activities often involve having the audience mirror simple, nonverbal gestures. For example, a clown may lead a section of the audience in some kind of fun, clapping rhythm. You too can use prompting gestures to engage your audience by simply modeling a nonverbal behavior and encouraging them to mirror that behavior back, like a head nod or a hand raise.

Your Turn

At the top of your next speech, script a prompting gesture during your introduction. Describe a relatable experience while nodding your head

affirmatively, encouraging your audience to mirror that nod back to you. For example, if you're presenting a persuasive speech about using public transportation, you could say, "I think we'll all agree that traffic can be frustrating!" as you nod your head expectantly. Your audience will probably respond by mirroring your head nod. Setting up some simple prompting gestures during your talk can be an easy way to increase engagement by encouraging your audience to mirror your gestures and agree with your statements.

There's no need to step in front of a stone-faced clown class to start using the power of audience engagement in your presentations. Try some of these simple techniques in your next speech and you may be surprised to find yourself in a more dynamic partnership with your audience. You will stop presenting to your audience and start engaging *with* your audience!

Editor's Note: Don Colliver will be a speaker at the [Toastmasters 2023 International Convention](#), taking place August 16–19 in Nassau, Bahamas.

Don Colliver is a trainer and professional speaker living in the San Francisco Bay area of California. He recently released the book *Wink: Transforming Public Speaking with Clown Presence*. Reach him at [winkpublicspeaking.com](#).



Leading With a *Laugh*

Serious talk about workplace humor.

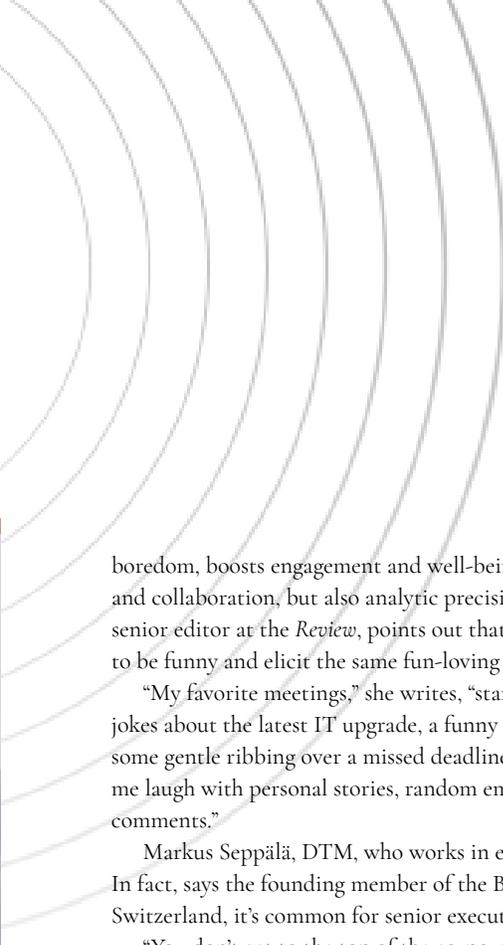
By Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.

Did you hear the one about the CEO who used humor in the office? He paid his employees in yucks instead of bucks!

In the workplace, humor is serious business. Laughter can bring a team together and help employees resolve conflict. But it can also lead to terrible misunderstandings. That doesn't mean that leaders should be afraid to use it! As with any powerful tool, you'll want to do so properly.

Leading employees with humor means different things to different people. Maybe it takes the form of sharing jokes with employees or sending along funny videos or cartoons. Maybe it's infused into the very DNA of the company. In any case, experts agree, it can make all the difference in building and maintaining a successful team.

Why is humor such an important leadership tool? Funny you should ask! Every laugh, writes Alison Beard in the *Harvard Business Review*, "brings with it a host of business benefits. Laughter relieves stress and



boredom, boosts engagement and well-being, and spurs not only creativity and collaboration, but also analytic precision and productivity.” Beard, a senior editor at the *Review*, points out that her favorite bosses “know how to be funny and elicit the same fun-loving behavior from their employees.”

“My favorite meetings,” she writes, “start with some witty banter—jokes about the latest IT upgrade, a funny story about a difficult author, some gentle ribbing over a missed deadline. My favorite colleagues make me laugh with personal stories, random emails, and occasionally off-color comments.”

Markus Seppälä, DTM, who works in executive compensation, agrees. In fact, says the founding member of the Basel International Speakers in Switzerland, it’s common for senior executives to have a sense of humor.

“You don’t get to the top of the corporate ladder without social skills,” he says, “and humor is an important one.”

Luring in the Laughs

Once you’ve determined that humor is a good idea, how do you proceed? Before you decide to tell a few jokes, determine whether or not the people around you will appreciate them. This is especially true when working in today’s global environment.

“Humor does not always easily or elegantly cross cultural borders,” says Christian Höferle, founder of The Culture Mastery, an Atlanta, Georgia-based organization focused on strategies for closing culture gaps. “What we find funny is often defined by our shared experience in a group, including our cultural and pop-cultural reference points. Say I make what I think is a humorous remark based on a popular TV show or book. It’s going to fall flat if my audience doesn’t share my knowledge.”

Early in his career, Höferle, who is originally from Germany, made a joke to a crowd in Tennessee. The remark was based on his native land’s lax approach to religion—which was vastly different from that of his audience. Needless to say, the joke landed with a very awkward thud. When that happens, speakers may have to work extra hard to regain their rapport with listeners, not to mention their own confidence.

Höferle notes, “Unless you know your audience well, it’s usually best to steer clear of humor about hot-button issues such as religion, as well as politics and sexuality.”

Knowing the audience is good advice in any speaking situation, of course. And that includes knowledge of the industry you work in. While there may be plenty of dark humor behind the scenes in a funeral parlor, for example, an undertaker probably doesn’t want to joke around with the public, either face-to-face or in marketing! Take your cue from the C-suite, which is to say, the corporate culture. You’re safer when a sense of humor starts at the top, especially if you’re discussing a sensitive matter.

What’s more, you may not always know what kind of day your fellow employees are having. Is someone in the midst of a personal crisis? If so,



“You don’t get to the top of the corporate ladder without social skills, and humor is an important one.”

—MARKUS SEPPÄLÄ, DTM

tread lightly. Always ask yourself: Is comedy what’s called for in this situation?

