

# LIFE

is a Presentation



PAM  
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# **LIFE IS A PRESENTATION**

**Pam Chambers**

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Pam Chambers

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**Pam Chambers** is known as Hawaii's Presentation Coach. Since 1985, she has helped thousands of people become better communicators - whether they speak to one person, to small groups, or to large audiences.

Pam used to be “the shyest girl in the world,” and avoided standing out in any way. But years later, she was propelled into the limelight when she accepted a position as sales manager for a seminar company in San Francisco. She then put herself through the challenging and rewarding process of becoming a public speaker. And now she teaches others to speak out.

Pam eagerly helps a wide array of clients. She coaches moving men, bodyguards, front-line retailers, entertainers, CPAs, attorneys, bankers, CEOs, and people from any industry you can name - even a shy ten-year-old boy.

You can request a variety of in-house training programs, presentation skills classes open to the public, one-on-one coaching, and keynote speeches.

Pam's style is interactive, entertaining, and practical. She knows how to bring out the best in her audiences, and she is praised for her “wise and cheerful lessons.”

She earned BAs in Communication Disorders and English Literature.



## Acknowledgements

“I’d like to thank everyone I’ve ever met.” That’s what Kelsey Grammer said in his book, *So Far*. My sentiments exactly. No matter what the context of our interaction, you probably had something to do with who I am today.

Whether you sat in one of my audiences, attended a training session, or invited me to work with your staff, this book is possible because of you. I am grateful for the privilege of doing work I love. The fact that my work may matter to others is additionally gratifying.

These articles were originally published in my column, “Stand & Deliver,” which appeared in *Voice of Business*, a newspaper produced by The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii.

Special thanks go to Angela Treat Lyon for designing and creating this book ([AngelaTreatLyonART.com](http://AngelaTreatLyonART.com)).



## **Introduction**

### **Do you suffer from America's #1 fear - speaking in front of others?**

I used to have that fear too. However, I overcame it, and since 1985, I have coached people from all walks of life, helping them gain the confidence and skills to express themselves effectively - whether to one person, to small groups, or to large audiences.

I'm guessing that life has brought you to the place where you must, at least occasionally, speak in front of others. Am I right?

You may be terrified, or you may be confident.

Either way, I have something to offer that will make you a more valuable employee, a more effective leader, a better salesperson, or simply a better communicator with your friends and family.

#### **Here's what I offer:**

- Customized seminars for businesses and organizations
- Presentation skills classes for the public
- Personal one-on-one coaching
- Products that will enhance your communication skills

**Take the following quick survey to find out where you stand:**

## Quick Presentation Skills Survey

**Rate yourself on the following questions, on a scale from 1 to 5 (5 is the highest score), then read what I have to say about your score.**

- I am confident about speaking in front of groups.
- I get my point across.
- When I'm done speaking, my audience knows what action to take.
- I use body language effectively.
- I have good vocal variety, and don't speak in a monotone.
- I dress for maximum effectiveness.
- I organize my presentations so that they make sense.
- I build and maintain rapport with my audience.
- I manage my audience so that I stay in command of the room.

**Score:** \_\_\_\_\_

- **9 - 15 points:** I sympathize. I've been there. You probably dread public speaking, and think it's hopeless. It's not. Read on!
- **16 - 25 points:** You're a good candidate for my Level I Presentation Course because you have some foundation on which to build. It would be helpful to know which of your scores were the lowest. Feel free to email me at [speakout@PamChambers.com](mailto:speakout@PamChambers.com) and I'll respond.
- **26 - 35 points:** Often people in this range believe that they don't need to study presentation skills because they're getting by well enough as it is. If you have dreams of greater leadership, you must be great at giving presentations. Learn more!
- **36 - 45 points:** Fantastic! Do you believe in fine-tuning? You are someone I could really have fun with! We could work together on perfecting your pauses, using the well-placed question to keep your audience hooked, and making your call-for-action irresistible! Please contact me. I'd love to meet you.

Aloha,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pam".

Pam Chambers

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Life is a Presentation

## **Ten Keys to Freedom of Speech**

### **1. Seize the opportunity.**

You will improve with practice. Stand and introduce yourself at networking events, offer to lead a meeting, or be a part of a panel discussion.

### **2. Clarify your purpose and call for action.**

What is the purpose of your presentation? What is your desired outcome? Make your intended result clear at the beginning of your presentation and end with a compelling call for action.

### **3. Know and love your subject.**

When you speak about what you know and love, you are convincing, credible, and compelling. The sparkle in your eye and passion in your voice make people want to listen.

### **4. Connect with your audience.**

You are creating a relationship with your audience. Eye contact closes the gap, allows you to read your audience, and shows that you care about them. Forget any advice you've heard about looking over people's heads. It takes at least two seconds of eye contact to convey, "I'm with you."

### **5. Ask questions.**

Questions keep audience members alert and involved, and give you valuable information with which to shape your presentation.

**6. Pause.**

Pauses add impact and allow people to reflect on your message. Give your audience a chance to breathe, think, and agree with you.

**7. Be specific.**

Use relevant details and examples to paint pictures for your audience to step into. Details make any presentation more memorable.

**8. Read your audience.**

Your audience is constantly speaking to you. Notice body language, facial expressions, and energy level. Respond appropriately.

**9. Release control.**

You may spend much time preparing for your presentation. But how many times have things gone differently from how you planned? Hold your presentation in a loose hand, allowing flexibility and intuition to play a role.

**10. Let them in on it.**

Allow yourself to be open, honest, and revealing. Let people know who you are. If your mind goes blank, admit it. Someone will remind you of where you were going.





## **No More Fear!**

**If you were to ask 1,000 people to name their greatest fear, the majority would say, “Speaking in front of people!”**

Face it. If you’re in business, it is inevitable that you will be called upon to deliver a report, lead a meeting, introduce yourself at an association meeting, or speak before a large audience.

Many people suffer their whole lives over the anxiety of “blowing it” in these situations. There’s hope. There is a way to experience no more fear. In this book, you will learn strategies and philosophies that will make a big difference in how you approach your next presentation.

A basic truth about human beings is that we will do just about anything to avoid pain. We want pleasure. If the thought of speaking in front of people fills you with discomfort, you’ll avoid it. But there is also discomfort in not overcoming this fear. Think about it. What does it cost you to allow your fear to persist?

What pleasure would you gain if you overcame your fear? Probably greater confidence, self-esteem, and personal and professional power. But first, you need to make a decision: “I am going to overcome my fear. I can do it.” This book will help.



## Rewind

**If speaking in front of groups isn't your favorite activity, let me ask you this: When did it become uncomfortable?**

Probably not last month, or last year, but when you were in grade school. You had to get up in front of the class and give an oral book report, or describe your science project. Perhaps for the first time in your young life, your friends became your enemies. You flubbed a word. Someone snickered. Your face turned red. More people snickered. Your mind went blank. Your teacher frowned and told you to continue. Bam! You made a decision: "This is not safe." And forever after, memories such as these were linked to being in front of people.

In my classes, people ask, "What am I so afraid of? Normally I'm a confident person!" I think that at the bottom of any fear lies the horrendous thought that you might be so unacceptable, make such a fool of yourself, and be so unrespectable, that you might as well pack up and leave town. The city would be abuzz about how awful you were. Most basic, you might be abandoned - left to circulate through the universe, outcast and alone.

Sounds melodramatic, but people nod in agreement when I describe it this way. What can you do if you have a presentation in the near future?

- Tell yourself the truth about how you think and feel.
- Realize that that was then, and this is now.
- Discover a desire to share your message. How will it help people?
- Know your subject, and if possible, love your subject.
- Clarify your intended result and call for action.
- Figure out what to wear.



## **Let Them in On It**

**Previously, I listed Ten Keys to Freedom of Speech. Let's focus on Key #10 – “Let them in on it.” This is my favorite key. It is the solution to just about everything.**

Your mind goes blank. Have you ever tried to pretend that your mind wasn't blank, hoping that as you stared at the ceiling, your next words would come to you?

Sometimes when I'm speaking, this is what happens: I'm telling a story to illustrate a point. As I come to the end

of the story, I realize that I've forgotten why I'm telling it. The solution is to let them in on it.

I say, "My mind just went blank. Why am I telling you this?"

People laugh, and someone says, "You were making a point about...."

I say, "Oh, yes! Thanks!" and I'm on track again.

I've never received any bad marks on my evaluation sheets because of this. I've never seen an audience rush out of the room in search of a perfect speaker whose mind won't go blank.

Another example: As you're giving a presentation, you notice that people look confused. Instead of doggedly continuing, hoping they'll catch up, let them in on it. "It seems that I've confused some of you. Let me say that another way."

