THE POWER OF TOASTMASTERS

SPEECH FOR

JIM SMITH

Hello everyone! It’s a great privilege to be here tonight to speak to all of you…. and I really, really mean it! Every time I have the opportunity to speak before an audience, I jump at the chance! Since I have been a Toastmaster, I’ve realized that my life, my experiences and my relationships in all areas have been enhanced, and I am living proof of the “power of positive public presentation!” Communication is the essence of life and thanks to my participation I have to say that I am proud of who I am, what I’ve learned, and how I express myself.

The comedian Jerry Seinfeld once observed, “According to studies, most people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death…. Does that sound right? …” Most people would rather be the “spoken of” than the speaker! And that’s one of the really great reasons why I love the power of Toastmasters, because, believe me, I personally would rather be the speaker than the “**speakee**!” (**Say this with enthusiasm and wait for the laugh**)

Yes, public speaking has been known to sometimes get a bad rap. Mark Twain said, “There are two types of speakers: those who are nervous and those who are liars.” And so we come to one of the main benefits of being a toastmaster, which is learning to conquer fear. It seems that people are born with the stage fright gene. Well, if that’s true, we’ve come to the right place to get over this one! I have to say though, that even if a person isn’t afraid to get up in front of an audience and speak, there are so many other benefits and valuable lessons to be learned through participating in Toastmasters.

I consider myself a “high energy” kind of person. I’m positive, I’m enthusiastic, and I love to share thoughts and ideas with people. To me, the proverbial glass is not only at least half full … as opposed to being half empty… it’s filled with that lemonade we all hear of-you know-when life hands you lemons? Yes, I am proud to have been blessed with a positive attitude and the energy and passion to share it! It doesn’t matter if there are 2 people in a living room or 500 people in a crowded auditorium, I know that thanks to all that I’ve learned in my involvement with this organization, I will take in priceless information and guidance and receive genuine value for the experience.

So, you might be wondering, “How can participating in Toastmasters ‘rock **my** world?” Let’s just say that the **Power** of Toastmasters ignites the **Power** within you! Through participation, the opportunities for growth are endless:

* We are given the forum and the tools to learn to communicate more effectively. A novice toastmaster may join the group thinking that he or she came to learn techniques to be more effective in public speaking, but the benefit is far greater than that. We learn to **COMMUNICATE**. We learn that there are all forms of communication-whether it’s the inflection of the voice, the way someone stands, the gesture of a hand-all of what we do communicates our message. I think many of you will agree that it really is **empowering** to **effectively** transmit that message. It also is a fantastic gift to take what we’ve learned and apply it to people we listen to. Communication is a 2-way street and there is nothing more satisfying than when people can speak and listen clearly.
* Being involved in Toastmasters also helps to hone one’s leadership skills. With the heightened ability to give and receive conversation, it is a natural extension to also be able to organize thoughts, create and hold a “context” and to manage a situation. Clarity in self-expression breeds clarity in deeds and actions. When a person knows how to edit his or her thoughts and expressions, it clears the way for the ability to more effectively manage situations.
* By now, everyone is probably aware of the power of successful communication. Just think of a time when the words that came out of your mouth didn’t quite represent what you really wanted to say, and as result, you may have felt, well, to be kind, like you didn’t get your point across. Through participation with this group, each one of us now knows what it feels like to fail, and finally to succeed in conveying a message or concept. And I think I speak for just about everyone here when I say, it definitely feels better to give an effective speech! There’s nothing like “**being in the zone**” with one’s audience and feeling the electricity that happens when true and **successful** verbal communication is achieved. If **THAT** doesn’t boost one’s confidence, **NOTHING WILL**!
* And let me just ask one question-in a million years, did I **EVER** expect to learn so much and have so much fun at the same time? Who ever dreamed that this would be such a powerful addition to my life-on so many levels? It would have been enough if I had only learned how to be more authentic when it came to public speaking. It would have been enough had I just gained more self confidence, and it certainly would have been enough if I just tapped into my “inner leader” and became more satisfied in so many areas of my life, but **NO**!!! It didn’t stop there!!! On top of all of these great gifts, I also got to explore and learn about things I never dreamed existed! (**Name 2 or 3 things you had to research for Toastmasters**) Thanks to Toastmasters, I now know about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and, believe it or not, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. **WOW**!!!

Yes. There is power in being a Toastmaster. Eloquence. Poise. Self-confidence. Knowledge. These are all valuable lessons to learn and practice within this great forum and in all areas of life. I’d like to share some wise words from Sir Winston Churchill, one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. He said, “Public speaking-Say what you have to say and when you come to a sentence with a grammatical ending, sit down.” So thank you all and good night!