

# Quality Education News

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Dear Supporter of Quality Education

## Does public speaking terrify you?



Nerves are not a disaster. The audience *expects* you to be nervous. It's a natural body response that can actually improve your performance.

Chris Anderson

Do you dread having to speak to a large audience? You're not the only one. Millions of people are fearful of public speaking. If you're a teacher, you're usually comfortable talking to the classes that you teach. So, what causes the emotional meltdown when asked to speak to a school hall packed with people?

A major reason for fearing to speak in public is that the person is scared of looking foolish. The person feels that if they give a poor speech, their reputation will be rubbished. Forever afterwards – the speaker thinks – others will look down on them. At this point there's a need for a reality check.

The fact is that shortly after you've given your talk – no matter how good or bad it was – most of your audience will have forgotten most of it. Even if the speech was poor, what will the audience do? Will they rise up and hurl bricks, eggs and tomatoes?! Highly unlikely. Secretly, many in the audience might be admiring your courage of public speaking.

Warren Buffett, the billionaire investor, once remarked that as a young person, he was terrified of public speaking. Buffett signed up for a public-speaking course. Yet at the very first session, he flunked out because he was too scared to give a speech to the group. He plucked up courage, enrolled again and passed. Buffett made the comment that a person could increase their value by 50% by improving their communication skills. That would include public speaking.

In a profession such as teaching, nobody earns money remotely near Buffett's cash pile. Yet any teacher who aspires to be a team or subject leader in a Grade, needs to be able influence others through their speaking skills. Virtually every promotion post from Head of Department upwards demands the ability to be a confident speaker.

How sad it is when outstanding teachers don't get deserved leadership roles and promotions simply because they're too fearful to speak in public.

What can be done to calm one's nerves if one has to do a presentation? Amy Jen Su (2019: 114 -115) who coaches executives and leaders, gives advice. Firstly, accept that being nervous before a talk is normal. Get comfortable with the idea that discomfort is part of the game. Embrace that nervousness. Yes, there might be a racing heart, sweating palms and a cracking voice. Let your body help you manage those situations.

Take deep slow inward breaths. Breathe out slowly. Stand comfortably and, if possible, have a physical anchor. That physical anchor could be the lectern or the table on which you have put your notes.

Jen Su makes the point that prior preparation does much to calm the nerves. Prepare and practise the opening of the presentation. It sets the tone for everything that follows. If you're worried about being asked questions to which you don't know the answers, think of possible questions and your responses. Don't be scared to ask the audience for their help if you don't know the answers. In their eyes it makes you look human – just like them!

On the day of the talk, arrive early. Check that everything is in order such as the air conditioning being on or the need to open windows. Are the data projector, lights and microphone in working order? Is a glass of cold water to hand for you? Walk the room to get a sense of the venue. If feasible, greet people as they arrive.

Before your talk, give yourself one or two motivational mantras. One could be, "I've prepared well and I know the topic" or "I'm going to enjoy sharing what I already know so well."

Public speaking is a bit like riding a bicycle for the first time. The first time it's a bit scary but also exciting. Then it becomes easier every time that you try and, of course, even enjoyable!

Sincerely

Richard Hayward

### References

Gallo, C 2019. *Five stars: the communication secrets to get from good to great*. London: Pan.

Su A J 2019. How to calm your nerves before a big presentation. *Harvard Business Review-On Point*, Summer, pages 114 -115.



This newsletter is a social responsibility project of SAQI. If you would like to be put on the mailing list, please contact Mrs Vanessa du Toit on [vanessa@saqi.co.za](mailto:vanessa@saqi.co.za)

Dr Richard Hayward, the editor, does school leadership and management programmes under the aegis of SAQI. Programmes are endorsed by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Attendees earn Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points. For workshop details, please contact him on [rpdhayward@yahoo.com](mailto:rpdhayward@yahoo.com) or ☎ 011 888 3262.

Free back issues of QEN may be downloaded at [www.saqi.co.za](http://www.saqi.co.za) (click on "Quality Education").



