

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

*A SIMPLE SEVEN-STEP GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING*



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For anyone in any walk of life the ability to have one's thoughts, ideas and instructions clearly heard and understood by others is vital. This is especially the case where the subject is of particular interest to the listeners.

This can be challenging! Most of us are not seasoned after-dinner speakers or well-known presenters. But that is also our strength provided we get the message across. For someone who is interested enough to come to a talk on the Mind, Body, Spirit and Healing fields, having an 'ordinary' person presenting often makes it all seem that bit more possible they, too, can get involved.

That is why this article has been prepared for the Spirit Trader web site where you can find it and put it to good use. If you have already read the site guide ["Making The Most of Spirit Trading"](#) you'll know that an excellent way to grow your business is to give talks on your chosen subjects. If you haven't read the guide yet please have a look as it has lots of good ideas.

If you are motivated to assist others in these interesting times then giving them talks and presentations is a good starting point. Anyone can do it with some preparation as long as they realize that you can always benefit from learning new skills. You should recognize that a good standard of communication is absolutely essential and yet it often turns out to be the weakest link.

If you have a challenging or different message to put across you can sometimes find yourself in a situation where YOU know what you *thought* you'd said. However, it soon becomes clear from blank looks, disbelief or other reactions that your audience got an entirely different message! If you think about everyday life you'll recall many examples of people mis-hearing or mis-understanding each other. It's vital that we have ways to get our message across so the words and ideas are heard and understood in the manner we intend.

That is the purpose this simple seven-step process to getting your message across. It is here to help you make sure that failing to get the message through doesn't happen to you. If you take the short time necessary to read this guide and then apply the information as and when necessary, you WILL improve your success in *getting your message across*.

This short guide is primarily aimed at the more 'public' situations where you are talking to people about something important. That's a great opportunity when it arises but you may not know their current levels of understanding. When you have a spiritual or healing message to give others that can be literally life changing it's vital they have the very best chance of hearing, understanding, absorbing and acting upon it. In other words you are looking for the middle ground when the maximum number will 'get it' first time.

Standing on a platform or stage in front of hundreds of expectant people means that you MUST aim to create a channel of communication with the maximum number of them. You need to be realistic and understand that in any group there are some people whose limiting beliefs, negative attitudes or other challenges mean that you are not going to have the impact you want. Even with the best speakers you can see the odd audience member sat with firmly crossed

arms and a determined look of disbelief! However, there are plenty of others in that same audience with open minds who deserve your very best level of communication.

Whether you regularly speak at events, give some kind of teaching or have to communicate with your human sisters and brothers this article is for you. For some of you the steps given in this guide may well be useful *outside* of your chosen spiritual working environment. After all, we usually have relatives and friends who we have to come into contact with on a wide range of personal issues!

These seven steps are equally effective in the theatre, classroom, bar, dining room or even the bedroom! They may give you that added 'edge' you've been looking for in your personal and private communications as well as your professional ones.

This guide has been compiled to present and explain a few simple principles on how to get your message across verbally:

- Speak about the things you really know and truly understand.
- Prepare what you want to get across properly.
- Excite your audience about your subject through your own enthusiasm.
- Add examples, illustrations and stories to help them understand you.
- Keep it simple. If it's complicated break it down for them.
- Express yourself sincerely with warmth for your audience and subject.
- Remember your audience's wavelength: WIIFM

Those are the seven steps. Individually they seem simple enough don't they? Well that's good because the truth is always simple and takes few words to tell! You will do well to remember that small point. If you find what you are talking about is getting complicated then take a pause, reconsider the detail you are giving and then bring it back to simple steps.

Now let's take each of the seven steps in turn and expand them a little for you:

Speak about things you know and understand.

If you are speaking to an audience and prepared to share what you know they *can* learn from you. All that is required is for you to know and understand your material before you communicate it. If you have mastered your material then you can find ways to keep it simple for them. When you speak about things you truly know you can focus all your energy into putting it across to your audience rather than trying to work out where you are and what to say next! By starting your talk with confidence you establish your right to continue speaking. It's important to understand that you *rarely get a second chance to make a good first impression!*

People respond well to confidence and authority in all kinds of communications. We all want to associate with those people we perceive to have expertise, authority and success in their chosen fields. Remember that the people you want to reach love to be associated with the winners and steer clear of losers.

You want them to assign you the status of the winning kind. One really convincing speech or presentation to an audience can capture their ongoing interest in you and your subject. That's why it is so important for you to have a thorough and obvious grasp of your subject. You are not a good enough actor to fool people's intuition when you talk about things you don't know enough about. It is wise to remember that your audience can spot waffling and detect a phony in seconds. If you speak about something then had better be sure you know what you are talking about! If you do know your subject it increases your confidence and your audience's confidence too. You, and they, can put all the energy and attention into what is being said and thus you will get your message across successfully.