Or if you get the feeling that people don't agree with you, say, "I get the feeling that some of you have a different opinion. Tell me about it."

Say what you see. This relieves you and your audience.

See the truth and tell the truth. For people who want to give a perfect presentation, this is a challenge. There's a wall between trying to be perfect and allowing yourself to

be genuine. But it's a tissue-paper wall - one that you can easily break through. As my mentor, Stewart Emery, says, "You don't have to rehearse to be yourself."

What a relief.



## **Controlling Nervousness**

**Does your presentation begin when you start to speak?**

Actually, it begins the moment you agree to speak. From that point on, your presentation begins to take shape. Positive thinking makes a difference.

**If you catch yourself imagining the worst, stop.**

Change the channel and replace those images with scenes of success. You stride confidently to the front of the room. People look at you with interest and acceptance. You feel good about yourself and your message.

**Get to the meeting early.**

As people arrive, greet them and introduce yourself. Look for people who might intimidate you, and connect with them ahead of time. This way, audience members are friends instead of scary strangers.

### **Don't say "fear." Say "energy!"**

The symptoms associated with fear (clammy hands, pounding heart, knocking knees) are the results of adrenaline. Anything wrong with that? Not if you think of it as energy!

Granted, sometimes it seems as though there's too much of it coursing through a too-small container. The solution is to make the container bigger. Move your body, gesture broadly, walk into the audience. Use that energy to make your presentation exciting and dynamic!

### **Find the friendly faces.**

I used to have a perverse fascination with audience members who appeared to disapprove of me or my message. I gave them too much power over me.

You gain positive energy by connecting with the people who support you. As you gain confidence, you will be able to accept even the scowlers and nay-sayers.



## **How to Structure Your Presentation**

**Here is a ten-step formula for structuring your presentation. People who follow this "recipe" report good results.**

**Step One:**

Know your intended result. What is your purpose? What do you want to happen as a result of your presentation? Tell your audience exactly what you expect. “When you leave this room, you will have three ideas you can use this afternoon.”

**Step Two:**

Tell a story about yourself. This will bring your audience close to you. For example, I tell people about how I used to be afraid of public speaking - how my knees would shake and my voice would quiver. (People seem to like hearing about this.)

**Step Three:**

State your credentials. “And since I mastered my fear, I’ve been teaching others how to do the same. I work with a wide range of companies, offer private coaching, etc.” This takes you from friend to authority.

**Step Four:**

Get information about your audience. Tell them that you have three or four questions so that you can personalize your presentation. “How many of you currently give presentations? For the rest of you, how many see that in your future?”

**Step Five:**

Pause. In light of what you’ve learned about your audience, pause and ask yourself if the approach you had planned is appropriate. If not, release control, and offer something that would be more valuable.

### **Step Six:**

Give an overview. People like to know where they're going. Tell them how the hour (or day) will be structured so that they know what to expect. Adults are like kids on their first day of school: Where's the bathroom, when's lunch, and when can I go home?

### **Step Seven:**

Establish the benefits. Get everyone enrolled, aligned, and eager to listen to you. "Let's talk about the benefits of speaking in front of groups. What can you think of?" List these. Make sure all the benefits are listed by asking, "And what about reaching dozens of people at a time? Would that be a benefit?"

### **Step Eight:**

Deliver your material. Steps 1 – 7 take approximately ten minutes. Your remaining time will be spent delivering your material. To keep things lively, use a variety of questions, use vivid examples, move around the room, use your hands and body to illustrate your point, and use visual aids or props.

### **Step Nine:**

Involve your audience. A great way for me to involve my audience is to ask for volunteers to give a one-minute presentation, and let the others give feedback. You can involve people by asking questions, or by breaking them into small groups to solve a problem. The goal is to get interaction. You shouldn't be the only one talking.



### **Step Ten:**

Call for action. I might say, “What are two skills you can use in your next presentation?” Or, “There’s a petition at the back table. Please sign it before you leave.” Make a clear request.



## **The Crucial First Five Seconds**

**Picture this:** You’re sitting on your sofa watching TV, remote control in hand, looking for someone who will captivate you. How many seconds do you give each candidate before you zap them away? If you’re like most people, two to five seconds.

**It’s the same when you give a presentation –** whether to one person, to a small group, or before a large audience. Within seconds your audience makes decisions about your credibility, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and social standing. Instead of making a bad impression and having to claw your way into position, start off on the right foot.

### **Dress the way they expect you to dress.**

What is the dress code of your audience? Dress that way and a notch above, to show that this event is important to you.

### **Show that you want to be there.**

Your presentation starts the moment anyone you'll be speaking to sets eyes on you. From that moment on, you need to convey that you're eager, purposeful, and confident. People will observe you long before it's your turn to speak (and long after you've stopped speaking).

### **Match your audience's energy.**

Each group has its own energy - apathetic, mildly interested, eager. Start where they are. You'll create a bond that will allow you to move them toward your intended result.

If you are with an apathetic group, pose a few rhetorical questions, and watch for their ears to perk up. Then move to some hands-up questions. This will give you what you want - an involved audience.



## **Ask Questions**

**It's easy to involve your audience when you use questions effectively.**

**The rhetorical question** expects no response, but perks up people's ears. Signal that you expect no response by continuing to speak, rather than waiting for an answer.

“Have you ever spoken to a lively outspoken group?”

I have, and I can tell you, it's a thrill!" The rhetorical question poses no risk for your audience because it doesn't require anyone to speak.

**The hands-up question** gives you immediate feedback and is low-risk for the audience. "Give me a show of hands. How many of you have ever spoken to a lively, outspoken group?"

Make sure the question isn't threatening. Few people would respond to, "How many of you are narrow-minded and opinionated?" Ask questions that people will feel good about answering.

**The question addressed to the group at large** is your first chance to have someone from the group speak out. It's a testing point, because the audience will be sensitive to how you treat the brave soul who answers.

"How did it feel to speak to a lively group? Anyone?"

You may have to wait five seconds before someone answers, so be patient. Be prepared to answer the question yourself.

**The question addressed to a specific person** is the most risky of the four types, and is valuable because it keeps everyone alert.

Call on someone who can handle the attention. "Mark, what was it like for you to speak to a lively group?"

By asking questions in this order, you will gain your audience's trust and be rewarded by their participation.



## **You Too May Have Wondered...**

**Q:** The other day I was introduced poorly by the leader of the meeting. What can I do about that in the future?

**A:** I know how that feels. I used to assume that people would know how to introduce speakers - until the time I was presented as “the gal who teaches people to talk.” Later that day, I sat down and wrote a standard introduction which requires only minor modification for each event. I send it in advance to the meeting planner. I also bring a copy to the presentation. The introduction should be brief and should include your relevant credentials, the benefits of listening to you, and the title of your talk.

**Q:** What if people are eating when it's time for me to speak?

**A:** Do everything you can to avoid competing with food. I would rather cut my talk by seven minutes than talk while dessert is being served. Recently I had no choice, and had to pause for several seconds until people took their attention away from their pie and gave it to me.

**Q:** During the question/answer period, one person monopolized the conversation, and came across as a know-it-all. I didn't know how to handle him!

**A:** Nip this situation in the bud before you get frustrated. You can say, "I see your point. Let's hear some other opinions." Look around the room expectantly as you say this.

Or, "You have a lot to say on the subject! Could we talk more during the break?" (Only suggest this if you intend to follow through!) Ask his name and refer to him once or twice as you continue: "As Joe pointed out earlier..." This technique satisfies Joe's desire for attention, and shows graciousness on your part. Avoid conversing one-on-one with these characters.



## **How Should You Dress for Your Presentation?**

**People often say, "What I wear shouldn't matter. It's who I am inside that counts." But even these people are interested in how they are perceived.**

People judge you in a matter of seconds based on your image. Even before you utter your first words, your audience has made decisions about the following: your credibility, competence, level of education, socio-economic background, attractiveness, and whether or not they want to know you.

### **Can these judgments be wrong?**

Certainly. The problem is, though, that when you give a presentation, people don't have weeks to get to know you. If you create a negative first impression, it's unlikely that you'll get a second chance.

### **Find out how your audience will be dressed.**

If you look very much different from them, it will take significantly more time to establish rapport. Why risk this? At the time that your presentation is scheduled, find out how people will be dressed, and dress a cut above. Show that this event is important to you.

### **Plan in advance.**

It's discouraging to pull out the jacket you intended to wear, only to discover a spot or a missing button. As you scramble to assemble a new outfit, your confidence gives way to frustration. Examine your clothing in the light of day ahead of time.

