

THE NATURAL SPEAKER

SECOND EDITION



Randy Fujishin

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For my wife, Vicky



PREFACE

We all have our own natural way of breathing, walking, seeing, and talking. Some of us, when we talk, like to tell stories, while others prefer facts and figures. Some speak in dynamic, commanding voices, while others offer gentle, soothing tones. There are some who speak quickly and others who prefer to stroll through their sentences. Over the years, these individual tendencies become part of our natural style—a large part of who we are.

Yet, when asked to speak before an audience, most of us are anything but ourselves. We change in immediate and dramatic ways. Our bodies become tense, our thinking is disjointed, and our hearts are overwhelmed with fear. We can hardly think about giving a speech without falling over.

This book is a guide that will help you give a speech without falling over. It will enhance and improve your natural speaking strengths, while providing you with a basic knowledge of speech construction, practice, and delivery. We will let the natural speaker inside you come out in the process of developing these skills.

In Chapters 1 and 2, we explore the nature of the communication process and the principles influencing your interactions with others. Your communication attitude, five interpersonal life skills, and your decision to grow in all these areas are also examined.

In Chapters 3 and 4, your greatest fear—stage fright—is addressed, and specific ways to deal with this fear are presented. You will also learn to deliver an effective impromptu speech, utilizing a simple, five-step method that has proven effective in any speaking situation.

Selecting, researching, and organizing a speech topic are discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. In these chapters, you will be given a practical

guide to constructing a speech from start to finish in an effective and comprehensive way.

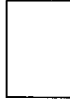
In Chapter 8, the physical components of speaker delivery are highlighted, and six practical methods for delivery improvement are given. The emphasis of this chapter is on developing those speaking strengths you already possess, and adding new skills that will enhance your natural style.

The principles of sharing information with your audience will be covered in Chapter 9. Also covered are practical suggestions for informative speaking, language use, and audience questions. In Chapter 10, the fundamentals of persuasive speaking will be examined. Aristotle's three persuasive appeals—ethos, logos, and pathos—will be discussed, and ways you can incorporate each appeal into your speech will be presented.

Finally, chapter 11 will explore the idea that your role as a public speaker could last your entire lifetime, and not be limited to one class experience. By continuing to use your public speaking skills in your professional, educational, and personal life, you will discover a deepening awareness and appreciation of who you are and what you can share with others.

The purpose of this book is to give you the basic skills to present a speech to any audience in a way that is natural, effective, and rewarding for you and your audience. Your decision to develop and improve your natural speaking abilities is one that will reward you, both professionally and personally, for the rest of your life.

Randy Fujishin



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1

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS

Your Most Important Skill

Never before had Paul sat so long in total silence with another human being. Paul, a young psychologist, was in a therapy session with his client, a middle-aged woman with lifeless eyes, arms that hung limply at her side, and a posture that displayed the shame and anger that often accompanies victims of physical abuse.

It was during Paul's first year of clinical training as a marriage, family, and child therapist that he had worked with her. The woman came to therapy with a long history of depression and withdrawal. As a novice therapist, Paul encouraged her to open up and share her feelings. But all the woman did was sit in silence during those first two sessions. He asked the usual questions therapists are trained to ask, and she responded only with silence. She simply stared out the window to the peaceful mountains in the distance, as they sat in his cramped little office.

During the course of therapy, she did make some progress. After two months, she responded in short sentences to some of Paul's questions. She even smiled a time or two. Yet, within four months, she quit coming to her sessions. Paul left messages on her answering machine inviting her back to therapy, but she did not respond. Paul never saw the woman again.

To this day, Paul is haunted by something she said at the end of one of her final sessions. After he asked her why she spent the vast majority of her time in therapy in silence, she slowly admitted, "Most times it's less painful to be silent than to talk. I think it would be much easier to live my entire life not having to communicate with anyone."

Can you imagine a life without communication? Immediately your existence would change in dramatic ways, leaving you with an entirely different life. An empty, hollow life.

