

Get Rid of Public Speaking Fear by Using Humor in Your Speech

By Dennis Severt

This is one of the most powerful ways of not only getting and keeping your audience's attention, but making a connection with your audience so that the effects of fear don't creep into your mind and ruin your speech.

How can you use humor in your speeches? One of the easiest and most effective ways to use humor in your speeches is to build the humor into your stories. There is already humor in your everyday life, in your experiences, and in the lessons that you have learned in your life - some of which you will be sharing with the audience. All you have to do is look for the humor and bring it out to get your audience's attention.

Many speakers assume that if you are using humor in a speech, then that means that you have to tell jokes during your speech. The truth is, telling jokes is not a good idea. Your audience will know that you are just telling jokes for the sole purpose of getting a laugh. If you do this, they will perceive you as being insincere, and will likely stop listening to what you are saying.

How can audiences tell when you are just using a joke solely as a means to get a laugh out of the audience? Quite simply, they can tell because if you are telling jokes, then you are hijacking your story. Telling jokes that have nothing to do with the story or the main point you are trying to get across diverts your audience's attention away from your speech.

The best humor will not only get your audience to laugh, it will also enhance your stories. If you are telling a story about an experience that you have had in your life for the purpose of making a point, stop and think about what that experience felt like. What did your surroundings look like? What was the irony in your situation that you can use as a bit of humor in your speech? Undoubtedly, if a story is important enough to share with your audience, it is because it stuck out in your mind. Use that mental picture to find the humor in that situation.

Many times, you don't even have to say anything at all to bring out the humor in a particular part of your speech. Your humor can come from your facial expressions, your hand gestures, and your posture - don't forget the importance of physical humor in your speech. This is particularly important because you can continue making your point without interrupting your speech to invoke some humor.

How can using humor in your speech help you to overcome the fear you may have of public speaking? Well, there are several ways that choosing humor can help you. First, using humor in your speech helps to disarm your audience - it dispels any

negative expectations that your audience may have about listening to a public speaker, particularly if you are giving a speech to employees of a company, or other audience attendees that are there because they are required to be there, instead of being there by choice.

When you use humor in a speech by integrating it into your stories, you are helping people to realize that you are a speaker who is not only entertaining, but who has something to say that is relevant to their lives. Using humor in your own stories helps them to realize the humor in their own lives.