**ETHOS**  
*Credibility*



**PATHOS**  
*Emotion*



**LOGOS**  
*Logic*



# Speak to persuade

Public speaking involves persuading. The chairperson of the Parents' Teacher Association might want support from the audience to raise money for a new building. A teacher who talks to parents on Parents' Evening could be appealing for support from the home in the education of their children. The school principal talks to prospective parents and their children at an Information Evening. She's trying to persuade families to enrol their children at the school.

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, believed that a sign of an educated person was the ability to persuade others. He developed three tools that would help a person be an effective persuader. Great orators such as Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama and Margaret Thatcher have also used them. Aristotle maintained that great speeches have ethos, logos and pathos. When all three are present, a memorable speech is created.

## 1 Ethos

Ethos is the ethical appeal of the speaker. The audience gives the speaker credibility. Ethos is the Greek word for 'character'. Often the words of introduction about a speaker set up the credibility. It could also be the person's reputation. The choice of words used by the speaker is one that makes the audience feel comfortable. There's a sense that the speaker is, 'one of us'. He understands who we are and we trust him.

An example would be the patient walking into a doctor's consulting room and seeing the framed qualifications on the wall. The patient is likely to accept the doctor's authority on medical matters.

## 2 Logos

During the presentation the speaker gives the facts, figures and statistics to support the argument. Case studies, stories and PowerPoint presentations might be given. This is the logos (in Greek) or logic of the speech.

Points are made to show the accuracy of what is being spoken. This is where the logic behind the argument or viewpoint is made clear. If handled well, the speaker is able to pre-empt possible negativity

that audience members might have about the contents of the speech. Sound logic often converts critics.

## 3 Pathos

To get audience 'buy in' to what the speaker is saying, there's a need for pathos. In Greek, the word means both 'suffering' and 'experience'. Pathos is the emotional response that the audience has both to the speaker and the speech. The speaker wants to be seen in a positive light by the listeners.

How does one make that connection with an audience? A good start is simply to have a friendly smile. A cheerful face is often seen as a characteristic of a likeable person. A warm greeting gets the tone right. An amusing comment or joke can help not only make the speaker feel a little more relaxed but the audience is looking forward to what's going to be said next.

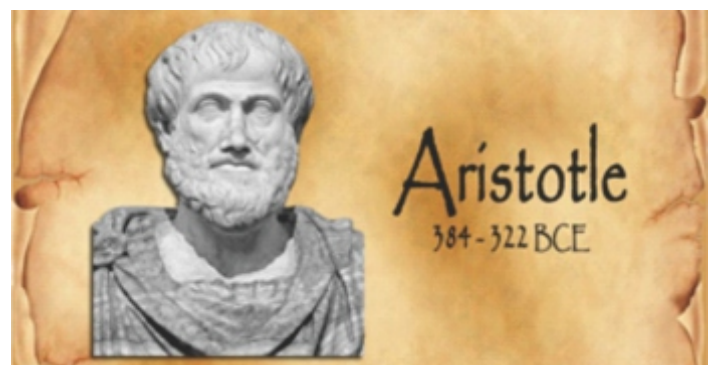
Telling a story is an excellent way to make the emotional connection. As the story unfolds, the audience shares in the excitement or anger or whatever emotions the presenter is expressing.

Great speakers appeal to the audience's emotions. Winston Churchill inspired the British to be brave at the start of the Second World War in response to the Nazi onslaught on their nation. Nelson Mandela made an appeal for a spirit of reconciliation amongst different racial groups at the onset of South African democracy. The more powerful the pathos, the more potent the persuasion.

## References

Ethos, pathos and logos definition and examples 2015.  
<https://pathosethoslogos.com>

Ethos, logos and pathos: the structure of a great speech 2016.  
<https://fs.blog/2016/11/ethos-logos-pathos/>





# Keep it simple

Most school teachers have a tertiary qualification. The education profession is filled with teaching jargon. A trap that teachers can fall into when talking to an audience is to forget the background of their listeners. An Annual General Meeting with parents might include a smattering of accountants, lawyers and scientists. Those parents also have tertiary qualifications but they're not familiar with the language of our profession.

