

DISCUSSION GUIDE

OWN THE ROOM

Brought to you in partnership with public speaking and executive training coach Bill Hoogterp, founder and creator of the Own the Room® public speaking and communication training system. For more tips, resources, videos and information about Own the Room® courses, visit www.owntheroom.com. Also look out for Bill's upcoming book, *"Your Perfect Presentation: Speak in front of Any Audience, Anytime, Anywhere, and Never Be Nervous Again,"* to be published in March, 2014.



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Key Points

Your job as a speaker or presenter is to grab the spotlight.

Once you have it, you can redirect it onto your topic or issue, a statistic, an individual, the audience—wherever and however you want, to achieve your objectives. You can't do anything useful with the spotlight, however, if you don't first command it for yourself.

The first few times you speak in public, it will feel awkward and uncomfortable, and you will make mistakes.

It gets easier each time, because you will improve and grow more confident with practice. You must cross the valley of awkward before you can summit the mountain of smooth.

Remember, your presentation is not about you, it's about the audience.

Focus on your audience and your message, and the magic will happen.

When you have a chance to lead a presentation, speak up at a meeting, or shine on a project, take it.

Trust your instincts more, and be quicker to act on them.

Personal Inventory

Use your fingers to share your answers to these questions with your Circle.

1. How much do you like public speaking? (0 = I hate it, 10 = I love it)
2. How would you rate your current skills as a public speaker? How much do you want to improve? (e.g., currently a 4, want to be an 8)

Take a few minutes to answer this question:

ACTION

Why do you want to improve your public speaking skills?

Share with your Circle. 30 seconds each. 5 minutes total.

- What is the main reason why you want to improve your public speaking skills?
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Practicing Skills

Exercise 1: Eliminating Weak Language

One of the quickest ways to improve your public speaking skills, and increase your confidence, is to eliminate weak language. Weak language is any word or phrase that does not add value to your message (e.g., “um”, “basically”, “let me start by saying”, “at the end of the day”, “what I’m trying to say is...”).

To practice eliminating weak language, break into pairs and spend 5 minutes total on this exercise.

ACTION

Speaking partner:

1. Pour one inch of soda into a plastic cup. The soda represents the content of your message.*
2. Fill the remainder of the cup with water, diluting the soda. The water represents weak language.
3. Answer the following question in one minute: “Where do you see yourself in five years?”

Non-speaking partner:

1. Each time your partner uses weak language, point it out and have them take a sip of the diluted soda.

Switch roles and start over.

** Don't have soda? Have your partner hold a pen and raise it each time you use weak language.*

Exercise 2: Use Strong Language to Paint Pictures and Evoke Emotions

We are using strong language when we use our words to paint pictures and evoke emotions in the minds and hearts of our audience. This allows us to establish an emotional connection, engaging our audience in our presentation.

As a Circle, practice using strong language by spending 5 minutes on this exercise.

ACTION

1. Select a member of the Circle who is wearing a bright-colored item of clothing to be the “super model.”
2. As you go around the Circle, each member takes turns describing the item of clothing in one or two sentences.
3. Ask the “supermodel” to choose which description she or he will remember the most, and explain why.

Share with your Circle. 1 minute each. 10 minutes total.

- Share your “aha” moment from the weak language experiment with your circle.

One Action

Spend 5 minutes preparing a 1-minute speech about a time in your life when you were proud of yourself. Give yourself permission to be creative, fearless and take chances.

ACTION

My proud moment:

Present to your Circle and then ask for feedback. Ask for three things you did well and one area where you need to improve. Always focus on the positive. Building on your strengths is the best way to improve. Each person has 1-minute to present and 30 seconds to collect feedback from the group.

Three things I did well:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

One area where I need to improve:

1. _____

Bringing It Home

Take 2 minutes to identify an opportunity for you to speak in public in the next month. It does not have to be a formal presentation at work. You can speak before a community or volunteer group, address your child's class, or speak in a meeting.

ACTION

My opportunity to speak in public this month:

Share with your Circle. 30 seconds each. 5 minutes total.

- Share your opportunity to speak in public with your Circle so that you commit to doing it.
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