No longer could you talk with friends over coffee or laugh with your family at a picnic. No longer could you whisper sweet nothings to your spouse or discuss the latest movie with a neighbor. No longer could you debate an issue at a business meeting or negotiate the price of a used car. No longer could you apologize for a wrong or ask for forgiveness from a wounded friend. In short, no longer would you be fully human. We need communication as a bridge to others in this life.

Hell was once described, not as a burning pit of endless agony, but as a cold, lonely, isolated place where each person was sentenced to spend eternity alone on an island. No bridges between the islands. No way to span the gulf between people. Forever alone. A life without communication would be hell.

What Is Communication?

Although there are numerous definitions for communication, the following definition is very simple and has been around for a long time. *Communication* is the process of sending and receiving messages. The sender sends a message through a channel to a receiver. The receiver responds with feedback to the sender, and noise can interfere with the fidelity or accuracy of the message. Communication can be both verbal and nonverbal. *Verbal* communication consists of all language that is spoken and written, whereas *nonverbal* communication is all communication that is not spoken or written.

The Six Components of Communication

The communication process is made up of six components. They are the sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback, and noise.

Sender

The *sender* is the originator of the message. In other models of communication, the sender can also be called the source of the message. The process of communication begins at this point with a speaker who wishes to communicate an idea or feeling. It's important to note the sender doesn't simply send a message. She must first decide what she wants to communicate and then encode the message. *Encoding* is the process of converting

the message into language and terms that will be understood by the receiver. Once the message is encoded, it is sent to the receiver.

Message

The idea or feeling the sender wants to communicate is called the *message*. The message can be any idea, thought, emotion, or feeling the sender wishes to communicate. Whether it's a flirtatious wink across a crowded room or a commencement address at Harvard University, the message is still the thought or feeling the sender wants to communicate.

Channel

The *channel* is the means by which a message is transmitted. Messages can be transmitted through channels of hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch. A sender can use a variety of channels to communicate her message. For instance, if she wants to communicate affection to someone special, she can choose to tell the person with words, hug the person, send cookies, write a letter, or offer perfume. In public speaking, the auditory and visual channels are used most often. But it's important to keep in mind that the more channels utilized by the sender, the more impact the message has on the receiver.

Receiver

The destination of the message is called the *receiver*. Without the receiver, communication does not occur. In public speaking, the receiver of the message is the audience. In the communication model, the receiver receives the message, then must decode the message. *Decoding* is the process of translating the message so that it has meaning for the receiver. A wink of the eye from the sender can be decoded or interpreted in many ways. It can be a nonverbal sign of flirting, a sign there's dust in the eye, or even the first symptom of an epileptic seizure. The decoding process is vital in communication.

Feedback

The response of the receiver to the sender is called *feedback*. Although feedback is really a message from the receiver to the sender, the term helps us see the circular movement of this communication model. It should be stressed that the receiver can send the return message through all the same channel options as the sender when she encodes and sends the response.

Noise

Noise is any disturbance or interference in the communication process. *External noise* is any physical interference that diminishes or reduces the meaning of the message. Examples of external noise include background talking, a jackhammer banging outside the building, or even a distracting mannerism of the speaker. All these and more can interfere with the communication process. Psychological or semantic interference, on the other hand, is called *internal noise*. Internal noise can cause us to misinterpret or decode the message in a way not intended. A word with multiple meanings is a common example of internal noise. For instance, an audience may interpret the speaker's statement, "She was a cheap woman," in a variety of ways depending upon their individual interpretations of the word "cheap."

The Principles of Communication

Now that you have an idea of what communication is and the elements that make up the process, you are in a better position to examine some principles that govern communication.

You Cannot Not Communicate

Even when you don't think you're communicating, your nonverbal behavior is constantly giving off important messages. Your posture, your eye contact or lack of it, and the manner in which you walk or even sleep send messages loaded with meaning to the outside observer. Freud wisely observed, "He who has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger tips and betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."¹ Your body, your movements, your use of time, the distance you stand from others, and even your clothes closet broadcast constant and powerful messages to observers. You are always communicating.

