

DALE CARNEGIE

# How to Develop Self-Confidence & Influence People by Public Speaking



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— Dale Carnegie —

# How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking



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published as a Pocket Book. They felt, as I do, that this book contained many valuable ideas for everyday living.

The Dale Carnegie Course has now spread its philosophy throughout the world and has reached a total of over 1,000,000 graduates. The course helps people to achieve a more courageous, happier and more fruitful life, by bringing out the latent qualities they possess.

This Pocket Book, *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking*, has been edited to appeal to the "reading" public. It contains many of the words of wisdom that have helped our students to achieve their goals. In re-reading the book carefully in the past few months, I realize how many wise rules it contains for overcoming fear and gaining self-confidence. Practical techniques and suggestions are added to those rules that will help everyone to meet people as individuals or as groups, and to talk with them effectively.

I do hope new readers will gain as much from this book as have the students of the Dale Carnegie Course in the past thirty years.

—DOROTHY CARNEGIE



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## CHAPTER ONE

# Developing Courage and Self-Confidence

More than five hundred thousand men and women, since 1912, have been members of public speaking courses using my methods. Many of them have written statements telling why they enrolled for this training and what they hoped to obtain from it. Naturally, the phraseology varied; but the central desire in these letters, the basic want in the vast majority, remained surprisingly the same: "When I am called upon to stand up and speak," person after person wrote, "I become so self-conscious, so frightened, that I can't think clearly, can't concentrate, can't remember what I had intended to say. I want to gain selfconfidence, poise, and the ability to think on my feet. I want to get my thoughts together in logical order and I want to be

able to say my say clearly and convincingly before a business or club group or audience. ” Thousands of their confessions sounded about like that.

To cite a concrete case: Years ago, a gentleman here called Mr. D. W. Ghent, joined my public speaking course in Philadelphia. Shortly after the opening session, he invited me to lunch with him in the Manufacturers' Club. He was a man of middle age and had always led an active life; was head of his own manufacturing establishment, a leader in church work and civic activities. While we were having lunch that day, he leaned across the table and said: “I have been asked many times to talk before various gatherings, but I have never been able to do so. I get so fussed, my mind becomes an utter blank: so I have sidestepped it all my life. But I am chairman now of a board of college trustees. I must preside at their meetings. I simply have to do some talking. . . . Do you think it will be possible for me to learn to speak at this late date in my life?”

“Do I *think*, Mr. Ghent?” I replied. “It is *not* a question of my *thinking*. I *know you can*, and I *know you will* if you will only practice and follow the directions and instructions. ”

He wanted to believe that, but it seemed too rosy, too optimistic. “I am afraid you are just being kind,” he answered, “that you are merely trying to encourage me. ”

After he had completed his training, we lost touch with each other for a while. Later, we met and lunched together again at the Manufacturers' Club. We sat in the same corner and occupied the same table that we had had on the first occasion. Reminding him of our former conversation, I asked him if I had been too sanguine then. He took a little red-backed notebook out of his pocket and showed me a list of talks and dates for which he was booked. "And the ability to make these," he confessed, "the pleasure I get in doing it, the additional service I can render to the community—these are among the most gratifying things in my life."

An important disarmament conference had been held in Washington shortly before that. When it was known that the British Prime Minister was planning to attend it, the Baptists of Philadelphia cabled, inviting him to speak at a great mass meeting to be held in their city. And Mr. Ghent informed me that he himself had been chosen, from among all the Baptists of that city, to introduce England's premier to the audience.

And this was the man who had sat at that same table less than three years before and solemnly asked me if I thought he would ever be able to talk in public!

Was the rapidity with which he forged ahead in his speaking ability unusual? Not at all, There have been hundreds of similar cases. For example—to quote one more specific instance—years ago, a Brooklyn physician, whom we will call Dr. Curtis, spent the

winter in Florida near the training grounds of the Giants. Being an enthusiastic baseball fan, he often went to see them practice. In time, he became quite friendly with the team, and was invited to attend a banquet given in their honor.

After the coffee and nuts were served, several prominent guests were called upon to "say a few words." Suddenly, with the abruptness and unexpectedness of an explosion, he heard the toastmaster remark: "We have a physician with us tonight, and I am going to ask Dr. Curtis to talk on a Baseball Player's Health."

Was he prepared? Of course. He had had the best preparation in the world: he had been studying hygiene and practicing medicine for almost a third of a century. He could have sat in his chair and talked about this subject all night to the man seated on his right or left. But to get up and say the same things to even a small audience—that was another matter. That was a paralyzing matter. His heart doubled its pace and skipped beats at the very contemplation of it. He had never made a public speech in his life, and every thought that he had had now took wings.