### **Pay attention to detail.**

If your shoes are scuffed or your heels are worn down, people who notice detail will say to themselves, "Hmm. Those shoes need attention. I wonder what kind of attention he'd pay to my account."

Improving your image is not as difficult as you might think. You have to make it important, and then consult those who can help you. The right image is your first key for opening the doors to lasting business relationships.



## Mastering the Question/Answer Period

**Speakers usually look forward to the question and answer period. It's exciting when people show interest in your topic.**

But if you don't handle this well, the presentation can end on a weak note. Here are some challenges and how to handle them.

There aren't any questions. Imagine: You've generously saved 10 minutes for questions, but there aren't any. Instead of, "Do you have any questions?" ask, "What questions do you have about this, that, or the other?" This assumes that they have questions, and that now is the time to ask them.

"What questions do you have?" Still nothing?

Without stammering, blushing, or encouraging pity, say, "A common question is \_\_\_\_\_. The answer is \_\_\_\_\_."

"Any other questions?" (Still nothing?)

"Yesterday someone asked me \_\_\_\_\_. The answer is \_\_\_\_\_."

By this time, people are thinking, "Oh, I get it. Questions and answers!" Then they get involved. This method always works.

## **You don't know the answer.**

There are two ways to not know the answer: the wimpy way and the confident way. Instead of cringing and weakly confessing that you don't know, be bold. "Now that's something that I don't know. But I know exactly where to find the answer for you, and I will!" It's OK not to know everything.

Nothing can be more unnerving than a hostile question from the audience. Believe it or not, it's possible to accept, and even appreciate, a heckler. Here's the ideal attitude: This is a helper disguised as a jerk.

Repeat the question to the entire group. This shows that you are willing to boldly face the question. It allows you to buy time to collect yourself so that you don't respond weakly or with anger.

Respond to the question, continuing to look at several people in the audience. If you respond only to the person who asked the question, you remain connected to the hostility and lose your power.

Thank the person who asked the question and acknowledge his or her contribution. Chances are, other people were wondering the same thing. Chances are, because of that question, your presentation was more complete than it would otherwise have been. When you publicly acknowledge hecklers, they get the attention they want.

Once a man in my audience rudely asked, "Why should we listen to you? What are your credentials?" What a great



question! Though I didn't love his tone of voice, inwardly I was thrilled. I got to talk about my work without appearing to brag. I gained credibility, and was sincerely grateful for his contribution. If you retaliate against a heckler, the audience will turn against you. You must remain dignified, generous, and gracious.



## The Truth in Packaging Law

**Imagine standing** in the cookie aisle at Safeway. You see a bewildering array of cookies, all screaming, "Buy me! Buy me!" You finally settle on the Pepperidge Farm Nantucket Chocolate Chip. You were sold by the package displaying a scrumptious 3-inch cookie with 12 chocolate chips and lots of nuts.

It's the truth in packaging law that protects you from ripping open the package, only to discover a few one-inch cookies with two chips each and nary a nut in sight. The truth in packaging law ensures that what's on the inside will match what's on the outside.

*There is no truth in packaging law for humans.*

You can present yourself as knowledgeable when you're not. You can project bravado when you're quaking inside. You can sound certain when you're secretly doubting yourself.

But not for long.

Audience members have extra-sensitive feelers. They can spot a phony. Imagine 100 people realizing simultaneously that you don't know what you're talking about. Their trust evaporates and your relationship is damaged.

By sticking to the truth in packaging law, you won't find yourself in this unsettling situation. Remember the 10th Key to Freedom of Speech: Let them in on it.

If your audience knows more about your subject than you thought they did, say so. If your mind goes blank, say so. If you see confusion stamped on their faces, say so. If what's going on is OK with you, it will be OK with your audience.

**Be real, be honest, be genuine.**



## **Managing Challenging Audience Behavior**

**If all audience members** looked interested and eager, with pens poised, anyone could enjoy speaking in front of groups! However, most audiences present us with a variety of behaviors -- some of them challenging. Here are five behaviors you're likely to encounter, and some solutions.

### **The Latecomer**

Rushes in, causes disruption, and doesn't know what's going on. Instead of ignoring this person, or giving him too much attention, say, "Welcome. We're discussing our next fund-raiser."

### **The Head Shaker**

Is known for such statements as, "We tried that. That will never work," or merely sits silently objecting. Say, "Gene, I notice that you're shaking your head. Tell us what you think."

Then turn the objection into a question, respond to everyone, and thank him for his contribution.

### **The Dropout**

Doodles, reads, seems not to be paying attention. Move closer. If that doesn't work, say, "What's your reaction to this, Joan?"

### **The Whisperer**

Engages others in conversation. Nip this in the bud. Otherwise, you convey that it's OK for people to talk. Move closer without glaring.

If that doesn't work, say, "I have trouble concentrating when we're not focused. Could you all put your attention up front?"

### **The Know-it-All**

Wants attention. "You make a good point. What do the rest of you think?" Or, "You know a lot about this subject. I want to ask you something at the next break." (Then do.)

It is sometimes tempting to put people in their place, but your audience will turn against you if you do this publicly. On the other hand, if you ignore these behaviors, you will lose command and credibility. Keep the welfare of your audience in mind, and see yourself as not only a presenter, but as a fair and friendly cop - leading, managing, and focusing.

*You are the steward of the space.*



## **What you Give to One, you Give to All**

### **Audience members are like a family.**

They feel a kinship with each other, and keep a close watch on how their “brothers and sisters” are treated. They are sensitive to the feelings that you stir within them.

People ask how they can create eye contact with 100 or more people. What you give to one, you give to all. Therefore, if you connect strongly with a person in the front row, then with someone to your left, then with someone in the back row, everyone will feel that. They’ll say to themselves, “Wow! She’s really with us. Maybe she’ll look at me soon.” People waiting for your attention are people paying attention.

The same goes for the painful times when you realize that you have offended or criticized someone. Let them in on it. “That sounded critical. Please excuse me.”

What about touching people? Sensitivity should govern whether, and how, you touch audience members. A playful tap on the shoulder can make the whole group feel good. Touching someone too abruptly or too intimately can make the group feel instantly uncomfortable.

Be especially careful about how you respond to the first audience member who speaks out. Everyone will be watching to see if this is safe. Even if you don't agree with what is said, validate the participation. Others will join in, and that's when the presentation becomes fun.

What you give to one, you give to all. You can spread good feelings throughout the entire group by making one person feel good.



## Release Control

**Let's say that you spent** ten hours preparing for your presentation to a computer club. When the big day arrives, you get on the stage and begin your presentation, faithfully following your notes. After ten minutes, you notice that the audience has “gone south.” Everyone appears to be bored and restless. Say what you see.

“Some of you look bored and restless. Is this material too basic for you?” They nod in agreement. Now you have a choice. Do you doggedly continue with your plan, or do you release control?

Release control. This may mean that you literally tear up your outline and throw it over your shoulder. You face the audience and ask how you can serve them. “Well, I see that I didn’t do my homework by finding out how much you know. What else can I offer you? I’m skilled in the areas of \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.”

Releasing control requires that you know your subject, read your audience, and let them in on the situation.

It’s about holding your presentation in a loose hand and being flexible. It’s about letting the talk go differently from how you pictured it in the safety of your office. This is the real world, filled with mystery and questions. It is only when you’re in the presence of your audience that the whole picture emerges, and you must be ready to go with the flow.

I’m not suggesting that you abandon your intended result. Remain committed to your goal, but be willing to take a different route to get there. This attitude is what allows presentations to be alive, fresh, and spontaneous, no matter how many times you have spoken on the same topic. Every audience is different.

Let every presentation be a reflection of their uniqueness, by releasing control.



## **The Reluctant Audience**

**Eager people make a wonderful audience. But what happens when one, several, or most of the attendees resent being there? Gulp!**

**First, accept that they don't want to be there.**

Their body language says it all. They emit heavy sighs. They roll their eyes, slump, and doodle. Instead of ignoring these signs, read your audience.

**Second, verbalize the truth.**

“Often people are sent to my workshops and they have no choice about being there. They arrive with resentment, skepticism, and a ‘This better be good’ attitude. If that’s how any of you feel, I understand. I’ve been in the same position myself. Possibly, as we move along, you’ll start to enjoy this.”

**Third, offer choice.**

You could allow input from the audience regarding the agenda or content of the material. You could offer choice on the method of interaction between you and them. Offering choice restores freedom.

**Fourth, check in with them.**

“How’s it going so far? Is this relevant to you?” If not, ask what would be valuable to them. See how flexible you can be without straying from your intended result.

When you demonstrate that you recognize and accept how people feel, a reluctant audience can change its mood.