If humor is on the menu, and you are in a position to inject it into your workplace, here are a few suggestions:

- Appoint a Minister of Fun. The job title, which can be honorary in addition to other duties, demonstrates that a company is motivated to instill a positive atmosphere. Years ago, a bank based in Miami, Florida, appointed a Minister of Fun. His job description included arranging theme-based parties, funny announcements, and giveaways, and generally encouraging an upbeat workplace culture.
- Post a joke or cartoon of the day with workplace email or announcements.
- Take full advantage of April Fool’s Day with a mock newsletter or a funny dress code if appropriate.
- Try to inject a bit of levity at the beginning and end of business meetings, whether through prepared jokes, cartoons, or light remarks.
- Consider instituting Comedy Fridays, for which employees are encouraged to dress up in funny ways or post their own jokes. Be sure to include guidelines for taste and sensitivity.
- Bring in a comedian (vet them carefully!) or humorous speaker for corporate events. You might even bring in a clown who does workshops with adults.
- Hire an improvisational theater troupe or stand-up comic for a communication workshop. As with any consultant, be sure the professionals you hire have experience working in organizations.

Help! Humor Emergency!

All joking aside, bear in mind that humor can also have a dark side. Think of the words stand-up comics use when discussing their work. They “kill” or “bomb” onstage. They want their audiences “helpless” with laughter to the point that they “die laughing.” While none of these terms is meant to be taken literally, the implication is clear: Humor can be a power game. If your idea of humor is making an employee or group the butt (another negative term!) of jokes, that strategy may very well backfire. In general, it’s a good idea to steer clear of sarcasm or comments that single out a minority.

When in doubt, experts agree, “punch up” rather than down. That is to say, it’s better not to make fun of employees with less power than you, particularly in front of others. That can make you look like a bully, unless they’re definitely in on the joke. There is nothing worse than having your coworkers laugh *at* you rather than *with* you. Well, maybe there’s one thing worse: having the boss lead the laughter.

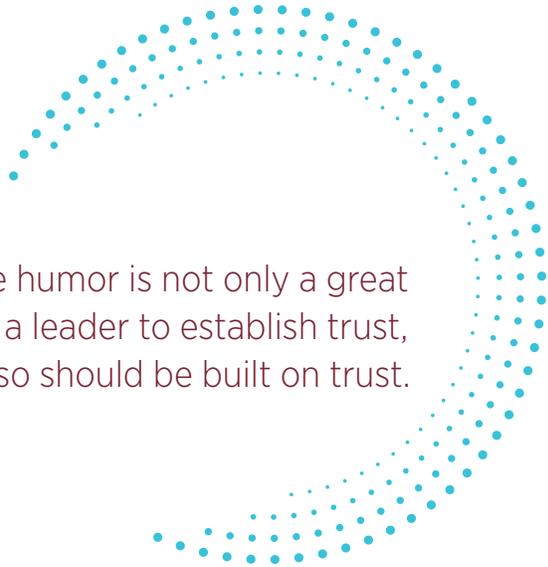
That said, watch what you say about your bosses, too. Instead, try making jokes at your own expense.

The expression “read the room” is useful to keep in mind. Is a coworker truly laughing, or just pretending to enjoy your humor? A true smile can be seen in the crinkles around the eyes, explains Beard. And most of us can spot a fake laugh with both ears tied behind our backs.

In short, genuine humor is not only a great way for a leader to establish trust, but it also should be built on trust. By being authentic, an effective leader connects with employees and draws them in rather than alienating them or making them feel ill at ease.

Humor 101

How do we learn to be funny? In general, says Seppälä, the Swiss Toastmaster, companies looking for assistance with “soft” communication



Genuine humor is not only a great way for a leader to establish trust, but it also should be built on trust.

skills for their employees turn to consultants who use aspects of stand-up comedy or improvisational theater techniques to encourage people to be more creative in their jobs. Of the two options, he says, pure stand-up comedy workshops are more challenging, but they can be very useful.

And where do you think Seppälä, who performs stand-up for companies throughout the world, learned to make people laugh?

“Toastmasters definitely helped me develop my sense of humor,” he says. “The way I got into stand-up comedy was that I saw that I was able to make people laugh in my Toastmasters club meetings, especially when that wasn’t the intention. In particular, I noticed this ability when fulfilling leadership roles in club meetings. Without Toastmasters, I would have never gotten into stand-up.”

How to Bring Humor to Toastmasters

- ♦ Appoint a Joke Master role. Years ago in West Boca Raton, Florida, we had a very funny club member. He was so funny, in fact, that whenever I was Toastmaster of the Day or Contest Master, I appointed him Joke Master. In the course of a meeting, I would call on him to tell a very short joke. He was a smash—and by the way, it did wonders for his speaking skills.
- ♦ Make a big deal of the Humorous Speech Contest at the club level. Plan for it ahead of time by bringing humor into club meetings in the form of jokes, cartoons, funny sayings, humorous speakers, etc.
- ♦ Select funny or simply uncommon words for the Word of the Day. It’s not so easy to use “burp,” “banana,” or “bugaboo” during a meeting without being funny.
- ♦ Ask the meeting Toastmaster to put a joke or cartoon on the weekly agenda page.
- ♦ Encourage all evaluators to give a shout-out to speakers who were funny.
- ♦ Coordinate a themed meeting on humor.

—Caren S. Neile, Ph.D.



I'm just not a funny person, you say. Don't despair. Not everyone was born with the same-size funny bone. You don't actually need to crack jokes to demonstrate a sense of humor. You can simply encourage others to make them and then share the laugh. After all, comedians love an audience. If you really want to take a stab at being genuinely funny, there are still plenty of ways to do it. For one thing, a lot of humor relies on wordplay. Did someone say "Dad jokes"? Puns are usually a safe bet, as long as you check that everybody gets the joke. (Case in point: Did you understand that in the joke at the start of this article the word "yucks" means "laughs"?) Just don't be afraid of groans!

Other important elements of humor include extreme exaggeration and the reversal of expectations. Say the office is notoriously freezing. You think your boss is going to show up at work in a winter jacket, but she comes dressed in a parka, ski boots, and snow goggles, instead. Now that's funny! Or, what about just being silly? Sight gags or pratfalls can also be a

safe way to elicit laughter, although pranks in the workplace are best handled with care. Not everyone appreciates them.

You and your team can get into the spirit of humor by making a point to watch funny movies or TV shows or listen to humor podcasts. Or maybe learn a few jokes. Just be sure to practice them well. As they say, the secret of comedy is—wait for it—timing! And what happens if a joke or other humorous attempt falls flat? You could always say something like, "It was a joke, I promise!" or "Back to the drawing board with that one," or maybe even, "I should probably take some comedy classes after work."

Come to think of it, that probably wouldn't be a bad idea.