Then, of course, in a country such as South Africa there are many who have not been able to complete a high school career. Add in the factor that for many, English is not their home language. It could be their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> language.

Using simple words ensures that one is easily understood. Everybody gets the message. There's no misunderstanding nor misinterpretation.

At what age-level should one pitch one's talk? A talk that can be understood by a Grade Seven (age 12 -13) child, is likely to be understood by most in an audience. Such a talk is profession jargon-free. Nobody should have the need to ask the speaker to explain the meanings of words used in the talk. Keep it simple Sam or Samantha.

## Give the talk verbal beauty and humour

Gallo (2019) recommends that speakers should give their talks 'verbal beauty.' Use figurative language and techniques to make speeches arresting and memorable.

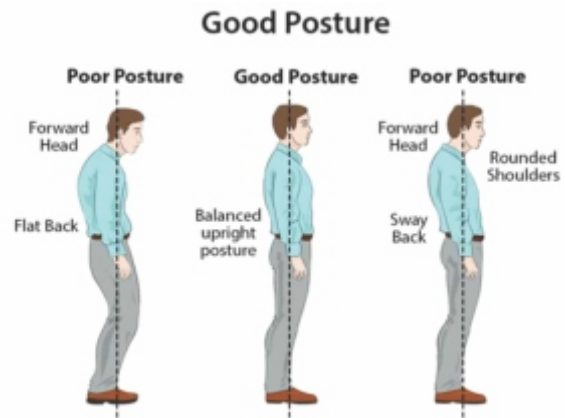
One technique is the use of contrast. After the Royal Air Force had been victorious in the Battle of Britain, Churchill in referring to the actions of the British pilots, wrote: "Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."

John F Kennedy used contrast to powerful effect in his Inaugural Address with this challenge to the American people, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country."

Analogy and metaphor add impact to a speech. Gallo cites Pope Francis who said, "For Mother Teresa, mercy was the salt which gave flavour to her work." The pope referred to the church as being like a "field hospital" that works on the margins of society and goes in search of "the wounded."

Play-on-words, puns and witticisms add enjoyment to a speech. An acerbic comment or two might be appreciated. Dorothy Parker, a critic for *The New Yorker* magazine was famous for her acid pen. A few examples from her are:

- This not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown with great force.
- Women and elephants never forget.
- I'd rather have a bottle in front of me, than a frontal lobotomy.
- Katharine Hepburn's performance in the play ran the gamut of emotions from A to B.



## Use body language to improve impact

Body language adds impact to a speech. Suggestions from Neil Flanagan, an internationally recognised conference and motivational speaker, are (2013: 158-159):

1. **Posture:** Try not to move body weight from one foot to another when standing. When listening to questions from the audience, lean forward as it reflects an attitude of respectful listening.
2. **Keep control of hand and arm movements:** Arms folded across the chest can suggest either an arrogant or defensive attitude. Keep them at the side or use the hands to hold on to the lectern. Avoid fidgeting or fingering jewellery, hair or clothing.
3. **Avoid using flamboyant gestures:** Using hand gestures to emphasise a point can be good but don't overdo it. Hand movements should be confined to an area about the width of the body.
4. **Make eye contact:** Aim to make contact with the whole audience. Identify four or five audience members in different parts of the room. Look at them; others will feel included in your eye contacts.

### References

Flanagan, N et al 2013. *The management bible*. Cape Town: Zebra Press.

Gallo, C 2019. *Five stars: the communication secrets to get from good to great*. London: Pan.