## **Notes and Visual Aids**

**Your notes should never be so voluminous that you have to wrestle with them.**

Become familiar enough with your material to use only a list of words and short phrases. For example, the word “nightmare” is strong enough to remind you of a challenging speaking situation. A list ensures that your delivery will be fresh, because you are not reading a word-for-word document.

Lots of people use visual aids (power point, slides, charts, graphs, flip charts) as a way to keep the attention off themselves. And it works. But that needn't be your goal.

Avoid competing with visual aids. It's amazing, but true: people will stare at a TV-like image forever, even if it's an illuminated but empty square on the wall. To prevent turning your audience members into zombies, turn off the computer or overhead projector when you're not using it.

Give people handouts only when you're willing for them to start reading and stop listening to you. Consider giving handouts at the end of your talk. Otherwise, you'll need to



direct people's attention: "Now let's look at page six." "Now I need your attention up here." "Let's put the handouts away for now."

If you're using power point, adjust the lights so that people can still see you and each other. If the room is too dark, don't be surprised if you hear snores.

Here is the acid test: Could you give an effective presentation if all of your props disappeared? Just you, the stage, and the audience? It's great to know you can.



## **Show Interest in your Audience**

**Recently I critiqued several 10-minute video taped presentations. One speaker stood head and shoulders above the rest. Here's why: She showed interest in her audience.**

Though the camera never focused on the audience, it was obvious that they were an active and equal part of the equation. If I were a meeting planner looking for a keynote speaker, I would select this one. Her name is Nancy Hanson, then president of Career Discovery, based in Honolulu. Here's how to make this kind of impact:

Arrive early and meet the people you'll be speaking to. I used to think it made me look glamorously important to

breeze in at the last minute to greet my public. What I lost by not arriving early wasn't worth it.

When you arrive early, you have a chance to meet people, find out why they came, what they want, and a bit about their business. You can then refer to them by name in front of the room or mention a conversation you had on your way in.

This shows the audience that you care about them, and that this is not the 405th time you've given the same canned presentation.

Ask questions early on in the talk: "Before I start, I'd like to ask a few questions so that I can gear my presentation to you."

*When the audience responds to you, respond to them.*

If they laugh, pause, and let them enjoy it, instead of plowing ahead. If you hear an exclamation, guffaw, or question, respond to it. Increase your receptivity.

You can also show interest by asking, "Are you with me so far?" "Does this make sense to you?"



## How to Get your Audience Involved

**The days of presenters standing behind a lectern and reading to their audiences are long gone - or should be. Audiences today are looking for speakers who reach out and touch them.**

**Ask questions:** rhetorical questions, hands-up questions, questions addressed to the group at large, and questions directed to individuals. Ask what you need to know in order to address the specific needs of your group.

**Get people into pairs.** Audience members are often reluctant to speak out in front of the entire group. But if they pair up and speak to each other, everyone feels safe. For example, you can give them two minutes to discuss how they'd plan a personal monthly budget.

If there are 50 people in the audience, there will be 25 voices speaking at once. Soon they'll be smiling and laughing and the energy level will rise dramatically.

**Ask for volunteers to voice an idea.** The audience will be warmed up, and you will surely be able to get people to express their ideas.

**Form small groups.** Ask your audience to form groups of four or five people, and give them a topic to discuss. After the given time has elapsed, ask each group to assign a spokesperson. (It's fun to watch everyone pointing at each

other!) Then you can go from group to group, letting each spokesperson speak.

You may be thinking that this approach wouldn't work with your group. "They're too shy." "They wouldn't like this." You'd be surprised! Give it a try.



## **How to Present yourself at Networking Events**

**Going to a networking event is another type of presentation. Everything matters – how you walk into the room, how you introduce yourself, how you eat, how you end conversations, and so much more.**

Look for other people who are alone. Make eye contact, smile, extend your hand, and introduce yourself. Ask questions. "What do you do?" "How did you get involved with this group?" You need not worry about being interesting. Be interested.

After you've built rapport, and if you want to pursue a business relationship, offer to exchange business cards. When you accept someone's card, look at it, say something about it, and store it in a respectful place (never below your belt). Gain permission to take the next step: "May I send you my brochure?"

When you get back to your office, make notes on the back of the business cards -- the date, where you met, what you talked about. If you made a promise, take immediate action. You will reap rewards when you keep your word.

Woody Allen said, “80% of success is just showing up.” Make networking a weekly activity, and your business will grow.



## **Using Positive Language to Get Desired Results**

**What do the following sentences have in common?**

“What we’re about to do is difficult for most people.”

“Please don’t return late from the lunch break.”

“Have a seat in the waiting room.”

**These three sentences are negative.**

**“What we’re about to do is difficult for most people.”**

If I were to say this to students in a training session, I would be suggesting that they will have a hard time with the next task.

Instead, why not use language that will support them to succeed? “Those of you who like a challenge will gain a lot from our next activity.”

**“Please don’t return late from the lunch break.”**

This plants the seed of everyone returning late. That’s not what you want. You will get better results if you say, “We’ll resume the training at 1:00. Please be on time.”

**“Have a seat in the waiting room.”**

This sounds innocent enough. But lurking in that sentence is a negative concept: waiting. No one likes to wait. When you say, “Have a seat in the reception area,” you remove the unpleasant connotation that your customer will be kept waiting.

The most effective way to weed negativity from your spoken and written word is to avoid using the word “don’t.” “Don’t make a mess” becomes “Please be neat.” “Don’t forget to register” becomes “Remember to register.” “Don’t miss our next event” becomes “Be sure to attend our next event.”



## **Life is a Presentation**

**A stage. A power point set up. A large audience. A speaker with a microphone. These are common images of a “presentation.” But don’t you present yourself every day? Consider these examples:**

### **Attending a meeting in a conference room:**

Are you presenting yourself? Of course. You are constantly sending subtle or obvious messages through your body language, facial expressions, the sounds you make, and the

energy you emit. Often these messages are more powerful than any words you might say.

**Talking to your auto repairman:**

The quality of your presentation, as you describe that funny noise, can greatly affect the quality of service you receive. You want to establish rapport so that the repairman wants to help you.

**Having lunch with a potential client:**

How you enter the restaurant, how you interact with the servers, your table manners -- these behaviors, and countless others, are part of your presentation. Your grace in social/business situations allows others to conclude that you have “executive presence.”

When you view each day as an opportunity to make several presentations, and if you give yourself gentle and honest critique, you will be able to approach any “stage and microphone” situation with eagerness and confidence.



**Know When to Stop**

**The speaker is captivating. You're on the edge of your seat. You avidly take notes, and agree with your neighbor that this is a great talk. You wish it could go on forever. But then it does.**

Why, oh why, do speakers torture us by talking beyond their allotted time? What are they thinking? Here are possible explanations: They've lost track of time; they didn't plan effectively; they're in love with their own voice; or worse, they don't respect our time.

No one likes to sneak out of the room to keep an appointment. It's awkward and embarrassing. Yet sometimes we have to. As speakers, you must avoid putting your audiences in this position.

### **Here's how:**

- Find out exactly what time you are expected to be off the stage.
- When writing your outline, make time notes in the margin so that you stay on schedule.
- Plan your talk as if you were packing a suitcase. Put it all in, then take some of it out. You never know what might occur that will reduce your time (the meeting starts late, people ask questions, etc.).
- Reassure your audience by saying, "I have a couple of minutes left. I'll take one more question."
- Gain points by finishing early. People appreciate having an extra five minutes to talk with friends, or to get to the parking lot.



- Be concise. I have a saying, “If you can’t say it in one minute, you can’t say it in five.” Learn how to get your point across with a few well-chosen words.
- Allow time for questions. One of my students planned her seven-minute presentation to the second. If she spoke at a certain rate, and added not one superfluous word, she would be finished exactly as the buzzer went off.

What she failed to realize, as she practiced at home for the twentieth time, was that her talk was funny. But because she hadn’t allowed time for laughter, she plowed right through, desperately waving her hands to get us to stop laughing.

When we mentioned this to her afterwards, she exclaimed with dismay, “But I didn’t have time for you to laugh!”

What a shame.

Don’t worry about running out of material. If you end up with extra time, let the group ask questions, or invite people to give input. The speaker who allows people to disband five minutes early is remembered far more favorably than one who holds people hostage five minutes too long.



## **Personalize your Presentations**

**One of the best ways to make your presentations memorable is to personalize them.**

When you were growing up, did your parents tell you not to talk too much about yourself? That you'd be considered self-centered and egotistical? That's what I was taught.

Yet, speakers who include personal stories in their talks are more likely to gain the interest and trust of their audiences.

If you're talking about the value of financial planning, you could include a story about how you handled money before you learned about planning.