Caren Schnur Neile, Ph.D., has written for the magazine for 1,267 years. She has won four Grammys singing the praises of Toastmasters. Visit her at carenneile.com.

A Panel Moderator's Guide to Success

Tips for facilitating lively, engaging, and informative sessions.

By Joel Schwartzberg

The moderator's job is serving the audience, and moderators should make every decision with that objective in mind.

Congratulations on being selected as a conference panel moderator. As you prepare for the role, it's essential to keep in mind your key objective: to engage and enlighten the audience. That means asking probing questions, not deliberately provocative ones, and keeping the session lively, productive, focused, and moving. The moderator's job is not about satisfying panelists' agendas, egos, or ambitions, nor about satiating the moderator's personal curiosity. It's about serving the audience, and moderators should make every decision with that objective in mind.

Below are 10 tips that best support a panel atmosphere of learning and inspiration.

1 Know the topic.

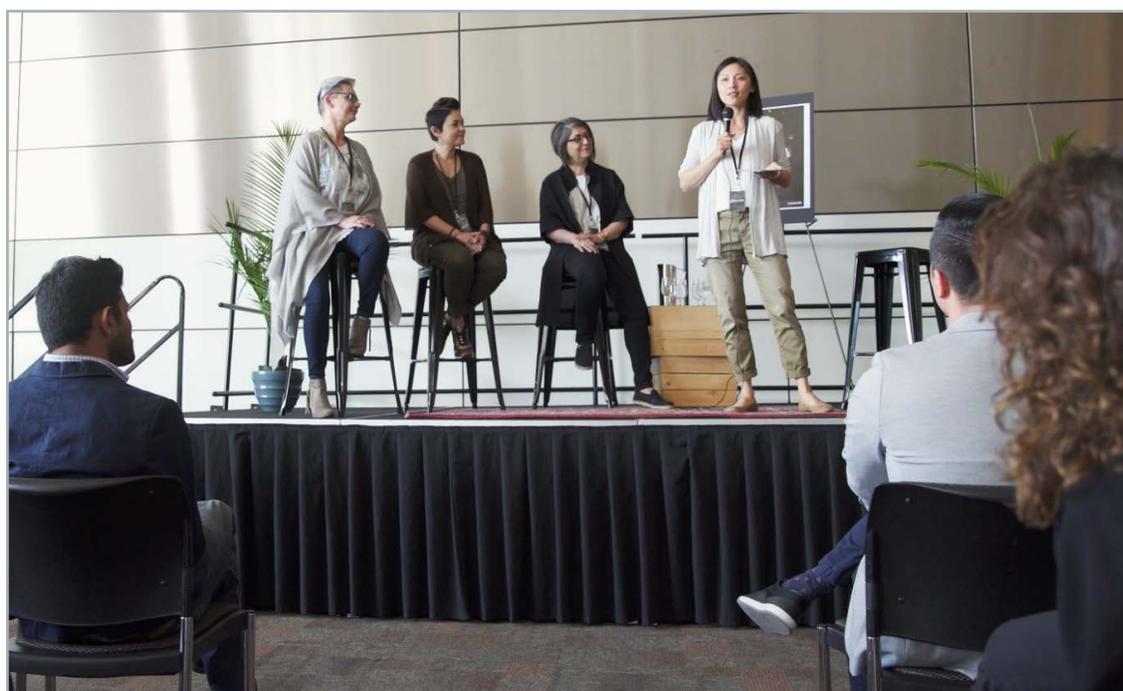
If you're unfamiliar with the discussion topic, do research online and take notes, but make sure the articles you read are very recent. You don't need to be an expert yourself, but you should know the fundamentals: what the topic is, how

it manifests in and influences society, and how the audience will benefit from the information. Being knowledgeable also helps you develop more relevant, on-the-spot questions.

2 Know the panelists.

Try to arrange a call with your panelists ahead of time or at least meet them just before the event to establish comfort and create rapport with them, as well as field any last-minute requests or concerns. Use this time to confirm their titles and/or areas of expertise, as well as the pronunciation of their names; don't make assumptions. Seeming unprepared about your panelists—particularly something as basic as mispronouncing their names or misstating roles—can harm your credibility.

Keep panelist names, titles, and short physical descriptions of them ("red shirt," "sandy hair") in an accessible place to ensure you can call on them quickly and accurately. Include phonetic pronunciation; writing "SUR-sha" for a panelist named Saoirse, for example.



3 Prepare your questions wisely.

Since most of the moderator's job will be spent asking questions, here are a series of recommendations on question conception, construction, and delivery.

- Prepare up to 10 questions in advance. Include at least one for each panelist. Know your first question and your last question, and to whom you will ask them. Every question should elicit a revelation, valuable learning, or suggestion to the audience.
- Your first question should be fairly broad or definitional. This "softball" approach will give you and your panelists confidence and warm up the audience with a baseline of understanding.
- Rank and ask questions in order of relevance and interest to the audience. Put the name of each panelist in all caps by the question you will be asking them so you can easily lead with, "SAM, here's one for you ..."
- Keep questions short and simple, so you can improvise, contextualize, and rephrase them, and avoid getting bogged down by words. Think of the questions as thought-starters you raise, not as scripts you read word-for-word.
- It's okay to ask the panelists in advance for questions they'd like to be asked, but scrutinize those as they come in to ensure they serve the interests of the discussion and the audience, not exclusively the panelist. ("Tell us more about the book you wrote!")
- Finally, be careful about asking all panelists to answer the same question, even at the end. Chances are, some of those answers will be redundant, and you may get several responses like "I was going to say the same thing Paul just said."

4 Introduce yourself and the panelists.

If you're not introduced by someone, do it yourself. Give your name and title; remember that you are an integral part of the discussion, not just someone who simply manages it, so your credibility is important.

Introducing panelists is about quickly establishing why their insights are relevant to the discussion. Don't share comprehensive biographies; stick to one to three details and avoid laundry

lists of achievements or accolades. Sometimes a professional title says enough. And make sure the lengths of your introductions are equally balanced among panelists.

Having the panelists introduce themselves may seem like a safe move, but it can be a risky proposition because you're handing over control. If panelists are going to introduce themselves, talk to them ahead of time about sticking to (1) who they are and (2) what they do. Explain that brevity is critical to allow adequate time for discussion and audience questions.

5 Convey the objective.

All panel discussions should elevate audience understanding in some way. So as you start, don't just describe the discussion ("We're going to talk about X"). Convey the impact of that discussion ("We're going to explore how X can/will impact Y").