What was he to do? The audience was applauding. Everyone was looking at him. He shook his head. But that served only to heighten the applause, to increase the demand. The cries of "Dr. Curfis! Speech! Speech!" grew louder and more insistent.

He was in positive misery. He knew that if he got up he would fail, that he would be unable to utter half a dozen sentences. So he arose, and, without saying a word, turned his back on his friends and walked silently out of the room, a deeply embarrassed and humiliated man.

Small wonder that one of the first things he did after getting back to Brooklyn was to enroll in my course in Public Speaking. He didn't propose to be put to the blush and be stricken dumb a second time.

He was the kind of student that delights an instructor: he was in dead earnest. He wanted to be able to talk, and there was no halfheartedness about his desire. He prepared his talks thoroughly, he practiced them with a will, and he never missed a single session of the course.

He did precisely what such a student always does: he progressed at a rate that surprised him, that surpassed his fondest hopes. After the first few sessions his nervousness subsided, his confidence mounted higher and higher. In two months he had become the star speaker of the group. He was soon accepting invitations to speak elsewhere; he now loved the feel and exhilaration of it, the distinction and the additional friends it brought him.

A member of the New York City Republican Campaign Committee, hearing one of his public addresses, invited Dr. Curtis to stump the city for his



party. How surprised that politician would have been had he realized that only a year before, the speaker had gotten up and left a public banquet hall in shame and confusion because he was tongue-tied with audience-fear!

The gaining of self-confidence and courage, and the ability to think calmly and clearly while talking to a group is not one-tenth as difficult as most people imagine. It is not a gift bestowed by Providence on only a few rarely endowed individuals. It is like the ability to play golf. Anyone can develop his own latent capacity if he has sufficient desire to do so.

Is there the faintest shadow of a reason why you should not be able to think as well in a perpendicular position before an audience as you can when sitting down? Surely, you know there is not. In fact, you ought to think better when facing a group. Their presence ought to stir you and lift you. A great many speakers will tell you that the presence of an audience is a stimulus, an inspiration, that drives their brains to function more clearly, more keenly. At such times, thoughts, facts, ideas that they did not know they possessed, "drift smoking by," as Henry Ward Beecher said; and they have but to reach out and lay their hands hot upon them. That ought to be your experience. It probably will be if you practice and persevere.

Of this much, however, you may be absolutely sure: training and practice will wear away your audience-fright

and give you self-confidence and an abiding courage.

Do not imagine that your case is unusually difficult. Even those who afterward became the most eloquent representatives of their generation were, at the outset of their careers, afflicted by this blinding fear and self-consciousness.

William Jennings Bryan, battle-marked veteran that he was, admitted that in his first attempts, his knees fairly smote together.

Mark Twain, the first time he stood up to lecture, felt as if his mouth were filled with cotton and his pulse were speeding for some prize cup.

Grant took Vicksburg and led to victory one of the greatest armies the world had ever seen up to that time; yet, when he attempted to speak in public, he admitted he had something very like locomotive taxi.

The late Jean Jaurès, the most powerful political speaker that France produced during his generation, sat, for a year, tongue-tied in the Chamber of Deputies before he could summon up the courage to make his initial speech.

“The first time I attempted to make a public talk,” confessed Lloyd George, “I tell you I was in a state of misery. It is no figure of speech, but literally true, that my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth; and, at first, I could hardly get out a word.”

John Bright, the illustrious Englishman who, during the civil war, defended in England the cause of union

and emancipation, made his maiden speech before a group of country folk gathered in a school building. He was so frightened on the way to the place, so fearful that he would fail, that he implored his companion to start applause to bolster him up whenever he showed signs of giving way to his nervousness.

Charles Stewart Parnell, the great Irish leader, at the outset of his speaking career, was so nervous, according to the testimony of his brother, that he frequently clenched his fists until his nails sank into his flesh and his palms bled.

Disraeli admitted that he would rather have led a cavalry charge than to have faced the House of Commons for the first time. His opening speech there was a ghastly failure. So was Sheridan's.

In fact, so many of the famous speakers of England have made poor showings at first that there is now a feeling in Parliament that it is rather an insuspicious omen for a young man's initial talk to be a decided success. So take heart.

After watching the careers and aiding somewhat in the development of so many speakers, the author is always glad when a student has, at the outset, a certain amount of flutter and nervous agitation.