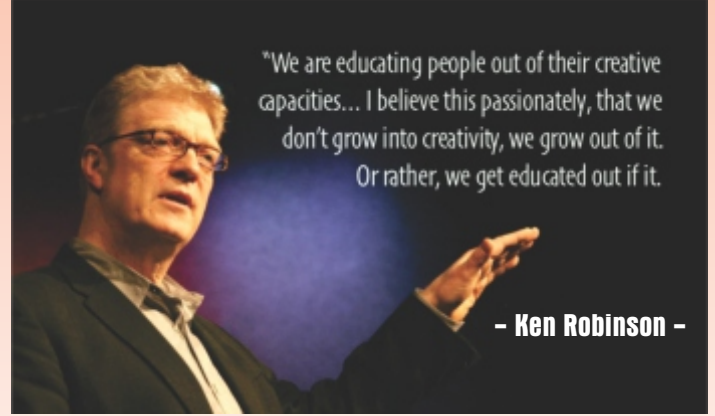


# The TED talks

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, presentation literacy should be taught in every school. Indeed, before the era of books, it was considered an absolutely core part of education, albeit under an old fashioned name: rhetoric

Chris Anderson, Head of TED

Millions of people Google the free TED talks. Chris Anderson, the curator (owner) of the TED site, states that there is no one way or formula to give a great talk. He believes that if done well, a talk is more powerful than anything in written form. Whereas writing gives us the words, speaking gives us a whole new toolbox to convey the message (Anderson: xi). The speaker uses a variety of tools such as body language, eye contact and passion to add extra impact to the written word.



The most famous TED talk of all time with 32 million hits, is that given by Sir Ken Robinson. He is a prominent British educator and his talk is titled, "Do schools kill creativity?" Robinson has a wonderful self-deprecating sense of humour. About his famous talk he makes the truism, "If they're laughing, they're listening."

To see the titles and download the TED talks, go to [www.ted.com/tedtalksbook/playlist](http://www.ted.com/tedtalksbook/playlist). Alternatively, go to YouTube.



## Tips for talks

Chris Anderson (2019: 16) warns in the left-hand column below, ten errors that TED speakers should avoid in their presentations. The right-hand column makes recommendations on what makes for a great talk.

10 WAYS TO RUIN A PRESENTATION	10 WAYS TO GIVE A GREAT TALK
1 Take a really long time to explain what your talk is about.	1 Get quickly to the topic of your talk.
2 Speak slowly and dramatically. Why talk when you can orate?	2 Speak in your natural speaking voice.
3 Make sure you subtly let everyone know how important you are.	3 Be humble about your achievements.
4 Refer to your book frequently. Even better, quote yourself from it.	4 No self-advertising of your wonderful book!
5 Cram your slides with numerous text bullet points and multiple fonts.	5 The fewer the words and bullet points in your slides, the better.
6 Use lots of unexplained technical jargon to make yourself sound smart.	6 Use simple language. Technical terms need clear explanations.
7 Speak at great length about the history of your organisation and its glorious achievements.	7 Avoid meandering; keep the focus on the talk topic.
8 Don't bother rehearsing to check how long your talk is running.	8 Stay within the time frame allocated for your talk.
9 Sound as if you're reciting your talk from memory.	9 Even if the talk is memorised, try to talk in a natural way.
10 Never, ever make eye contact with your audience.	10 Make frequent eye contact with the different sections of your audience.

### Reference

Anderson, C 2019. How to give a killer presentation. *Harvard Business review*. Summer, pages 12-19.



**SACE**  
South African Council for Educators

*Towards Excellence in Education*

## A never-ending journey

Most journeys reach a final destination. The Quality Education journey is different. It never reaches the final destination. The journey makes new discoveries on the road to never-ending continuous improvement. Perfection is never reached.

Yet there are those schools that get close to reaching the summit of Quality Education. In those schools, everyone – children, the parent community and staff – are always looking for ways to do what they're already doing well, even better. The learning process is a never-ending journey.

Certain SACE-endorsed professional development workshops are done at schools and tertiary institutions under the aegis of SAQI (South African Quality Institute). The SAQI presenter, Dr Richard Hayward, is a former headmaster of two Gauteng public schools. If you'd like details of the fourteen endorsed workshops, please contact him on either [rpdhayward@yahoo.com](mailto:rpdhayward@yahoo.com) or 011 888 3262.