

THE BIG IDEAS

The Big 4

Start w/a strong + persistent desire.

Reserve Power

Build it. Prepare well.

Persistence

Embrace the plateau(s).

Secret to Good Delivery

Hint: Be you.

Your Most Precious Asset

Is your uniqueness.

How to Gesture

Let it be spontaneous.

Magnetic Vitality

Cultivate it.

"There is a certain responsibility in making a talk, even if it is only to 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."

~ Dale Carnegie

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

THE CELEBRATED METHOD OF PERSUASION FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

Dale Carnegie

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

BY DALE CARNEGIE · GALLERY BOOKS © 2017 · 256 PAGES

"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."

~ Dale Carnegie from *How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking*

Before [Dale Carnegie](#) wrote [How to Win Friends and Influence People](#), he wrote this book.

In fact, back in the day, one of the things Carnegie was best known for was his ability to help people develop their leadership skills by becoming great speakers. This book is a distillation of the training manuals from his classes.

As with [How to Win Friends](#) and [How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#), this book is quick-reading, super-practical, and entertaining (especially if you get a kick out of the early 20th century style like I do).

I bought it years ago and finally read it after enjoying [How to Win Friends](#) and as preparation for a class on Public Speaking 101 I'm working on. We've had a lot of our members ask for that and our flagship corporate client would love some wisdom on this front as well so here we are!

If you're looking for an old-school guide on how to Optimize your public speaking skills I think you'll dig it. (Get a copy [here](#).)

Of course, it's packed with Big Ideas and I'm excited to share a few of my favorites so let's jump straight in! :)

"If you want confidence, why not do the things necessary to bring it about? 'Perfect love,' wrote the Apostle John, 'casteth out fear.' So does perfect preparation. Webster said he would as soon think of appearing before an audience half-clothed as half-prepared."

~ Dale Carnegie

"You may never be able to speak without some nervous anxiety just before you begin. But, if you will persevere, you will soon eradicate everything but this initial fear; and, after you have spoken for a few seconds, that too will disappear."

~ Dale Carnegie

FIRST: START WITH A STRONG AND PERSISTENT DESIRE

"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."

That's from Chapter 1: "Developing Courage and Self-Confidence."

First thing know? Carnegie tells us that even Lincoln (his favorite speaker) "felt shy for the few opening moments" of a talk before settling in. Good news! We're not alone. (["I'm excited!"](#))

He tells us that Lincoln also had a tireless commitment to his "self-study" and education. (With less than a year of formal education under his belt, Lincoln's education was ALL self-study.)

Which leads us to the most important facet of Optimizing our confidence in speaking.

Carnegie kicked off *How to Win Friends and Influence People* with a similar overview of how to get the most out of book—in that one, he shared 9 things to keep in mind. Here he shares 4.

Guess what? #1 is the same. You want to Optimize your ability to form great relationships and/or become a better speaker and/or Optimize ANY aspect of your life? Fantastic. Know this: The speed with which you progress will be directly determined by the depth of your desire.

5 or 6 intensity = 5 or 6 results. Want 9 or 10 results? Dial up the intensity of your desire and then match that with hustle. Period. Repeat in all aspects of your life.

Alright. So, that's the first essential thing. Here are the other 3:

"Second: Know Thoroughly What You Are Going to Talk About" - Sounds obvious because, well, it is. But... Poor speakers often don't prepare enough. "Unless a person has thought out and planned his talk and knows what he is going to say, he can't feel very comfortable when he faces his auditors. He is like the blind leading the blind. Under such circumstances, your speaker **ought** to be self-conscious, ought to feel repentant, ought to be ashamed of his negligence."

"Third: Act Confident" - Carnegie loves [William James](#) and the whole [As If Principle](#). Recap: fastest way to get a quality is to act like you already have it! "To develop courage when you are facing an audience, act as if you already had it." Fun/funny tip: "Draw yourself up to your full height, look your audience straight in the eyes, and begin to talk as confidently as if every one of them owed you money. Imagine that they do. Imagine that they have assembled there to beg you for an extension of credit. The psychological effect on you will be beneficial."