This would make you more credible to your audience: "You mean she used to have the same problems I do? And look at her now!"

My students love hearing about my most challenging speaking situations and how I dealt with them. They also love to hear about how painfully shy I used to be, and how I gained confidence.

A successful interior designer tells her audiences, "I grew up with a family whose idea of interior design was an artificial rose on top of the TV and plastic covers on the furniture.

When I was 15, I got hold of a magical magazine called *Architectural Digest*. That changed my life. I was determined not only to live the way the people in that magazine lived, but to help others live in beauty.”

*View your life as an endless source of material.*



## **How to Make “Boring” Topics Interesting**

**During one of my Level III sessions (in which each student presents a twenty minute talk), a tax attorney said, “I have to stop talking about taxes. I’m even boring myself!” We protested, saying that we were interested in what he had to say. Taxes are a part of everyone’s life.**

Many people believe that their topic is “dry and boring.” I know people who can make any subject sound boring, and I know people who can make any subject sound fascinating. What’s the difference? Attitude! When you love your subject, your enthusiasm ignites your audience.

I remember the most unsuccessful talk I ever gave. It was at the end of a long day for the 200 civil servants who attended a conference. I had agreed to speak about goal setting. I bombed.

On the drive home, feeling horrible and shedding tears, I vowed to understand where I had gone wrong. Answer: I was no longer in love with the subject of goal setting. I was, in effect, offering my guests stale crackers. When I got back to my computer, I deleted “Goal Setting” from my list of topics, and haven’t mentioned a word about goal setting since (except to tell this story!)

What if you don’t love your subject, but you have to talk about it anyway?

- Remind yourself that people need what you have to offer.
- Include recent anecdotes.
- Fake it ‘til you make it.

*There’s no such thing as a boring topic.  
If you’re interested, they’ll be interested.*



## **Fake It ‘Til you Make It**

**After all the ranting and raving I’ve done about being truthful with your audiences, I offer a twist: Fake it ‘til you make it. I heard this bit of wisdom many years ago from Rev. Cecil Williams in San Francisco.**

Say you wake up feeling “blah” on the day you must address your stockholders. Calling in sick is not an option. As you drive to the meeting place, you notice that you’d gladly change places with anyone else on the road. “Whatever they’re up to, it has to be better than this!”

It would not be appropriate to drag your feet as you approach the stage, nor to drape yourself over the lectern like an over-ripe banana.

*Act enthusiastic and you’ll feel enthusiastic.*

Throw your shoulders back, breathe deeply, smile, and pump up your energy. This will start a mood-altering cycle. People will respond positively. You’ll notice their positive energy. You’ll say to yourself, “I must be putting out some good stuff. Look what I’m getting back!”

A professional person puts on the show no matter what. Years ago, we invited a prominent businessman to speak at Honolulu’s Winners Circle Breakfast Club. He arrived early, looking a bit wan.

He reluctantly told me that he had a fever, but complained not at all to the audience. His talk about employee relations was so memorable that I quote him to this day. He faked it ‘til he made it!



## Directing Traffic

**A former mentor used to talk about “Moving the traffic in the direction it’s going.”**

**Imagine this:** During the morning rush hour, you position yourself at a busy intersection. You look official in your orange and yellow vest. When the traffic light turns green, you motion for people to proceed ahead. When the light turns yellow, you hold up your hand, telling people to stop. The traffic would behave appropriately with or without your guidance. This is called “Moving the traffic in the direction it’s going.”

I gave a talk to about 200 people. Three quarters of the way into my talk, I noticed that people were furtively leaving through a door to my left.

This started to get to me. As yet two more people approached the exit, I blocked their way, and laughingly said, “Halt! Before anyone else leaves, I need to know why. Have I gone on too long? Is there another presentation you need to attend? Somebody help me out!”

Someone said, “Yes, there’s another seminar starting now.” I said, “Great! Let’s take a one-minute break. If you need to leave, please do so now. The rest of you, please move up and fill in any empty seats.” I moved the traffic in the direction it was going.

If you have a talkative audience, give them two minutes to talk to the people around them. If you have a restless audience, instruct them to stand up and stretch.

If you have a displeased audience, ask people to speak one at a time, while you write their objections on a flip chart.

### **Remember Key #9, Release Control.**

When you are willing to surrender, and to move the traffic in the direction it's going, you do two important things: You demonstrate flexibility and you stay in the driver's seat.



## **Get There Early**

**I used to think it was glamorous to waltz in at the last minute to give a presentation. It was exciting to think that people were waiting to see me, and to hear what I had to say.**

What an arrogant attitude, and what a mistake! Here are the benefits you derive by showing up early:

You have a chance to check the room arrangement. Is the audio/visual equipment working?

Is the seating arrangement appropriate? Were you provided the right type of microphone?

How's the lighting? (Usually the room isn't as bright as it could be; the brighter the better!)

You have a chance to talk with the meeting planner and the person who will introduce you. This is the time to verify the amount of time you have to speak, who is expected to attend, and any special requests.

Meet your audience members as they arrive. Learn people's names, and chat with them about why they came and what they hope to gain.

You will feel that you're speaking to friends when you stand in front of them. You can also freshen-up your talk by referring to a conversation you had with so-and-so before the event began. This ensures that your presentation doesn't come across as canned.

Make friends with people who might intimidate you. This might be an authority figure, someone to whom you owe money, or a person whose phone call you neglected to return.

Make amends ahead of time so that you can connect fearlessly with anyone and everyone.





## Can it Be True?

**I came across a Zen saying that stopped me in my tracks: “The way you do one thing is the way you do everything.” Can it be true? When I offer this idea to my audiences, some people instantly agree and others balk.**

If you’re the kind of person who prepares weeks in advance, rehearses endlessly, and gets to the meeting place an hour early, it could be concluded that this is the way you “do everything.” Likewise for those who procrastinate, drive their staff crazy with last minute changes, and rush into the meeting room with papers flying.

Some people are not comfortable with offering a question/answer period at the end of their presentation. The root of this discomfort is fear. These people may be fearful in other situations where they feel vulnerable or are afraid of looking stupid.

Other people love the question/answer period! They thrive on the challenge. They may also be seen sky-diving, swimming in the icy Atlantic Ocean, or volunteering for activities they can’t possibly fit into their schedules.

Those who are honest with their audiences are likely to be honest with their friends and co-workers too. Conversely, those who bluff their way through probably do this in other areas of their lives.

When I thanked someone for keeping an agreement, she said, “If you can’t keep the small promises, how are you going to keep the big ones?” She understood that the way she does one thing is the way she does everything.



## **Annoying Habits that Speakers Should Avoid**

**“Why does he keep doing that? It’s driving me crazy!” Have you ever thought this as you watched someone give a presentation? Here are five annoying habits that you should avoid:**

### **Jingling keys and coins.**

When you’re nervous, your hands often tell the tale. Many people stand in front of the room, immediately put a hand in a pocket, and begin to fiddle with keys and coins. This is very annoying. Stop it! Free both hands and make meaningful gestures, or if you must, hold a marker in one hand (ready to write on a flip chart). Which brings me to the next point.

### **Clicking the top of the marker on and off.**

As I listened to a student give a one-minute talk, I counted the number of times he clicked the top of the marker on and off. Nineteen! He was the only one who didn’t notice it. In fact, he denied it.

**Touching your face (especially your nose and mouth).** My sister reported listening to a counselor who spoke about parenting skills. During his talk, he constantly put his fingers on (and in) his mouth.

At the end of the evening, he asked everyone to join hands in a prayer for the children. She scrambled to make sure she didn't have to stand next to him, and pitied the two people who did!

**Playing with your hair.** When you're having a bad hair day, it's natural to want to tame that errant strand. However, this only calls attention to the problem, and drives people crazy in the process. Women with long hair should avoid constantly flipping it and caressing it. Tie it back, or spray it in place.

**Making tsk-ing/smacking sounds.** Some people do this before each sentence as if to say, "Now hear this!" Get someone to fine you \$1.00 each time, and you'll break this habit fast.



## **Annoying Habits that Audience Members Should Avoid**

**I just discussed presenters' annoying habits. Now the shoe is on the other foot. Why should you care? Because you want the best experience possible,**

**don't you? You can help the speaker do a better job by avoiding these behaviors:**

**Eating/snapping gum.**

To a presenter, there's nothing as distracting as someone opening a bag of Fritos and chomping away. (Wait. There is something worse: people using cell phones while you're talking.) The only person who enjoys the sound of gum snapping is the person snapping it.