There is a certain responsibility in making a talk, even if it is to only two dozen men or women in a business meeting—a certain strain, a certain shock, a certain excitement. The speaker ought to be keyed up like a

thoroughbred straining at the bit. The immortal Cicero said, two thousand years ago, that all public speaking of real merit was characterized by nervousness.

Speakers often experience this same feeling even when they are talking over the radio. "Microphone fright," it is called. When Charlie Chaplin went on the air, he had his speech all written out. Surely he was used to audiences. He toured this country back in 1912 with a vaudeville sketch entitled "A Night in a Music Hall." Before that he was on the legitimate stage in England. Yet, when he went into the padded room and faced the microphone, he had a feeling in the stomach not unlike the sensation one gets when he crosses the Atlantic during a stormy February.

James Kirkwood, a famous motion picture actor and director, had a similar experience. He used to be a star on the speaking stage; but, when he came out of the sending room after addressing the invisible audience, he was mopping perspiration from his brow. "An opening night on Broadway," he confessed, "is nothing in comparison to that."

Some people, no matter how often they speak, always experience this self-consciousness just before they commence but, in a few seconds after they have gotten on their feet, it disappears.

Even Lincoln felt shy for the few opening moments. "At first he was very awkward," relates his law partner, Herndon, "and it seemed a real labor to adjust

himself to his surroundings. He struggled for a time under a feeling of apparent diffidence and sensitiveness, and these only added to his awkwardness. I have often seen and sympathized with Mr. Lincoln during these moments. When he began speaking, his voice was shrill, piping, and unpleasant. His manner, his attitude, his dark, yellow face, wrinkled and dry, his oddity of pose, his diffident movements—everything seemed to be against him, but only for a short time. ” In a few moments he gained composure and warmth and earnestness, and his real speech began.

Your experience may be similar to his.

In order to get the most out of your efforts to become a good speaker in public, and to get it with rapidity and dispatch, four things are essential:

#### First: Start with a Strong and Persistent Desire

This is of far more importance than you probably realize. If an instructor could look into your mind and heart now and ascertain the depth of your desires, he could foretell, almost with certainty, the swiftness of the progress you will make. If your desire is pale and flabby, your achievements will also take on that hue and consistency. But, if you go after your subject with persistence, and with the energy of a bulldog after a cat, nothing underneath the Milky Way will defeat you.



Therefore, arouse your enthusiasm for this self-study. Enumerate its benefits. Think of what additional self-confidence and the ability to talk more convincingly in public will mean to you. Think of what it may mean and what it ought to mean, in dollars and cents. Think of what it may mean to you socially; of the friends it will bring, of the increase of your personal influence, of the leadership it will give you. And it will give you leadership more rapidly than almost any other activity you can think of or imagine.

“There is no other accomplishment,” stated Chauncey M. Depew, “which any man can have that will so quickly make for him a career and secure recognition as the ability to speak acceptably.”

Philip D. Armour, after he had amassed millions, said: “I would rather have been a great speaker than a great capitalist.”

It is an attainment that almost every person of education longs for. After Andrew Carnegie's death there was found, among his papers, a plan for his life drawn up when he was thirty-three years of age. He then felt that in two more years he could so arrange his business as to have an annual income of fifty thousand; so he proposed to retire at thirty-five, go to Oxford and get a thorough education, and “*pay special attention to speaking in public.*”

Think of the glow of satisfaction and pleasure that will accrue from the exercise of this new power. The



author has traveled around over no small part of the world; and has had many and varied experiences; but for downright and lasting inward satisfaction, he knows of few things that will compare to standing before an audience and making men think your thoughts after you. It will give you a sense of strength, a feeling of power. It will appeal to your pride of personal accomplishment. It will set you off from and raise you above your fellow men. There is magic in it and a never-to-be-forgotten thrill. "Two minutes before I begin," a speaker confessed, "I would rather be whipped than start; but two minutes before I finish, I would rather be shot than stop."

In every effort, some men grow faint-hearted and fall by the wayside; so you should keep thinking of what this skill will mean to you until your desire is white hot. You should start this program with an enthusiasm that will carry you through triumphant to the end. Set aside one certain night of the week for the reading of these chapters. In short, make it as easy as possible to go ahead. Make it as difficult as possible to retreat.

When Julius Caesar sailed over the channel from Gaul and landed with his legions on what is now England, what did he do to insure the success of his arms? A very clever thing: he halted his soldiers on the chalk cliffs of Dover, and, looking down over the waves two hundred feet below, they saw red tongues of fire consume every ship in which they had crossed. In