"The truthful, inside story of almost anyone's life—if told modestly and without offending egotism—is most entertaining. It is almost sure-fire speech material."

~ Dale Carnegie

"Fourth: Practice! Practice! Practice!" - *"The last point we have to make here is emphatically the most important. Even though you forget everything you have read so far, do remember this: the first way, the last way, the never-failing way to develop self-confidence in speaking is—to speak. Really the whole matter finally simmers down to but one essential: practice, practice, practice. That is the sine qua non of it all, 'the without which not.'"*

Desire + Knowledge + Confidence + Practice. <— Our 4 essentials. How are yours?

Later in the book, Carnegie tells us that one of the best ways to become a great speaker is to soak our minds in the prose of great books. (His top 2? The Bible and Shakespeare.)

And... One of his favorite writers was [Ralph Waldo Emerson](#). Let's review what Ralph says about enthusiasm: *"Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic, be enthusiastic and faithful, and you will accomplish your object. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."*

THE SECRET OF RESERVE POWER

"Luther Burbank said, shortly before his death: 'I have often produced a million plant specimens to find but one or two superlatively good ones, and have then destroyed all the inferior specimens.' A speech ought to be prepared somewhat in that lavish and discriminating spirit. Assemble a hundred thoughts, and discard ninety.

Collect more material, more information, than there is any possibility of employing. Get it for the additional confidence it will give you, for the sureness of touch. Get it for the effect it will have on your mind and heart and whole manner of speaking. This is a basic, important factor of preparation; yet it is constantly ignored by speakers, both in public and in private."

That's from Chapter 2: "Self-Confidence Through Preparation."

Want to be confident in your public speaking? Be prepared. Create "reserve power." Know *way* more than you need to know on your given subject. That *reserve power* gives you a deep level of trust you know what you're talking about.

That's how I prepare for my classes. Studying. Studying. Studying. Then closing all the books and Notes and mapping out all the Ideas I could share on the subject. Way more than 10. Then the challenge is eliminating the "inferior specimens" and tying them all together in a coherent shape. With lots of reserve power.

How about YOU?

How can you REALLY know you know what you're talking about?! Create some reserve power!!

THE NECESSITY OF PERSISTENCE

"When we start to learn any new thing, like French, or golf, or public speaking, we never advance steadily. We do not improve gradually. We do it by sudden jerks, by abrupt starts. Then we remain stationary a time, or we may even slip back and lose some of the ground we have previously gained. These periods of stagnation, or retrogression, are well known by all psychologists; and they have been named 'plateaus in the curve of learning.' Students of public speaking will sometimes be stalled for weeks on one of these plateaus. Work as hard as they may, they cannot get off it. The weak ones give up in despair. Those with grit persist, and they find that suddenly, overnight, without their knowing how or why it has happened, they have made great progress. They have lifted from the plateau like an aeroplane. Abruptly they have gotten the knack of the thing. Abruptly they have acquired naturalness and force and confidence in their speaking."

"Study the careers of famous speakers and you will find one fact that is true of them all: they practiced. THEY PRACTICED. And the men who make the most rapid progress in this course are those who practice the most."

~ Dale Carnegie

"Some anonymous Irish politician is reported to have given this recipe for making a speech: 'First, tell them that you are going to tell them; then tell them; then tell them that you have told them.' Not bad, you know. In fact, it is often highly advisable to 'tell them that you have told them. Briefly, of course, speedily—a mere outline, a summary.'"

~ Dale Carnegie

Our growth, as we've discussed many times, is not a straight, "up and to the right" line of consistent gradual progress. It's more jagged than that and comes with plenty of plateaus (and the occasional "retrogressive" backsliding!).

The trick is to KNOW that. Then to fall in love with those plateaus on the path of mastery.

I'm reminded of [George Leonard](#). In [Mastery](#) he tells us: "Goals and contingencies, as I've said, are important. But they exist in the future and the past, beyond the pale of the sensory realm. Practice, the path of mastery, exists only in the present. You can see it, hear it, smell it, feel it. To love the plateau is to love the eternal now, to enjoy the inevitable spurts of progress and the fruits of accomplishment, then serenely to accept the new plateau that waits just beyond them. To love the plateau is to love what is most essential and enduring in your life."