6 Contextualize the questions.

To elevate spontaneity and promote a live atmosphere, contextualize prepared questions with an opening phrase like "I've heard that ..." "I recently read ..." or "Here's a question we've been talking about on my team ..." This tactic will help you avoid the robotic "and the next question is ..." which completely marginalizes the moderator.

You can also start a question merely by connecting it to a corresponding project: "This question is about the success of last month's campaign ..." or by referencing another panelist's expertise: "Kelly, you have experience with this from a legal perspective. Can you share ..."

7 Respond to answers when it adds value.

Though you're not a panelist, you are a panel participant, so feel free to add a quick bit of insight or agreement, or ask a follow-up question, so long as the speaking time remains balanced, and your contribution is adding meaningful value—not just more words—to the discussion.

You can also thank panelists for their individual answers but be careful not to say it after every answer. Caution: Responding with "good point" or "well said" is problematic because you don't want to imply other panelists make lesser points or are less eloquent.

8 Spread the wealth.

It's your job to ensure every panelist gets a moment to speak, whether you direct a question to them originally or secondarily ("Same question to you, Cynthia ..."). Don't let a single panelist dominate the discussion.

If a panelist seems to be giving a speech versus contributing a point, look for an opportunity to intervene with "Thank you, Roger" or a quick transition like "That's a good point, Sandy. I'm interested in what the other panelists have to say about that." You can also force a panelist to summarize by saying, "So what you're basically saying is ..." or asking a quick yes/no follow-up question.

Remember: As panel moderator, you're acting in the interest of the audience, so it's your job to make sure the discussion is balanced, even if you must politely intervene to enforce that parity.

9 Watch your time.

Keep track of the end-time of the discussion to ensure you have enough time to take audience questions and wrap things up. Even if live questions dry up, you can always return to your prepared ones, if you came with enough of them.

Never beg the audience for questions or wait too long for them. When you ask for questions and no one contributes, count silently to five, then move on to a backup question or something you conceive on the spot. It's better to end a panel session a little early than have periods of awkward silence or end with time-killing irrelevance.

10 Wrap it up.

After the final question is answered, two bits of appreciation are required: Thank your panelists for their input, and thank the audience for their attendance and questions. Then proceed with the next order of business, such as handing things back to the conference organizer or announcing the next event or activity.

Remember that the panel discussion ends not with the panel's last answer but with the moderator's final words. Good luck and have fun!

Joel Schwartzberg is the senior director of strategic and executive communications for a national nonprofit, a presentation coach, and author of several books, including *Get to the Point!* *Sharpen Your Message* and *Make Your Words Matter*. Follow him on Twitter @TheJoelTruth.



Toastmasters on Vacation

The benefits of international
travel are boundless.

By Maureen Zappala, DTM

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NAME OF PASSENGER JESSA SMITH	FLIGHT JMG123	NAME OF PASSENGER JESSA SMITH	FLIGHT JMG123
FROM LONDON	DATE 08 AUG 21	FROM LONDON	DATE 08 AUG 21
TO PARIS	TIME 08:45	TO PARIS	TIME 08:45
BARCODE	08 AUG 21	BARCODE	08 AUG 21

Tom Hobbs,
DTM, of Denver,
Colorado, in
Blarney, Ireland.



“I have a stronger appreciation of the international nature of the organization. I was pleasantly surprised by the consistency of the visitor experience across cultures.”

—ROBERT GREEN, DTM



When Greg Gazin, DTM, of Spiritual Living Toastmasters in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, traveled to San Francisco, he added to his vacation by visiting a Toastmasters club in the area. Gazin, host of *The Toastmasters Podcast*, was welcomed warmly and he jumped right into the action.

“I served as evaluator, speaker, and Table Topics participant,” he recalls. “As a Past District Governor, I explained how things worked in our District. One club fed me, but would not accept payment. They said (in fun), ‘Canadian dollars are no good here!’ They asked me to be the Ah-Counter and the ‘Eh!’ Counter—a Canadian thing.”

“After returning home I received a thank-you note, with an invitation to join the club—even though it was over 1,500 miles away.”

Gazin’s experience is typical of many members who took the opportunity pre-COVID to visit other Toastmasters clubs while on vacation in faraway destinations. It’s an exercise in international fellowship and fun, they say, and a chance to expand their cultural horizons.

Of course, people had to dramatically curtail vacation plans the past few years, as COVID wreaked havoc on the world and caused a seismic shift in global travel.

The Impact (and Silver Lining) of the Pandemic

However, all that change came with an unanticipated benefit—a surge in online Toastmasters clubs and meetings, with members seeking to maintain their skills while connecting with others in a safe and convenient way. Members could participate from anywhere in the world, creating opportunities to network and collaborate beyond the traditional geographic boundaries.

As many countries ease up on travel restrictions, and as people grow more comfortable (and restless), travel is opening up again. The World Tourism Organization found that global tourist volume declined by around 73% in 2020 compared to 2019. However, as the pandemic has begun to wane, the industry is starting to rebound. This year, global tourism is predicted to reach approximately 80% to 95% of pre-pandemic levels, according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

While technology has made it easier than ever to connect with people across the globe, nothing can replace the feeling of meeting someone face-to-face and experiencing their presence in the real world. Some members have even enjoyed meeting other members from around the world online—and then later seeing them in person.

Kathy Draper, from Wichita, Kansas, says, “I am in an international virtual club, Personal Growth Leaders, which is based in Ireland but has members from Malaysia, India, Canada, the U.S., Poland, Africa, and Ireland. I got to meet one of them at the 2022 Nashville International Convention who moves between the U.K. and Australia. I’m hoping to meet even more members at the 2023 convention in The Bahamas.”

“The feeling of meeting the people that used to be in those little squares is priceless.”

Benefits of Travel (If You’re Ready)

Ready to venture out? Supplementing your vacation or work trip with a visit to a new club in a new country offers opportunities for cultural connection, along with recommendations for local eateries. It’s easier than you might think, especially now, and it’s a great way to enhance a trip.

For instance, Fursey Gotuaco, of Future Champion Advanced Toastmasters Club in Hangzhou, China, recently visited a club in Bangkok while on vacation. Fabiola Cleofa, DTM, of Curacao (Dutch Caribbean), visited Toastmasters Medellín in Colombia. Tom Hobbs, DTM, of Denver, Colorado, has visited a whopping 197 clubs around the world, including Ireland, London, Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, and Tasmania. Virtually, he has visited 26 clubs for a total of 223 clubs. Wow!