**Not responding.**

Presenters rely on your responses. Are you smiling, nodding, and raising your hand, or are you staring ahead like a zombie? You might think that everyone else is responsible for providing clues to the speaker, and that your behavior doesn't make much of a difference. But even in an audience of twenty-five, if one person is withholding her energy, the speaker will be adversely affected. I'm not asking you to be phony, but do give the speaker something of yourself, even if it's disagreement. At least she'll know where she stands.

**Getting up and moving around.**

Some people think nothing of getting up to make a phone call or leaving and returning.

While it's true that presenters should provide breaks, the fact is that when you leave your seat in the middle of a presentation, you take your energy with you and create a "black hole." Maybe you didn't know your presence makes such a difference.

## **Whispering and chatting with others.**

Side conversations, no matter how quiet, can distract the speaker. It's better to pass a note than to fill the room with whispering sounds.

*Your considerate behavior can help  
the speaker give a better talk.*



## **How to Deal with Negative Feedback**

**A few years ago I conducted a one-day training for 40 people. Afterwards, my client sent me copies of the evaluations. All went well (“Great job,” “Best training I’ve been to…”), until I spotted a two-page single-spaced document that sent shivers down my spine.**

It was a scathing report of all that I had done wrong, how I had not delivered, and all the reasons why I shouldn't be hired by this (huge) organization ever again.

My blood froze and I started to sweat. (How is that physically possible?) I figured out who the writer was. How could I not have noticed that he was so unhappy all day long? Who the heck is he to judge me so harshly?

I wanted to phone him, write to him, report him to his supervisor. I even thought of consulting an attorney to

protect my name. (He had circulated his comments to all the decision makers in the organization.) Then I took a few deep breaths and repeated my mantra: “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.”

After three days of thought, and conversations with valued colleagues, I decided to do nothing. Instead of rejecting the feedback, how could I benefit from it? To what extent was he correct? Was I willing to be tormented by the opinions of others?

Here’s my advice, coming from someone who gets plenty of feedback:

*Let the dust settle, take what sticks, and  
leave the rest behind.*

You can’t be all things to all people. The most you can hope for is to have impact. Otherwise, you’re mediocre.

**Note:** If several people say the same thing, it’s probably true.



## **How to Love your Audience**

**We love audiences that love us. Nothing’s better than looking out and seeing nods of approval, people leaning forward in their seats, and**

**hearing bursts of spontaneous applause. As speaker Patricia Fripp would say, “The angels were there.”**

**Unfortunately, this scene isn’t common for most people.** When you have bad news to deliver or when your audience was forced to be there, it may seem that they don’t love you, and that may make it hard to love them. Why should you love them? Maybe “love” is too strong a word. But at least you ought to be able to feel acceptance and compassion for the people you’re speaking to.

**Put yourself in their shoes.**

Were you ever sent unwillingly to a meeting or seminar that you didn’t want to attend? I’ll bet you had some resistance or resentment. Remember how that felt, and you’ll have instant compassion for your audience.

**See the child in them.**

This may sound like New Age psycho-babble, but stay with me for a moment. Look at the people in your audience and imagine what they were like when they were five or six years old.

That young person is still in there somewhere. In their adult, and oh-so-grown-up way, they may be having a short-lived temper tantrum. They want you to know that they don’t like this -- not one little bit!

**Let them in on it.**

Tell them that you understand how they might be feeling.

“This may be the last place in the world you’d like to be right now.” Or, “I’ve been sent to seminars, too, and I felt extremely resistant. If you feel that way, I understand. Maybe that will change as we get underway.”

**Look for the good in them.**

If they speak out in a hostile way, look for what’s good about that. Maybe they’re voicing how others feel too. Maybe they’re opening up a much-needed discussion. And look at it this way: at least they’re participating.

*Things could be worse.*



## **How to Deal with Strong Emotions**

**Emotion can be a powerful tool in a presentation, but you need to know how to work with it.**

I’ve seen speakers become moved to tears, and I’ve seen speakers who became angry as they spoke about their cause.

Emotion sometimes gets stirred up in my classes, too, as people give presentations about a “milestone event” in their life (birth, illnesses, deaths, and scary situations). I’ll never forget the recently-engaged woman who cried as she spoke about her future in-laws’ disapproval of her because of her race.



Many people are afraid of strong emotion. If you're in the audience, you worry that the speaker will fall apart. You might also respond in kind, and Heaven forbid others should see you being vulnerable. If you are the speaker, you may be appalled at your "lack of control," and fearful that you won't be able to continue. And you don't want people to pity you.

**In these situations, use Key #10.** Let them in on it. You could say, "You can probably tell that I'm feeling sad about this, and after all these years!" Or, "I realize that I sound angry, and I am!"

A simple declaration relieves everybody. If the speaker is OK with his emotion, the audience will be OK with it too.

*The trouble occurs when you try to suppress and hide your emotion, pretending it isn't there.*

Everyone knows it's there, of course, but we're supposed to act as though it isn't. This causes discomfort for all. If you're lucky enough to still have emotions (that is, if you haven't numbed yourself to the pain of life), let your emotions enhance your talk.

Emotion is a force that can move mountains. Do you want to deny yourself that power?



## **How to Correct Another Speaker's Error**

**Suzanne called me the other day with an interesting problem. She was the emcee at a fund-raising meeting, and had arranged for a speaker, James, to promote the cause of her organization.**

James was charismatic and captivating. Suzanne, seated at the back of the auditorium, was thrilled. But then James made an error about how the funds would be used.

It was a rather significant error, and Suzanne didn't know what to do. Should she interrupt and correct him in front of everyone? Should she just let it go by? She did nothing. But it nagged at her for days.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, here are some solutions:

- If the error is heart-stoppingly significant, you can say, "James, excuse me for interrupting, but I need to clarify how the funds will be used."
- As the emcee, you'll be on-stage again to end the meeting. At that time, you can say, "This has been a great program! Thanks to everyone who participated. I need to make one change regarding how your donations will be used."

- You can send a letter to all who attended. This letter is an opportunity to thank them for coming, to re-state your call for action, and to correct the error without pointing a finger at James.

Mistakes can be shaped into something positive. Some of my worst mistakes were blessings in disguise. They gave me a chance to show professionalism and to become a better presenter. Mistakes also provide me with great material for future seminars: “I’ll never forget the time that such-and-such happened.”



## Words to Avoid

**“I’ll try to complete the report, basically, on the status of our project, hopefully, by Monday.”  
What’s wrong with this sentence? Everything.**

Many people have a tendency to dilute, to reduce, and to avoid certainty. Let’s look at some words that diminish power and credibility.

**Basically:** People use this word as filler. I once heard a student say “basically” twelve times in a one-minute presentation. The word came to have no meaning. It should have been omitted.

**Try:** Try to pick up something on your desk. If you’re now

holding something, you didn't try. "Try" means to attempt to do something. It does not imply success. So, the next time people say they'll try to attend your dinner party, don't even bother putting out a plate for them. They won't be there.

**Hopefully:** This word is used when we want to weasel out of taking responsibility for our results. We hope. We wish. We try. But *do* we? Probably not.

**If anything:** "If anything, I'll probably wear my blue dress." "If anything?" Please, let it be something! "If anything, she'll call you on Tuesday." "If anything, we'll have your pregnancy test results tomorrow."

A group of students made a commitment to eliminate these words from their speech. They agreed to make a buzzing sound each time they heard an offending word. It worked.

*Be clear, convincing, and credible.  
Use strong words.*



**"But When I Talk to a Bunch of Strangers..."**

**You may be one of thousands who feel this way:  
"I'm fine when I'm talking to my staff or other  
people I know, but when I talk to a bunch of  
strangers, I fall apart."**

Stop using the phrase: “A bunch of strangers.” Instead, think of these people as friends that you haven’t met yet. Here’s how I succeeded in making this adjustment:

I used to think that once I got to know people, I’d feel comfortable with them. But in a 30-minute presentation, I didn’t have a chance to “get to know” them. Am I stuck with thinking of them as scary strangers? No.

- **Realization:** I like 99.9% of the people I get to know.
- **Realization:** Most people like me, once they get to know me.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore, why not approach the front of the room assuming that we already like each other?

*Are you committed to your message?  
Is your heart in the right place?  
Are you doing the best you can?*

If your answers are “Yes,” then you don’t have to be worried about strangers.

If your answers are “No,” you need to clarify your purpose.

A great way to like your audience is to show up early so that you can meet and greet people as they arrive. Thus, when you face them en masse, you see a room filled with friends. And people who would be friends, if only you had the time.