Communication Is Irreversible

Many times we wish we could retract a critical word or erase an angry response that we have made. Unfortunately, this is not possible. An apology for harsh words can be sincerely accepted, but the memory of the event can live on for the remainder of a person's life. Human memory is a funny thing. The least of gestures, the smallest of words can haunt us long after the event. It might be wise for us to remember the recommendation, "One seldom regrets unspoken words."

Communication Is a Process

Many years ago, Hericlitus observed, "You never step into the same river twice." The river has changed—the water clarity is different, the temperature is different, the current is different, the depth is different, and the width is different. The river may look the same, but it's a different river. In fact, you too have changed—the very cells of your body are different—since you last stepped into its waters.

This same principle holds true for communication. A smile might have worked while requesting something from a friend last week. But this week, the same smile elicits mild rejection. Why? Because you cannot repeat any event in exactly the same manner. Things have changed. Both participants have changed in countless subtle and not so subtle ways. It is impossible to replicate the hundreds of minute variables influencing you just a week ago. Everything has changed to some degree during the week.

Have you ever seen the same movie twice? It's amazing how many new things you see the second time around that went unnoticed during your first viewing. Your emotional response to the film may also have changed, because of the personal changes and emotional experiences you have had since you first saw the movie.

Communication is a process. Life is a process. The soldier who goes off to war returns a different person. The old woman dying in the city hospital bed is not the same person who ran along the country lane 70 years ago. That is, however, the beauty of life. We can explore, experiment, change, and grow as we get older, so that on our deathbed we will have very few regrets.

Communication Is Learned

There are some nonverbal communication behaviors that seem to be universal, such as smiling and crying. But the majority of verbal and nonverbal communication is learned. The specific language that a child grows up with is learned early in childhood, as are the nonverbal communication behaviors that are appropriate for a specific culture. For instance, in the American culture we value and encourage direct eye contact, especially in the public speaking arena. Yet, a native of the Japanese culture would interpret the same direct eye contact as a sign of rudeness and lack of respect, especially when the speaker is addressing an individual of higher status.

Just as a fish is unaware of the water surrounding it, an individual might not be aware that communication is learned, since he too is surrounded by the language and culture of his society. However, when a

person learns a new language, visits a foreign country, or acquaints himself with a person from a different culture, he begins to realize that his way of talking and perceiving the world is but one of many. There are many realities out there, and perhaps one important indicator of maturity is the realization that “our way” isn’t necessarily the only or best way.

The most important aspect of this principle is that ineffective ways of communicating can be replaced by learning new, more effective methods of communicating. Often people think that because they can talk, they can communicate effectively too. This is far from the truth. Ernest Hemingway once warned us “not to confuse motion for action.” The same holds true for talking and communicating. Communicating effectively in our interpersonal and professional lives requires study and practice. Effective communication skills can be learned. They must be learned if we are to experience a life that is meaningful and worth living.

Communication Needs to Be Cross-Culturally Appreciated

Perhaps the most significant lesson we can learn is that communication is often culture specific. Granted, the principles of communication mentioned thus far apply to all cultures. Individuals from all cultures learn to communicate. They cannot not communicate. Their communication and their lives are in process. And once they communicate a message, intentionally or unintentionally, the effect is irreversibly felt by others.

But we must not make the mistake of thinking and believing what we value and seek to develop in terms of communication competencies is desired by all people in every culture. This is not always the case. For example, in this book you will be encouraged to maintain direct eye contact with your listeners, use expressive gestures, employ vocal variety, and share personal illustrations in your speaking. For the purposes of addressing most American audiences, these and other skills will serve a positive and desirable function. But if you were addressing a group of Japanese businessmen in Tokyo, these same behaviors might be interpreted as overly forward, disrespectful, annoying, and even rude. The Japanese often view direct eye contact as an invasion of personal space. The use of exaggerated gestures and vocal variety does not fit their more restrained and formal style of communication. And personal disclosure would be inappropriate, if not suspect, in a large group of strangers.