Studies indicate that vacations can reduce stress, increase productivity, improve physical health, and contribute to an overall sense of well-being. International travel has the advantage of increasing your empathy for a world beyond your own. You learn that most people around the world want the same things: good relationships, prosperity, and a sense of purpose.

One surprising benefit of international travel is that it can improve creativity and innovation. Adam Galinsky, a Columbia Business School professor who has studied the connection between international travel and creativity, says, “Foreign experiences increase cognitive flexibility. The key is multicultural engagement, immersion, and adaptation. Someone who lives abroad and doesn’t engage with the local culture will likely get less of a creative boost than someone who travels abroad and really engages in the local environment.”



1. Fabiola Cleofa, DTM (right), of Curaçao with Angela Cook of Toastmasters Medellín in Colombia.
2. Lance Webster, DTM, of North Hollywood, California, with friends he made in Chengdu, China.
3. Carolyn Becker, DTM, of Ropeley, Queensland, Australia, visits Singapore Orchid Gardens.

The Toastmasters brand gives a sense of familiarity in a foreign environment. No matter the country, the core meeting structure is the same. Most clubs follow a similar agenda with the same roles. There is no hierarchy in members, from the newest to the more seasoned (including the International President and World Champions of Public Speaking), the meetings roles are the same.

After visiting a club in Cairo, Robert Green, DTM, of Clayfield Toastmasters in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, says, “I have a stronger appreciation of the international nature of the organization. I was pleasantly surprised by the consistency of the visitor experience across cultures.”

You’ll learn new things, like marketing tips or creative meeting agendas, to bring back to your own club. One member was intrigued with a club that had a “mentor meeting” every few months. Another visitor learned a different way to get Table Topics® volunteers.

You can also learn how visitors feel when they’re a guest at your club. Past International Director TK O’Geary, DTM, of Albuquerque Challenge Toastmasters Club in Albuquerque, New Mexico, says, “I learned how others responded to the different way people speak. I learned how I come across in another culture. Despite being from different cultures, we have many similarities even though we are so far apart in miles.”

The most common similarity visitors to clubs in other countries note is the friendliness and welcoming behavior toward visitors. The differences include things like use of technology, energy level, food at the meeting, degree of formality, meeting venues, club size, and age range of members. Some clubs are more multicultural, some have more directly-to-the-point evaluations, and some have an intense camaraderie, going so far as to plan a weekend getaway as a group. Many clubs are bilingual, with English being one of the languages.

With Toastmasters now in 144 countries around the world, it’s easy to mingle with the international members. Tourist spots are terrific, but going off the main path to visit a local club can be a rich experience.

Making Connections and Understanding Cultures

Describing how club visits enhanced his travel experience, Lance Webster, DTM, of North Hollywood, California, says, “A cruise on the Danube River sounded like a great relaxing vacation, but for this 23-year DTM and Past District Director, it was hard to imagine going all the way to Hungary just for sightseeing. I wanted to meet new people and make a difference. What better way than by visiting at least one Toastmasters club?”

With careful planning, he visited six clubs, gave two speeches, conducted a leadership workshop, persuaded four visitors to join Toastmasters, and gained two dozen new Facebook friends from the other side of the globe.

The Toastmasters language of applause and encouragement transcends geography. Over and over, members report warm welcomes from host clubs in other countries. The opportunity to participate makes the experience especially rewarding.



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4. Susan Jahns, DTM (right), with Allene Lewis, DTM, both of Florence Toastmasters Club in Florence, Arizona, near Malaga, Spain.

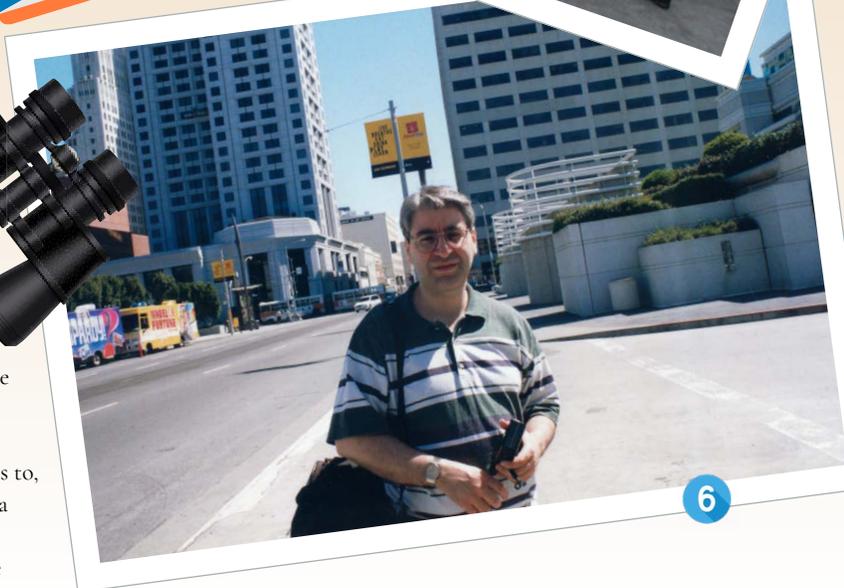


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5. Robert Green, DTM, of Spring Hill, Queensland, Australia, visits the Giza pyramids in Egypt.



6. Greg Gazin, DTM, of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, in San Francisco.



6

How Do You Find a Club?

Finding a Toastmasters club in another country is easy. There are three primary ways to do it.

1 The Toastmasters website. The simplest way to find a club is to, well, visit the [Find a Club](#) page on the Toastmasters website. Input a postal code or address of where you'll be, and a map of the area will appear, along with club website and contact information. Contact the club to confirm meeting time and location, and ask any other pertinent questions.

Carolyn Becker, DTM, from Ropeley, Queensland, Australia, visited Thomson Toastmasters in Singapore. She says, "I found a club using the Toastmasters website, and sent an email saying I was in Singapore. I asked if I could visit, and asked about any special requirements, public transport to the venue, and if English would be readily understood."

2 Internet research. Do an internet search to find a particularly strong club. Katherine Pratt, DTM, of San Mateo Toastmasters in Burlingame, California, did extensive research before visiting clubs in Japan and Malaysia. She says, "I Googled 'Toastmasters, Tokyo' and found the top few clubs that were listed. I checked out their websites and based my choices on the information published. To find a club in Malaysia, I used Find a Club because there were fewer choices where I was staying."

3 Network with personal connections. If you've met members in other countries, even if only online, contact them. Join the Official Toastmaster International Members Group on Facebook, a very active group with members from around the world, and ask if any clubs in your desired area are meeting in person or hybrid.