Plus: "Oh boy. Another plateau. Good. I can just stay on it and keep practicing. Sooner or later, there'll be another spurt." "It was one of the warmest moments on my journey."

Got any plateaus in your life? How can you love them a little more today?

THE SECRET TO GOOD DELIVERY

"A modern audience, regardless of whether it is fifteen people at a business conference or a thousand people under a tent, wants the speaker to talk just as directly as he would in a chat, and in the same general manner that he would employ in speaking to one of them in conversation.

In the same *manner*, but not with the same amount of force. If he tries that, he will hardly be heard. In order to appear natural he has to use much more energy in talking to forty people than he does in talking to one; just as a statue on top of a building has to be of heroic size in order to make it appear of lifelike proportions to an observer on the ground."

What's the ultimate key to a solid delivery as a speaker?

Basically, just act like you do when you're having a normal conversation. Then dial that energy up a bit—making it "bigger" like that statue on the top of a building. But don't worry about "doing it right." Just share your ideas with passionate intensity.

I'm reminded of a coaching session I had with [Steve Chandler](#) years ago. He told me that, when teaching, I should focus on CONNECTION rather than PERFECTION. He used former NFL broadcaster and coach John Madden as his prime example. He was far from a polished speaker, but he was so fired up about football you could *feel* it.

That's Carnegie's point throughout the book as well. He says your enthusiasm for the subject is contagious. You need to be fired up. Then share that enthusiasm with your audience!

And keep this in mind: "You can throw a steel-jacketed bullet at a man with all your might, and you cannot make even a dent in his clothing. But put powder behind a tallow candle and you can shoot it through a pine board. Many a tallow-candle speech with powder makes, I regret to say, more of an impression than a steel-jacketed talk with no force behind it."

P.S. Carnegie is ALL about being human and dropping all the silly "rules" of speaking that make us robots: "His heart was in his work.' That is the secret. Yet I know that advice like this is not popular. It seems vague. It sounds indefinite. The average student wants foolproof rules. Something definite. Something he can put his hands on. Rules as precise as the directions for operating a car.

That is what he wants. That is what I would like to give him. It would be easy for him. It would be easy for me. There are such rules, and there is only one little thing wrong with them: they don't work. They take all the naturalness and spontaneity and life and juice out of speaking. I know. In my younger days I wasted a great deal of energy trying them. They won't appear in these pages for ... "There ain't no use in knowin' so many things that ain't so."

"I have given up newspapers in exchange for Tacitus and Thucydides, for Newton and Euclid," wrote Thomas Jefferson, "and I find myself much the happier."

~ Dale Carnegie

"Know your goal. Choose it wisely before you set out to prepare your talk. Know how to reach it. Then set about it, doing it skillfully and with science."

~ Dale Carnegie

YOUR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSION

"All Fords are exactly alike,' their maker used to say, 'but no two men are just alike. Every new life is a new thing under the sun; there has never been anything just like it before, and never will be again. A young man ought to get that idea about himself; he should look for the single spark of individuality that makes him different from other folks, and develop that for all he is worth. Society and schools may try to iron it out of him; their tendency is to put us all in the same mold, but I say don't let that spark be lost; it's your only real claim to importance.'

All that is doubly true of public speaking. There is no other human being in the world like you. Hundreds of millions of people have two eyes and a nose and a mouth; but none of them look precisely like you; and none of them have exactly your traits and methods and cast of mind. Few of them will talk and express themselves just as you do when you are speaking naturally. In other words, you have an individuality. As a speaker, it is your most precious possession. Cling to it. Cherish it. Develop it. It is the spark that will put force of sincerity into your speaking. 'It is your only real claim to importance.'"

This is my favorite take-away from the book.

It's from the same section on how to Optimize your delivery as our last Idea.

There's only one you. Know and embrace your unique personality and then let it shine like that heroic statue on the top of that building. In short: BE YOU!

As [Leo Buscaglia](#) says: "You are the best you. You will always be the second best anyone else."