“Well,” you sigh, “I just won’t ever give a speech to a group of Japanese businessmen in Tokyo!” Maybe not, but the United States is a country that is home to hundreds of different cultures and ethnic mixes. That’s the beauty of our nation! If you really analyzed any audience in America, you’d be surprised at the heterogeneous mix of the various cultures and ethnic backgrounds of your listeners.

The purpose of this public speaking book is not to provide you with a list of the communication skills and behaviors valued by each of these different cultures. We'll leave that book to someone else. But you are under strict orders to become aware of, sensitive to, and respectful of these differences. This is not to say you must shift your communication style with each audience you address. That would be an impossible task to accomplish. But you are being challenged to examine the notion that "your way is the only way."

You need to become more aware of the subtle, and not so subtle, differences between cultures. Not only must you raise your level of awareness concerning these differences, but you also need to be more sensitive to them, not only in your speaking, but in your daily interactions with others. And finally, you must respect these differences in your speaking and listening with all people. The next section will help you meet this challenge.

Attitude Is More Important Than Aptitude

Before we proceed to the next chapter, the attitude of the communicator needs to be mentioned, for it is the attitude of the speaker that ranks as the most important factor in effective communication.

A person's attitude is far more important than his aptitude in communicating with others. An individual can be highly trained and skilled in the communication arts, but may possess an angry or critical attitude. It's this negative attitude that is sensed below the level of spoken language, and the receiver or audience ultimately responds to it, rather than to the words.

The attitudes that distinguish truly effective communicators from less effective ones are worth mentioning here. Effective communicators seem to possess an attitude of self-acceptance. They accept who they are without having to prove a great deal to others. They exhibit an attitude of other-centeredness, which enables them to empathize, care for, and respond to others. Rather than constantly being consumed with the need or desire to control others or gain their approval, these self-accepting individuals can dance to the beat of a different drummer with greater ease and grace. They don't spend a lot of time looking over their shoulders or down their noses.

Flexibility is another attitude that characterizes these individuals, for they are more likely to experiment, to take risks, and to make mistakes. They appear to be gentle in their dealings with others. And finally, these individuals possess a sense of openness and authenticity that makes them comfortable to be around, demanding little energy. We walk away from these individuals feeling enlarged rather than diminished.

The most telling attitude of effective communicators is their sense of joy—not just a temporary happiness or a practiced, interpersonal warmth, but a joyfulness that seems to come from deep within. Usually these individuals have lived a while, they have managed to survive and accept some of life's tragedies, and still, they have chosen to embrace the beauty and mystery of life.

You know when you've been in their presence, for they usually make you feel calm, relaxed, and trusting. Just as certain animals can sense fear in some people and love in others, you can feel the attitude of joyfulness in these individuals. At such times, words really don't matter all that much.

Without these attitudes shaping and influencing the entire communication process, most communication skills training is wasted. Ultimately, the heart is more important than the head.

Communication Skills for Your Life

Before we actually begin learning about the concepts and skills of effective public speaking, let's spend a few moments examining your personal communication life.

There have been individuals who were powerful, persuasive public speakers. They could command hundreds of people with their words alone. Their relationship with the audience was impressive, as the masses swayed in unison to their every word.

But their relationship to the audience wasn't necessarily indicative of their relationships with individuals in their personal lives. Some of these outstanding public speakers had miserable personal lives, wracked with pain, emptiness, and longing. Their awesome speaking skills could impress hundreds in the audience but could do very little to bridge the gulf between themselves and those who should have mattered—family and friends.

In this book you will learn skills and concepts that will help you speak effectively to an audience. But before you run out and book speaking engagements, we need to begin with a brief discussion on a topic that is enormously important to your life—your interpersonal communication impact on others.

Every time you talk with someone, you either enlarge or you diminish that person by your interaction. Suppose that you and someone else are engaged in casual conversation for a few minutes and then you say good-bye. As you walk away from that individual, how are you feeling? What kind of emotional impact did he have on you? Maybe he had a diminishing impact, and you say to yourself, "Yuk! I'm glad to be away