Your District officers will know other District leaders worldwide, so ask them for connections. Two-time District 38 Director Basha McCrumb,

DTM, of Newark, Delaware, not only visits clubs around the world, she's a member of clubs in three countries: the United States, the United Arab Emirates, and Bangladesh. "I started with Find a Club, but I also contacted friends from District 105 that I met through previous leadership activities. They invited me to various clubs and events, and even asked me to serve as a contest judge."

After the long period of lockdowns and restrictions, it's no surprise that people are itching to get back out there and explore the world, meet new people, and experience life in all its fullness once again.

Pack that toothbrush, comfortable shoes, and a passport. Then look up some Toastmasters clubs. When you cross the border into a new country, you'll create a new memory of a wonderful experience, and make friends in the process.

Susan Jahns, DTM, of Florence Toastmasters in Florence, Arizona, visited Achievers Toastmasters while vacationing in Malaga, Spain. She says, "Make the effort to find a local club and meet the members. I'm a widow, and I travel all summer. It's a great way to spend an hour or two meeting new friends."

Maureen Zappala, DTM, is a professional speaker, author, and the founder of the speaking service *High Altitude Strategies*. Learn more at maureenz.com.

It's Your Turn to Toast

Get past your fear by learning to C.H.E.E.R.S.

By Eddie Rice

The brother of the groom grasped the wireless microphone and cleared his throat: "Well ... you're probably all as surprised as I am to see me up here. My brother and I have hated each other most of our lives. So ... good luck, I guess."

The mic dropped, and he exited the dance floor.

"I didn't even give my normal 'Let's give him a round of applause,'" said the disc jockey emceeding the event. "I just hit the next song and hoped Lionel Richie could perform a much-needed exorcism."

If you've been asked to give a toast or just a few words at a special occasion, the goal is to tell the emotional truth of your relationship with the person being honored. It's meant to celebrate a milestone and look toward the future or look back fondly on the past. And unlike that brother of the groom toast, you don't have to be brutal to be honest.

For many people, fear can get to them on the big day. Fear paralyzes; fear weakens; fear can eclipse our desire to perform at our best. Yet think of the moments when fear has been a positive motivator in your life. Have you ever put together a large presentation for work, knowing how much it mattered to your reputation? Think of your first time as a parent, and how much love and fear motivated you to do your best to care for a living being.

How can you channel that same love for the person you're honoring, to create something wonderful instead of disastrous? Below you will find the necessary tools to create a memorable toast. Just remember the guidelines though the acronym "C.H.E.E.R.S."

C=Concise

No one ever complained that a toast was "too short." Keep yours to five minutes or under. To find the right word count, multiply 150 (the typical amount of words we speak per minute) by five, which comes to 750 words. You can calibrate that number higher or lower depending on your natural speaking rate.

Also, find out the order of speakers for the event. If you're among the first, it might be okay to speak up to seven minutes. However, if you're the last to speak, and the event is nearly over, keep it under five minutes.

H=Honor

The best toasts have two goals: honoring the person and honoring the event. You want to celebrate the person you're toasting by telling great stories that compliment

them. You want to also talk about the significance of the event in the lives of those attending.

Include stories about the person you're honoring, why you're grateful they are in your life, and why this milestone—retirement, wedding, birthday, or other occasion—is also important in the lives of your listeners.

Take out lame introductory and inside jokes, or comments that would embarrass the honoree or attendees. Cut any thank-you list that's so long it would make the Oscars awards start playing their send-off music.

E=Ego

There's nothing wrong with wanting to perform your best and you should be motivated to do so with any speech, but you cross the line when you make it about you rather than the person or people you're honoring. It's not the moment to start your stand-up career, and no one is going to be celebrating the anniversary of your toast one year from now. Take the moment to shine a light on the person you're celebrating rather than stealing the lime-light for yourself.

E=Engaging Stories

In a toast under five minutes, you usually have time to tell one engaging story. Here are some ideas to help you plan which story you want to tell:

Toast Research

While much of this article is geared toward a toast for any occasion, I launched an online survey of 273 randomly selected wedding toasters, and found the following, which can apply to any toast you give:

- ◆ 77% of wedding toasters had two alcoholic drinks or fewer.
- ◆ 50-75% practiced for one to two hours, if not more, before the big day.
- ◆ 20% sought help from family, friends, or a professional writer for feedback.
- ◆ 64% kept their toasts to five minutes and under.



Take the moment to shine a light on the person you're celebrating rather than stealing the limelight for yourself.

- They were there for me when ...
- The funniest story I can remember about them is when ...
- I learned the most about them when they ...
- They showed their true character when ...
- I can never forget the time when they ...

R=Relatable

Keep the inside jokes to a minimum—if you have to explain a joke, it ceases to be funny. Instead, choose stories and anecdotes that the entire audience can enjoy. In addition, try to keep everything family-friendly. You don't know the sensitivities of everyone in the audience. Leave the Vegas stories in Vegas.

S=Structure

Keep it simple:

1. Introduce yourself and your relationship to the person you're toasting.
2. Talk about the significance of the person or event, whether it's a retirement, wedding, milestone birthday, or the day of a memorial.
3. Tell one great story about the honoree.
4. Give advice, if appropriate. Tell how the honoree's story can give us lessons on how to approach work, marriage, and/or life.
5. End with "Raise your glass," and a simple quotation. To make the toast unique, find something that the honoree loves from a favorite song, book, or movie.

Practice Your Toast

First, record yourself and listen to the audio. Or if you prefer, get a transcript of the recording (Toastmasters' AI partner, [Yoodli](#), provides transcription) and edit your speech.

Second, listen to others' feedback, but don't get oversaturated with too many opinions or lavish praise. Instead, look for the common threads among the feedback. If you're a Toastmaster, your club may be willing to give you the stage to try out your toast. Your fellow club members can offer constructive criticism.

Third, if you can, practice where you are going to give the toast. See if you can get into the event space early and map out where the crowd is

going to sit and where you are going to stand to give your toast.

Internalize, Rather Than Memorize

Know your speech so well that you can give it from a bulleted list on notecards. Notecards are better than using a cell phone, as your battery might die, and the backlight from the phone can cause problems for the photographer. Plus, you may have to squint to read the small text. If you use notecards, write on them with a Sharpie marker, as pencil or pen may be hard to see under dim lights.

One thing I tell the people I work with is to aim for 90% rather than 100%. Don't get hung up on trying to be perfect or imitating what you saw in a movie. You don't have Hollywood screenwriters or *Saturday Night Live* comedy writers crafting the perfect lines for you. Instead, speak from the heart and remember to honor the person or honor the event.