## What to Do if your Mind Goes Blank

**People dread going blank in the middle of their presentation. They fear the audience will decide they are stupid and unprepared.**

It's not easy to pretend that your mind isn't blank when it is. Some people pause and strike a dramatic pose, frantically praying that they will regain their senses before everyone knows they are lost. Others stammer, turn red, and begin to sweat. They search the ceiling, hoping that some sign will appear to save them. These methods are unreliable.

*There's an easy solution: ask the audience.*

Here's what happens to me from time to time: I'll be telling a story.

Most of my stories are "multi-purpose," and I sometimes forget why I'm telling a particular story by the time I reach the end. I'm blank.

I let them in on it. "Wait. Why am I telling you this?" There is always at least one helpful person who will readily say, "You were making a point about such-and-such." I snap my fingers and say, "Right! The point is . . ."

I've never been criticized, verbally or in written evaluations, for having a mind that went blank. If it's OK with me, it will be OK with you. Sometimes, even with the help of my

audience, I don't make the connection, and must abandon the issue: "It's not coming back to me, so let's move on." Usually, within five minutes, the thought resurfaces, and I say, "I just thought of what I wanted to tell you back then."

If you are gripped with fear at the thought of appearing imperfect, that's exactly what can happen. So what?

The sooner your audience perceives you as genuine, honest, and self-accepting, the sooner you can enjoy your relationship with them.



## The Purple Blob Technique

**You stand up to give your presentation. You look out into the audience, and to your horror, you spot someone whose phone call you haven't returned. Or someone to whom you owe money. Or someone who looks like a former boss who intimidated you.**

Here is most people's reaction to this unpleasant surprise: They project an imaginary purple blob over the person they don't want to see (much as what you see on TV when the identity of a courtroom witness is being concealed). To doubly protect themselves, they make the purple blob big enough to prevent any out-of-the-blob mishaps, in case that person moves suddenly to the left or right.

While this technique may make you temporarily more comfortable, it interferes with your relationships with the innocent people in the vicinity of the “intruder.” And what would happen if you had to create several purple blobs? You would dramatically reduce your connection with the entire audience.

Instead of projecting purple blobs, I recommend that you arrive early enough to “case the joint,” looking for those who might intimidate you.

Go straight up to them and make amends. Introduce yourself to the person who reminds you of that scary boss, and notice that he is not that person.



## Plunging In

**What do presentations and swimming pools have in common? They both have places from which to plunge.**

Swimming pools offer two obvious places: the little stairs at the shallow end, and the diving board at the deep end. When it comes to presentations, the entries are not so clear. That’s why most presenters begin their talks in a wishy-washy manner. They seem to tiptoe around the edge of the pool, looking for the safest way to enter.

Avoid beginning your presentations like this:



- “Well. I wasn’t sure how to begin my talk, so do you have any questions?”
- “I thought I’d tell you about \_\_\_\_\_, but then I decided to talk about \_\_\_\_\_. Then I changed my mind again, and so we’ll start with \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “Thank you for having me. This is a swell organization. I’ve heard a lot about you. That was sure a good chicken lunch, wasn’t it? Let’s give a hand to our servers.”

Instead, learn about the situation ahead of time so that you can decide whether to use the little stairs or the diving board.

You may need to change your mind at the last minute, depending on the energy level of the audience. Match the energy.

If people seem low-key, a cannonball splash from the diving board could startle them. Conversely, if they’re rowdy and raucous, you’d be invisible with a “little stair entry.”

Whatever the case, it’s always good to start with a story. “It’s June 24, 1975. I’m facing 500 people I’ve never met before. My job is to convince them to \_\_\_\_\_.”

*Test the water before you speak.  
When you walk to the front of the room,  
know exactly how you’re going to plunge in.*



## **It's not Being Phony – It's Being Flexible**

**I ask one student to add animation. I ask another to tone it down. I ask a third to use more vocal variety. Most people take feedback well, and are curious about how to apply it.**

Others resist, saying, “That’s just not me. You’re asking me to be something I’m not. It’s not my nature to be that way.”

This can be a dilemma. You want to be more effective in front of people, but you don’t want to be phoney. I understand. But to be effective in front of groups, you must develop skills that you might not otherwise use.

Instead of thinking that you’re being phony, decide that you’re being flexible. Here’s an analogy: A small eatery gains a reputation for serving the best name-your-favorite-food in town. They’ve achieved success by offering this one great entree with a choice of side dishes. Then someone suggests that they expand their menu by offering daily specials. The owner of the restaurant protests, “But that’s not what we do!”

But what if, in their own pantry, existed the ingredients to concoct something different and special once in a while? Why not be flexible? You might need to expand your “menu” to satisfy the taste of your audience. If the situation calls for more hot sauce, put some on the table. If more syrup is required, offer that too.

I simply suggest that you bring forth what's already "in the pantry," and that you give people what they want. How do you find out what they want? Ask. "Is this pace right for you? Should I move faster?" "Would you like to take a break now, or shall we continue?" "Am I being too technical, or is this clear?"

*You show consideration and attentiveness when you adjust to meet your audience's needs.*



## **Hoarding your Goodies**

**After a student gave his presentation, a classmate said, "I liked what you said, but it felt as though you were holding back." His response: "But I don't know you yet."**

Boy, did that get me going! It's natural to "hold back" until you get to know people. This may be appropriate in situations which require caution. But when you're making a presentation, holding back is not effective.

Most presentations last 20 - 40 minutes. How long does it take to "get to know" people? Longer than that. Since the purpose of most presentations is to create relationships, should you suppress yourself? I think not.

After the class discussed this concept, I gave our student another chance to talk to us as if he knew us. With this new

attitude in mind, he became someone we'd want to know. I said, "You were hoarding your goodies! Is there a shortage of you?"

*What do people want of you? They want your unique personality, essence, and vitality.*

*The more of yourself you give,  
the more others will give to you.*



## **Actions Speak Louder than Words**

**Did you know that at least 85% of your message is communicated through your body language?**

Body language includes everything non-verbal: where you stand, how you stand, your energy level, eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and how you are dressed. Consider the following actions and their perceived meaning:

- **Action:** You step back as you greet your audience.  
**Meaning:** You don't want to be there, and would disappear through the wall if you could.
- **Action:** Someone asks you a tough question and you scratch the back of your neck.  
**Meaning:** You feel "hot under the collar."

- **Action:** You keep your hands in your pockets.  
**Meaning:** You don't want to "show your hand;" you're trying to hide something.
- **Action:** You gaze slightly above everyone's head.  
**Meaning:** You don't want people to know what you're thinking.
- **Action:** You hold your hands in front of your solar plexus or your crotch.  
**Meaning:** You're defending yourself from a fatal blow.
- **Action:** You're a female and you tilt your head, clasp your hands, and raise your shoulders.  
**Meaning:** "I'm a cute little girl, so don't hurt me."
- **Action:** You allow your eyes to travel over people's bodies.  
**Meaning:** You want to "own" or intimidate them.
- **Action:** When answering a hostile question, you lock eyes with your challenger.  
**Meaning:** You're an animal trapped in the headlights of an oncoming vehicle.

*You may argue that you didn't mean to convey these things, but it's the audience's perception that counts.*



## **New Words Yield New Experiences**

**Some of my clients want to increase their vocabulary. Roget's Thesaurus can help. I still have the paperback copy I used in high-school. It's brittle and crumbling, but I can't bear to part with it.**

The deceased futurist, Buckminster Fuller, taught that quality of life is largely based on vocabulary.

For years, I spent weekends at Lanikai Beach on Oahu. On my morning walks, I'd often see towering cumulus clouds on the horizon. "Uh-oh. Grey clouds. I hope this doesn't mean rain. The picnic might be ruined, and what about our visiting friends from Seattle?" Grey clouds led to worried thoughts.

One week, my mother visited from California. We walked, and I commented on the grey clouds. She said, "Pammy, those clouds aren't grey. They're lavender!"

Wow! Until I saw the subtle distinction between grey and lavender, my experience was unnecessarily blighted. Now that I can see lavender my outlook is brighter.

*How you talk to yourself has a major impact  
on how you feel. If you find yourself on  
the negative channel, switch!*

According to folklore, someone asked explorer Daniel

Boone if he ever got lost. He thought for a minute and said, “I was never lost, but I recall being confused for three days.”

If you don't own Roget's Thesaurus, get it. You're in for a treat.



## **Too Self-Conscious? Change the Channel!**

**Do you wonder, “What should I do with my hands?” “What if people notice I'm missing a button?” “What if they see me sweating?”**

Some people say, “I could never speak in front of an audience. I'm too self-conscious!”

Exactly. They are too self-conscious. They are not other-conscious. Your TV has several channels. There's a sports channel, a food channel, Nick at Night, and a channel called “Me.” There's a time and place for all of these options. When you're in front of an audience you need to select the “Others” channel.