So please take this first of the seven steps to successful speaking seriously. Before you decide to put yourself in front of an audience you need to be brutally honest with yourself about your level of knowledge on a given speaking topic. Look, we can't possibly be expected to know everything now can we? Well no one expects otherwise of us unless we are standing before them pretending to be some kind of expert. Then it's open season in the phony hunt!

If you are scheduled to talk to a group on a subject that you feel uncertain about, be honest with yourself. Work out what it is that you still need to know and put a learning plan into action. That way you can seek out the information you need and prepare yourself properly. There is certainly no shame in admitting and addressing gaps in your knowledge. That's an excellent quality that allows us to always seek out new knowledge and test our understanding. Knowing what you still don't know is a wisdom that helps you to grow and thereby become more than you were. If you are truly motivated by a compassionate heart and a genuine desire to be of service to your human sisters and brothers you will want to develop your powers accordingly.

Prepare what you want to get across properly.

You have to do this no matter what the subject is that you have to address. Please be clear that there are no exceptions to this step. It doesn't matter how thoroughly you think you already know and understand the subject. You still need to do your homework and prepare. There's a simple phrase that's particularly appropriate in this context so here it is: *Prepare and Prevent so you don't end up having to Repair and Repent!*

We are all human and so we all have off-days and moments when our memory or concentration can let us down. At such times a few key words or phrases readily to hand will help us recover and often prevent a disruptive pause in proceedings and flow. There is nothing to be ashamed of in referring casually to notes in such moments. The shame is when someone bluffs their way through a 'sticky patch' in their presentation. It rarely goes unnoticed!

The best preparation technique is to break down your subject matter into simple, logical steps and have some cue cards on the table or in your pocket. White ruled 6x4 index cards from the local stationers especially for this purpose. Get the cards and create a set for your talk with simple memory-jogging keywords in large easily read script. Do NOT write out your speech in full. You will have

trouble finding your place and you'll be tempted to read from the cards and no audience enjoys the experience this way. Just write key words or phrases in large letters in black felt pen (Sharpie's are great for this). Write in large letters because some speakers who need glasses to read but not to speak! So even the most visually challenged of us can refer to a cue card without glasses if we prepare it properly, even in poor lighting as at some dinner events.

By the way, for the 'techies' amongst you I have a word or two of caution. However tempted you are to make your notes on some kind of electronic handheld device, don't do it! At conferences, exhibitions, seminars and so on I have seen too many totally exasperated speakers shaking their PDA in frustrated rage or anxiously seeking out batteries or a power point to recharge it! The technology will one day let you down, whereas the index cards won't!

If you are including any display materials or slides then make sure you have the opportunity to run through them well before your audience is seated. Test equipment (!) especially if it's been hired for the event so that you know how to operate it smoothly. It is very useful to have a few friends 'sit in' on the rehearsal before any presentation. They will let you know if something isn't easy to see, read, or doesn't follow logically and so on.

Preparation also means to be sure to check the environment you will be speaking in. If you have to address a small group in a confined space then satisfy yourself that everyone will be comfortable and able to see any presentation materials. If you are having to give an after dinner speech, respond to a toast or are going to be invited to 'say a few words' at a social function then be sure you can have your cue cards casually at hand. No one has ever objected to a speaker casually glancing down at a cue card in his or her hand and it is a simple method to ensure you get your message across.

Excite your audience about your subject through your own enthusiasm.

If you are genuinely excited and enthusiastic you'll be leaving your audience in no doubt about your passion for the message you are delivering. There is nothing worse than witnessing a speaker saying how 'excited and enthusiastic' they are about something when clearly they are not! They say the words well enough but are caught doing so in a monotonous and clearly un-exciting tone of voice! It is really disastrous when dealing with subjects that connect personally and spiritually with the audience. Trust me, you cannot fake this. I knew a chap who spoke this way so consistently that I reckon he could put a house brick to sleep!

Either you are excited and enthusiastic about something or you are not. If you cannot get enthusiastic about the message then how can you expect your audience to be anything but indifferent? They are not going to struggle to get excited about the subject that you clearly feel otherwise about. There's a simple principle: don't attempt to convince others on anything you're not passionate about.

Excitement and enthusiasm from someone who is passionate about something are really quite infectious! I guarantee that if you speak with genuine passion,

excitement and enthusiasm then YOU will enjoy giving the presentation and your audience will enjoy receiving it.