Eddie Rice is the author of *Toast: Short Speeches, Big Impact*, and a member of *Eastside Toastmasters Club in Shaker Heights, Ohio*. You can find out more about him at ricespeechwriting.com.



Members of clubs in Division G gather for their Toastmasters en Familia event in Puerto Rico.

Get Outside Your Club Space

Events beyond standard meetings forge camaraderie and creativity.

By Andrew Miller

Is your Toastmasters routine getting stale—too much “same old-same old”? If so, it’s time for bold new ideas. Try things that are different, social, and outside of your typical club space or format. Get together for a picnic, a party, or a mountain retreat. Hold your meeting in a busy restaurant or a local park. Put on a variety show and invite the public.

Social activities allow people to get to know each other—their interests, strengths, and backgrounds. It has become clear that productivity and morale improve when employees get together after work hours. While Toastmasters isn’t work, external events can have the same benefits for your members, therefore reinvigorating your club. An enthusiastic and fulfilled member is more likely to sign up for meeting roles, give a speech, or fill an officer role.

I attended my first such event soon after joining We Can Speak-Hablar Podemos Toastmasters Club in Tallahassee, Florida. It was the club’s second annual Picnic in the Park. There were games, swimming, an awards ceremony, lunch, and plenty of networking at this Division-wide activity. While at the picnic, I learned that another member had a scientific background very similar to mine, and I watched our members interact, got to know their families, and learned about their likes and dis-

likes. When we met again on Zoom, I knew them better.

According to Bobby Blackmon, DTM, former Club President, members hungered for something different after the pandemic. The picnic was a welcome alternative to Zoom. “And some of us made new friends,” Blackmon says.

Later that year, several clubs wanted to connect again, and a group picked grapes at a local vineyard. In the fall, we went bowling.

It’s possible that some members will feel like they are too busy to participate in anything beyond the standard club meeting. Blackmon suggests highlighting the fun you can have spending time with fellow members. He also says, “Schedule things far enough in advance so they can prepare.” And get them involved. “They’re more likely to attend if they helped with the planning.”

Remember: People Are Social

Boyan Kelchev, President of Speak and Lead Toastmasters in Sofia, Bulgaria, points out that social gatherings foster new experiences and discoveries. They encourage members to connect in ways they haven’t before. “We build camaraderie every time we get together,” Kelchev explains. People are social animals, and Toastmasters provides a

group identity. Club members are proud to say, “I am a Toastmaster.”

Speak and Lead members gather at a local restaurant after each meeting. In April 2023, they held a two-day retreat at a resort in the Rila Mountains. In addition to conducting a formal meeting and a speech contest, they ate, danced, and sang. Spouses, children, and non-members attended.

In March 2023, 11 clubs in Division G held Toastmasters en Familia in a park in San Juan, Puerto Rico. “Many of us had not seen each other since COVID,” says Nora Mújica Trenché, DTM. “We especially wanted friends and families to attend.” They ate and played paddleball, Jenga, and dominoes. This family day attracted the attention of others in the park, and many

sternwheeler, for a three-hour dinner cruise on the St. Johns River. The club also has fireside educational chats in members’ homes and holiday-themed parties.

Embrace Unique Events and Holidays

During the warmer months, Madrid Advanced Speakers and other local clubs meet in El Parque del Buen Retiro. They had a memorable holiday meeting in December, followed by a festive lunch. They are committed to helping Toastmasters prepare for contests, and every year they purchase contest recordings from the International Convention. They meet to watch and evaluate the speeches given by the World Champion of Public Speaking, and the event

those in attendance. This allows Toastmasters Versailles to publicize their club and attract new members.

Entice New Members

Eric Muehling, DTM, Vice President Membership of Tundra Talkers Toastmasters Club in Fairbanks, Alaska, says, “Because we lost members during the pandemic, we decided to ramp up outside activities.” Last summer, they met in a city park for a picnic and officer induction. They hosted a holiday party in December with a potluck and gift exchange. Existing members were enthusiastic, and new people joined.

Natalia Garibay, Vice President Public Relations for Club Tm De Ensenada, in Mexico, said their club holds several events every year to promote Toastmasters and increase membership. Recently she organized “Unidos por La Voz” (United by Voice) to publicize Spanish-speaking clubs throughout the world. Their Zoom event was an expanded version of a regular meeting with six prepared speeches, Table Topics®, evaluations, and networking opportunities. About 125 people from 18 countries participated, and the event attracted new members. The club is no stranger to strong turnouts. Last year, they celebrated their 51st club anniversary with participants from 15 other countries on Zoom.

“We build camaraderie every time we get together.”

—BOYAN KELCHEV

requested information about the organization. That’s another benefit of doing public activities: You might end up gaining potential Toastmasters.

Add Variety

Wayne Tuttle of Raising Champions Advanced Toastmasters in Brampton, Ontario, Canada, says his club holds one external event every month. This past March it was Laugh your Socks Off (LYSO), an online variety show. Over 50 members and guests listened to goofy songs, jokes, and a performance by Tuttle and his hand puppet, Ted (The Turtle-Neck) Turtle. “Variety is important,” Tuttle says. “It keeps people coming.”

The idea for LYSO originated with Niagara On The Lake Toastmasters in Canada. Charlie Kennedy, DTM, says their club started LYSO in 2018, and it is usually held at a cafe in St. Catharines, Ontario. Although not an official club event, the emcee promotes Toastmasters and directs the audience to tables with information about local clubs. Throughout the show, members circulate and talk about Toastmasters.

Winter Park Toastmasters Club, in Winter Park, Florida, draws on a unique venue for outside activities. Each year, the club rents pontoon boats and tours nearby lakes. In the spring, they board a remodeled steam-powered

is hosted for all the clubs in Madrid and any others who would like to attend.

Gavel Clubs operating in prisons can’t meet outside the compound. However, they find ways to spice up their meetings. Last December, the Phoenix Gavel Club at the Walton Correctional Institution in DeFuniak Springs, Florida, held a themed meeting. Members described memorable holiday traditions. Instead of exchanging gifts, the Men of Tomorrow Gavel Club at Madison Correctional Institution, also in Florida, hosted a Secret Santa Claus. Speakers took turns making positive comments about a member without mentioning his name. The others had to guess who was being described. For these Gaveliers, such celebrations provide a much-needed link to the free world.