Emerson comes to mind again. Carnegie shares this passage from [Self-Reliance](#) (and tells us we need to read the essay!): "Envy is ignorance. Imitation is suicide."

Think about the public people you most admire. They aren't copies of anyone else. They're fully expressing their unique selves. That's why we love them.

So... Throw away all the artificial ideas. Let go of perfection. Focus on connection. Start by connecting with your own wonderfully idiosyncratic style and let it rip.

HOW TO GESTURE

"Any gesture that is gotten out of a book is very likely to look like it. The place to get it is out of yourself, out of your heart, out of your mind, out of your own interest in the subject, out of your own desire to make someone else see as you see, out of your own impulses. The only gestures that are worth one, two, three, are those that are born on the spur of the instant. An ounce of spontaneity is worth a ton of rules.

Gesture is not a thing to put on at will like a dinner jacket. It is merely an outward expression of inward conditions just as kisses and colic and laughter and seasickness. ...

If you forget all else we have said about gesture and delivery, remember this: if a man is so wrapped up in what he has to say, if he is so eager to get his message across that he forgets himself and talks and acts spontaneously, then his gestures and his delivery, unstudied though they may be, are very likely to be almost above criticism."

Want to know how to gesture properly when you speak?

Rule #1. If you got the move from a book or a workshop, that's the wrong way to gesture. (lol)

Your movements should be natural. Let them arise spontaneously as a by-product of your enthusiastic engagement with your talk.

How great is this? "If you who read this book speak in public so that people hearing you will suspect that you have had training in public speaking, you will not be a credit to the author.

"One time a young man who aspired to study law, wrote to Lincoln for advice, and Lincoln replied: 'If you are resolutely determined to make a lawyer of yourself, the thing is more than half done already. . . . Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.'"

~ Dale Carnegie

He would desire you to speak with such intensified and exalted naturalness that your auditors would never dream that you had been trained.”

MAGNETIC VITALITY

“Don’t imitate others. If you speak spontaneously you will speak differently from anyone else in the world. Put your own individuality, your own characteristic manner into your delivery.”

~ Dale Carnegie

“Do nothing to dull your energy. It is magnetic. Vitality, aliveness, enthusiasm: they are among the first qualities I have always sought for in employing speakers and instructors of speaking. People cluster around the energetic speaker, the human dynamo of energy, like wild geese around a field of autumn wheat.”

At the end of the day, YOU are your talk.

Your energy, your confidence, your preparation, your enthusiastic delivery.

Therefore, we need to make sure we “do nothing to dull your energy.” Stated positively, we want to make sure we’re dialing your energy WAY up! Carnegie reflects on a couple of our fundies:

Sleep: *“If you wish make the most of your individuality, go before your audience rested. A tired speaker is not magnetic or attractive.”*

Eat: *“Eat as sparingly as a saint.”* Lest, *“The blood that ought to have been in my brain was down in my stomach wrestling with that steak and potatoes.”*

btw: Isn’t this astonishing? *“Sir Richard Burton, the translator of the ‘Arabian Nights,’ spoke twenty-seven languages like a native: yet he confessed he never studied or practiced any language for more than fifteen minutes at a time, for, after that, the brain lost its freshness.”*

Here’s to you being the most energized, confident, enthusiastic version of you as you confidently and powerfully share your ideas in your next public talk!!

B

Brian Johnson,
Chief Philosopher

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[How to Win Friends and Influence People](#)

[How to Stop Worrying and Start Living](#)

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About the Author of “How to Develop Self-Confidence and Influence People by Public Speaking”

DALE CARNEGIE



Dale Harbison Carnegie was an American writer and lecturer and the developer of famous courses in self-improvement, salesmanship, corporate training, public speaking, and interpersonal skills. Born into poverty on a farm in Missouri, he was the author of *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, a massive bestseller that remains popular today. He also wrote *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, *Lincoln the Unknown*, and several other books. One of the core ideas in his books is that it is possible to change other people’s behavior by changing one’s behavior toward them.

About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives so they can actualize their potential as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + practical tools. Learn more and optimize your life at optimize.me.