Add examples, illustrations and stories to help them understand you.

In most speaking situations it's a good idea to steer clear of telling jokes just for the sake of it. However, if you can tell an interesting story, case study or real-life example that is relevant to the subject matter then do so. If it is relevant and happens to be amusing also then so be it!

People find it a lot easier to remember stories. If they know what they are hearing is story then they tend to relax and pay attention. One reason is perhaps that the human race has a long history of preserving important information in the form of parables and stories. Most of your audience will have fond memories of having stories read to them as children or of reading stories to their own. The mental pressure of a learning situation lessens greatly when you engage the audience in an interesting story that requires them to use their imagination. That's not too hard to do if you can share your own personal experiences with them.

Keep it simple. If it's complicated break it down for them.

The message is clear: keep it simple. If you don't keep it simple and make your audience feel left behind it isn't your audience that is stupid is it? You do not create a good impression and you certainly don't win friends, business and influence people by patronising or embarrassing them. It is vital that you keep your audience with you every step of the way from the start through to the conclusion.

You cannot afford to 'lose' anyone on the way. So if you feel that the material is about to go over their heads then pause, reconsider and break it down. Most of the time they'll never notice what you did. Those of your audience who could have understood the more complex stuff will not mind in the least!

The rule is to deliver your message to an audience the same way you'd deliver it to a good and valued friend who isn't as expert as you are on the subject. It is not talking down to them; it is being considerate and clear.

Express yourself sincerely with warmth for your audience and subject.

A long time ago in ancient Rome marble statues were fashionable and very valuable. As with any lucrative trade there were crooked dealers in those days that sold damaged marble statues as perfect. They did this by replacing missing bits and filling faults in the white marble statues with white wax. At first glance everything looked fine when the customer viewed and purchased the statue. However sooner or later their prized hero or heroine would start to lose parts as they melted!

To deal with this form of fraud the Roman senate approved a law that certified statues as (in Latin) *sine* (without) *cera* (wax). It was a kind of good-housekeeping seal of approval. In other words if it was certified '*sine cera*' what you saw was what you got!

Today we better know 'sine cera' as 'sincere'. When we are 'sincere' we are literally 'without wax' and stating that what we present is without deceit and what we truly are!

So when you are putting your message across you need to be yourself. A huge part of human communication is non-verbal and subconsciously processed. If someone's words don't match their body language, tone, gesture, emotions and intentions the subconscious will detect this lack of coherence and will generate uneasiness at the conscious level in the audience. The end result is that, at the conscious level, the one being unnatural is usually treated as insincere.

There is nothing worse than having a genuine message become un-convincing to the audience because of non-verbal negative signals. You might say that being yourself isn't a good idea because you are nervous when speaking in front of others. Guess what? Most people have been nervous at some point and will understand how it feels. If you feel a bit nervous before you speak it's okay. Be yourself and tell your audience honestly that this is so. It usually defuses any possible misinterpretation of you and also wins you their support! Anyone who overlooks the power of human sympathy does so at his or her own loss. To combat nervousness is a subject beyond the scope of this article but it is not a handicap to getting your message across provided you treat it honestly and sincerely.

Remember your audience's wavelength: WIIFM

This is a very important point that many presenters simply overlook. The truth is that anyone who has to listen to another human being for any length of time will be operating on the most common human mental wavelength: **W**hat's **I**n **I**t **F**or **M**e? You ignore this point at your own peril! Just because you ARE a good healer, recognized expert on something or whatever isn't enough of a reason for sitting through your talk. Think about a talk that has stuff in it for THEM and then make sure they know it.

So the real purpose of this step to successful speaking is to ensure you let your audience know up front, occasionally during the presentation, and at the conclusion exactly what is in it for them. So if you tell them up front that they'll learn a new and simple anti-stress technique or a recipe for a healthy hot drink then you make sure you deliver it. To be sure your audience 'buys in' to your presentation and pays full attention to your message you must be sure that your idea of what's in it for them matches up with theirs. It is simple enough as a principle of communication but not always easy to put into practice.

Pay proper attention to who your audience are. Know where they are coming from, what special interests they might have in common and what might just give them the added incentive to receive and remember your message the way YOU intended them to.

LAST WORDS

There you have it. These seven steps work and that they are not that hard to remember or to execute. Keep this article safe and refer to it whenever you feel the need.

If you apply the seven steps you will soon find that you are successfully getting your message across. You can benefit from applying the seven steps professionally, socially and, let's not overlook this important part of life, in more intimate situations with friends and family. Whatever the situation if you have to say it then you want to be sure you get your message across.