You're speaking to a group, and you notice that you're thinking about your hands, your hair, your clothes, your this, your that.

“Whoa. I'm on the wrong channel!” In half a second, you

can switch to “Others.” Now you’re watching an entirely different show. You notice that Steven looks eager, that Suzette needs a pen, that Curtis has a question, and that Jason seems to be tuning out.

*It’s not possible to be on two channels at the same time.  
When you turn your attention to “Others,”  
all self-consciousness disappears.*

Once you’ve mastered switching between “Me” and “Others,” you’ll want to call your cable company and order a channel called “Us.”

This channel features the relationships between speaker and audience. When you’re on this channel, you will be the battery and your audience will be the alternator.

“Yeah, but I still want to know what to do with my hands.” Don’t even ask. Your hands know what to do all day long. They act naturally, they get things done, and they express themselves without effort. Just three things: Keep them out of your pockets, out of fig-leaf position, and out of your mouth.



## **Give What you Want to Receive**

**You’ve probably read this advice in self-help books: If you want more romance, be more romantic. If you want more love, be more loving. If you want more respect, be more respectful.**



## **Give what you want to receive.**

This holds true for your relationship with your audience. I have a client who comes across as apologetic and unsure of herself.

I said, “You normally seem outgoing and positive. Do you know why you are timid in front of the group?”

“I just want them to approve of me!”

“Then you must first approve of them,” I responded.

You’ve heard the expression, “What goes around comes around.” When giving a presentation, you set the tone. If you laugh easily, so will the audience. If you’re interested in them, they’ll be interested in you. If you love your subject, they may love it, too.

How can you approve of a group of people you have never seen before? You assume that if you had the chance to get to know them, you’d like them. Wish them well. Look for the best in them. Assume that they came for a good reason, and that they are there to have a good time.

Before you arrive at the meeting place, silently welcome everyone who might show up. Expect to learn something, to touch someone, and to be touched.



## Avoiding Disaster by a Hair's Breadth

**I was the keynote speaker at a luncheon for 450 people. Because of the tight schedule, I agreed to start my 30-minute talk while people were still eating. (Mistake.)**

The noise in the room was deafening. Everyone was talking! Servers were busily serving and clearing, and then a fresh battery of servers infiltrated the room with trays of dessert. The phrase, "I couldn't hear myself think," came to mind. By the third minute of my talk, it seemed to me that I was babbling.

I'll be honest: I *was* babbling. When none of my "tried and true" techniques worked, I came up with one that did. (That's another story.)

Finally the audience became quieter, with the exception of the table in front of me. One man at that offending table never stopped talking.

Each time I started a new sentence, he turned to his table mates, and spoke with great animation. The longer this went on, the more I wanted to kick him out.

Many beads and trickles of sweat later, I ended my presentation. After everyone rushed off to the afternoon sessions, I asked the meeting planner about "that table in front and the man who wouldn't stop talking."

“Oh, yes,” she said, “They were all from Japan, and he was translating your talk for them.” Oh. That would have been good to know.

I had been *this close* to telling him to leave! How would he have communicated that to his peers? “She’s telling me to leave!”

*Moral: Ask if there is anything you should know about your audience.*



## “Is Anybody Listening?”

**Previously, I described my helplessness in trying to be heard over the noise created by 450 diners. I don’t blame them. Timing, logistics, and the desire for social interaction contributed to this situation.**

And besides, who was ever taught how to be a good audience member? (If I were to offer a free seminar on the subject, I couldn’t expect more than my loyal friends to show up.)

I mentioned that my “tried and true” techniques didn’t work. At one point I simply stopped talking and looked around, hoping that my sudden silence would get people’s attention. It didn’t.

Then I tried wading into the audience, with microphone in hand. This had the desired effect only on the people directly around me. Back to the riser I went.

Then I hit on a strategy that worked. I paused mid-sentence and said, “If you’re listening, raise your hand.” To my surprise, almost half the hands went up. I then said, “Thank you. Look around your table. If you see someone whose hand isn’t up, get their attention and ask them to look my way.”

After the rustle of “No one’s asked us to do this before” subsided, most people looked my way. I said, “I know that some of you aren’t listening to my talk. But I need to ask you to not listen silently, so the rest of us can get on with it.” Chuckle, chuckle. And then, near quiet. “Thank you! I’m working hard up here. I appreciate your support.”

As I continued my talk, I noticed the noise level rising and said, “If you’re listening, raise your hand.” By the third time, almost every hand went up.



## **Praise for Pam Chambers**

“When Miss Chambers spoke to the audience, she displayed confidence and control. She did not have to yell to keep their attention focused on her. I thought that was a phenomenal display of competence and charisma.”

~ *High school student*

“You are just like Miss Fisher in that wonderful crime show! Physically fit, well-dressed, smart, talented. Need I go on? Yes! An exceptional trainer with huge heart for lifting people up and helping them be the best they can be. Did I mention wickedly funny? How about deeply appreciative and grateful for the richness in your life?”

~ *Susan Szabo, artist and entrepreneur*

“The high school open house was last night, and we received the best feedback! Unlike previous years when teachers distributed handouts or prepared Keynote slide presentations and read their slides to the audience, many teachers spoke without notes and slides and shared wonderful anecdotes about themselves and what they value about being at Mid-Pacific. You made an impression and your presentation tips were taken to heart.”

~ *Edna Hussey, Mid-Pacific Institute*

“I was grateful to reunite with long time friend Pam Chambers. She shared priceless advice in dealing with customers. Her advice is unique, inspiring, and empowering. She’s beyond an expert when it comes to interpersonal relations and communications.”

~ *Angela Keen, Shriners Hospital*

“A note to let you know that yesterday in my Hogan Leadership class, I asked the students who, among our more than 50 speakers, were the most impressive leaders. You were chosen by several, and their choices were supported by all.”  
~ *Dr. John Webster, Hogan Entrepreneurs*

“I will recommend Pam to all who will listen.”  
~ *Dean Yamamoto, attorney at law*



## **Top Hits from Pam's Collection of Super Short Shows**

- While attending a networking event, make it a point to meet these three people: the most important person in the room, someone who might intimidate you, and someone you can learn from.
- If you're dining with others, and you happen to burp audibly, what should you do? You should say "Excuse me," without making direct eye contact with anyone. You don't want to involve an innocent person in your faux pas. Simply lower your eyes and quietly murmur, "Excuse me."
- Let's say you asked for half an hour of someone's time. Instead of trampling over that time limit, be the one to say, "I see that we have five more minutes. How shall we best use that time?" This shows discipline and respect, and thus builds trust.

- One of my friends has an ironclad rule. When she's out dining with her buddies, the first person who even glances at her phone pays for everyone's meal. This keeps everyone's attention where it should be: on each other!
- I used to worry that I wasn't interesting enough to take up other people's time at a networking event. And so, for years, I held back. Finally I had a stunning realization that changed everything: I don't have to be interesting as long as I am interested. Get others to talk about themselves, and ironically, you will be fascinating.
- You know that awkward silence that can descend upon a small group like a wet blanket? Everyone looks down and desperately tries to think of something to say. You can help by turning to your neighbor and saying, "I'd love to hear the story behind that unique necklace you're wearing!"

## **To view Pam's Super Short Shows . . .**

Please visit [PamChambers.com](http://PamChambers.com) and click on the button (like this one) below her video to see Pam in action.

Click here to watch Pam in action.



## **Pam's workshop topics include:**

- How to give a presentation tomorrow and sleep well tonight
- Hawaii's leadership challenges and how to rise above them
- What everyone needs to know about business etiquette
- How to turn satisfied customers into loyal customers
- Hosting the business lunch with grace
- How to get the most from networking events



“Your class was by far the best training we’ve ever had, and we have been through a lot of different types of training!”

~ *Michael Ohashi, General Sales Manager, Horizon Lines*

“If you know Pam’s presentation methods, you can easily discern who has, or has not, been her student. Her influence is life-changing.”

~ *Linda Butts, Entrepreneur*



Life is a Presentation

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Life has given you the opportunity to speak in front of others. This valuable guide will help make you a more valuable employee, a more effective leader, a better salesperson, and a better communicator with friends and family.

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*One of Pam's enthusiastic audiences*



*Pam Chambers*

**Pam Chambers** is the author of *Speak for Yourself*, *Stand & Deliver*, *Not This Again!*, and *Public Speaking Made Easy*, which made the bestseller list in Hawaii. She was named by Honolulu Magazine as one of Hawaii's 10 Most Admired Women. Pam knows how to bring out the best in her audiences, and is praised for her “wise and cheerful lessons.” [PamChambers.com](http://PamChambers.com)

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