Marius Popescu, President of Toastmasters Versailles, in Versailles, France, explains that their club meets in restaurants during the holiday season. This helps prepare members to speak in real-world settings with many distractions—which standard meetings don’t provide. These restaurant get-togethers often attract bystanders who later join the club.

Toastmasters Versailles also participates in the Forum des Associations outside Versailles Castle every year. The event invites associations from all over the city to present what they do to

Put Ideas Into Practice

If you want to invigorate your membership, think up some new activities. If you’re short on ideas, visit another club to find out what they’re doing or borrow ideas from clubs highlighted in this article. Regardless, plan events that are innovative and exciting to invigorate your club members and possibly attract new ones.

As Blackmon, my fellow club member, says, “People are happiest when they’re busy. They need to have a sense of purpose.” By bringing together your club members outside of your meetings, they will come back to club meetings with stronger bonds, greater intention, and a renewed sense of excitement.

Andrew Miller retired in 2013 from a career that included research in aquatic systems and university teaching. He is a member of We Can Speak-Podemos Hablar Toastmasters Club in Florida. He volunteers in prisons, restores antique stained-glass windows, and writes. His website is andrewcmiller.com.

Sounds of Silence

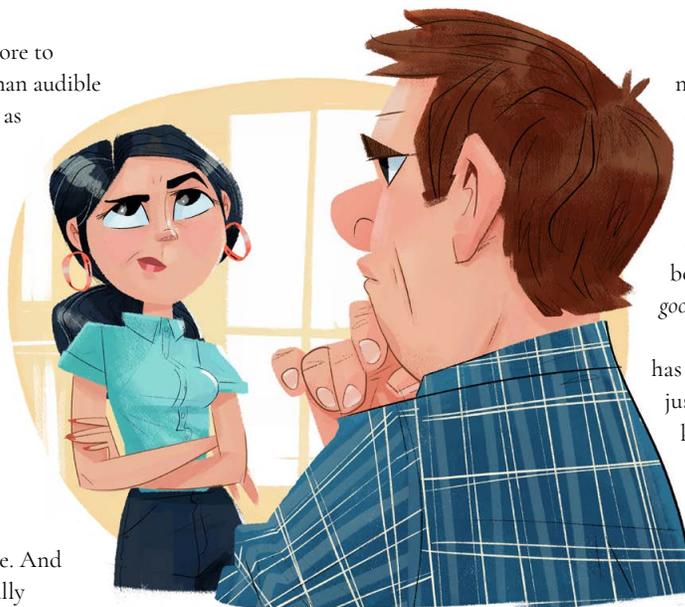
A picture may say a thousand words, but silence just goes on and on.

By John Cadley

We all know that there is more to human communication than audible sounds, otherwise known as “words,” emanating from the larynx. There are facial expressions, hand gestures, head movements, lip formations, leg/foot activity, eye movements, and other forms of “body language” that convey one’s meaning just as clearly as the spoken word—if not more so. We all know people who say or do things that leave us speechless. These people are called husbands and wives.

I am married to a wonderful woman—smart, funny, talented, articulate, perceptive, knowledgeable. And yet there are times when she is literally dumbstruck, when she opens her mouth, but nothing comes out, when I can almost hear her quick, sharp mind scanning all 171,476 words in the English dictionary and failing to find one that even remotely expresses her feelings. Being fairly perceptive myself, I have noticed that these episodes appear to have something to do with me. I see these nonverbal signs as marital semaphores, signals that my ship is somehow off course and without a correction is likely to sink.

My spouse doesn’t need her whole body to make these signs. She can say it all from the neck up. First, there are the eyebrows. When raised, they say: *Oh, really? And where did you get that idea?* Then, of course, the eyes themselves, which contain a vast vocabulary of “looks” that say everything from *You must be kidding* to *No jury would convict me*. These eye movements can be subtle and hard to decipher, which is why I am always grateful for a good old-fashioned eye roll—with its unmistakable meaning: *There’s a limit to my patience and you’re at the CAUTION: DO NOT ENTER sign*. The only time I worry is when the eyes start to roll all the way back. It means that whatever I have done has caused my wife to decide her only recourse is loss of consciousness.



The eyes have even more to tell. They are often referred to as windows to the soul, and like all windows they have shades, called eyelids. If the shades are raised so high I can’t see them, it means shocked astonishment. If

If my wife does
something disagreeable,
I make a sour face.
She says that’s childish,
which it is—I learned
it from my children.

they are half-closed, she is trying to decide if I could have possibly meant whatever it is I just said or did. If they are closed completely, she is in denial, a sort of willful blindness to something she cannot believe she is hearing or seeing.

The lips are a simpler matter. They can only be “pursed,” as if to say: *I do not approve*. But then, that’s all they really need to say, isn’t it?

The head speaks as well. It has a normal lateral rotation of 30%, but the one I look for is a slow, barely perceptible side-to-side motion of no more than one or two degrees, indicating profound weariness, an exhausted attempt to ward off bottom-of-the-well despair, as in: *Say goodnight, kill the lights, my sister was right*. Amazingly, even the back of the head has a language. I don’t know how—it’s just hair—and yet I can look at it and know with absolute certainty that, to paraphrase Hamlet, something is rotten in the state of my marriage.

Now, this business of unspoken meaning goes two ways. I respect and admire my wife tremendously, but she is not perfect. This is when it’s my turn to wave the semaphores. Unlike my wife, however, my eyes are not that expressive. If they’re open, I’m awake; if they’re closed, I’m asleep. And that’s about it. I do use facial expressions. If my wife does something disagreeable, I make a sour face. She says that’s childish, which it is—I learned it from my children. If she says something that I find illogical, I hold out my hands, begging for clarification. That’s when she gives me the eye roll ... but I had my hands out first so I win!

I also cross my arms on my chest to let her know I’m not buying whatever she’s selling. It’s a classic defensive posture, meant to show I intend to stand my ground, and it works. The only downside is there’s not much dinner conversation. Just the sound of chewing, really.

There’s only one nonverbal way out of this impasse—a hug. If it’s returned ... well, that’s language even a troglodyte could understand. And I can, too.

John Cadley is a former advertising copywriter and currently a musician working in upstate New York. Learn more at cadleys.com.

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CLIENT SPOTLIGHT - BO BENNETT, DTM

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

What is a "normal childhood?" Does it include almost being murdered by your sister with an ax? Speeding around town in the back of a station wagon because your mom is chasing an "alien spaceship"? Being busted by the police for intent to light a pond on fire? Tackling your mom to the ground and wrestling a knife out of her hand because she was trying to kill your dad? While my stories may be unique, readers will be able to relate to the broader themes 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 

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