



*Douglas A. Bruce has been Director of the Office of Communications for the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center since 1985. He also served the University for five years as Assistant to the Director of the Information Services. Prior to coming to UK, Mr. Bruce was Director of Public Relations for the Kentucky Alcoholism Council. He also has worked as a news reporter/announcer and program director for several local radio stations, and was program director for Junior Achievement.*

*Mr. Bruce graduated from UK in 1976 with a bachelors degree in social psychology.*

## LUNCHEON

Thursday, September 16, 1993

Douglas A. Bruce, Director  
Office of Public Affairs, University of Kentucky

### LUNCHEON PRESENTATION

Today we are going to talk about stress. Stress is one of those wonderful things. You can think of it in engineering terms, which is the amount of pressure exerted on a substance to the point that it breaks. Or, you can think of it in the medical terms, which is the amount of energy that is placed upon a person's being that causes it to malfunction (read in: heart attack, stroke, nervous breakdown, ulcers, and the litany goes on). Or, you can think about it a slightly different way, which is to think that stress is what has made our country as good as it is. Our forefathers and foremothers had the vision and the courage to reach further than their present grasp. That is the model I would like for us to focus on today. We will take some moments in our lives that have had the potential of being the other kind of moment (those that erode us of our self confidence) and turn them around and make them the kind of experiences that can move us forward.

I am going to talk about three types of experiences and I am going to make it real simple. There are three things that are going to happen to you and, if you take the right spin on them, you can propel yourself forward from that void. One of them is *embarrassment*, which happens to everybody. The second is *resentment* (we have a national pastime of holding onto things). The third is *management of ego*.

Let's talk about embarrassment first because it is always my favorite since I do so much of it. It is a land that I don't just pass through--I live there! One of the things that was not mentioned in the introduction is that I am the son of a minister. I have been called sons of other things; son of a minister is my choice.

I grew up in southwestern Pennsylvania in a small community called Pittsburgh. My dad, being a minister, decided when I was 11 years old that I needed to go to church camp to get me out of beautiful downtown Pittsburgh. So, he shipped me off to church camp, and I went begrudgingly. I had a chip on my shoulder and I was looking for someone just like myself to form what Coach Bill Curry calls the "fellowship of the miserable." I was recruiting. I wanted somebody else to hate this place as much as I did, and I found that somebody. The two of us bonded immediately and throughout the week we conspired to make everybody else miserable. We had such fun doing it that by the end of the week I didn't want to go home.

My friend and I worked it out so that we would exchange weekends at each other's homes. He grew up on a farm and I grew up in a city, so this was going to be adventure for each of us. His weekend was first.

He came to my house in Pittsburgh and we did all the Pittsburgh things--we went to a Pirates game, Steel City, the Glass Towers, and I let him breathe all of the gray air he wanted to (and, at that time it was abundant).

Then my turn came. I got to go to the farm. I had never been on a farm in my life, so there were lots of surprises awaiting me. The first surprise was cows. The closest I had ever been to a cow in my life was in *National Geographic* magazine, where they are only that big. In *National Geographic*, they didn't have scratch and sniff then, so the ambiance that a cow brings was missing. That was a real experience; it was payback time for all of the gray air. The second surprise awaiting me was the horse--well, let me just say it this way--Roy Rogers lied! Because when he jumped on Trigger and kicked his heels into Trigger's flanks, he stayed on. I did not.

The third surprise was chickens. I discovered that chickens are just like pigeons, only on drugs. Unbelievable! Have you ever seen an egg that comes out of a chicken? Not the kind you get at Kroger, those are separate, those come from a factory. I am talking about what comes out of a chicken, they are not the same. To this day I do not like eggs because of that experience--I know what is on the outside. But, suffice it to say, it was a wonderful experience for me.

I did go through another series of surprises I would like to share with you. That evening after my first day on my friend's farm, I went through a series of moments which (to say the least) was the source of a great deal of anxiety. At the age of 11, I was cast upon an individual's bedroom that had only one bed. Never in my entire life had I spent the night with another human being, much less another male. My anxiety level was rising. Another surprise awaiting me was in the back seat of the station wagon--my mother drove off with my suitcase. No pajamas for Doug that night. My anxiety level turned up yet another notch. My friend had the unmitigated gall to stand there with the light on in the room and began to undress. Well, panic set in because I had no pajamas and I was going

to end up in that bed with him. I didn't know what to do so I fell back on what my mother always told me to do when we went into someone's home for a meal, "When you're in someone else's home, you do as they do." So I did. He's on one side of the bed and I'm on the other mirroring his every move. It was sort of like a shadow dance--his hands would go up to unbutton a button and mine would go up too; as they proceeded down his shirt, it was a parallel experience. He took off his shoes and socks, and so did I. Then the great magic moment came when he stood up, undid his belt buckle, unsnapped his jeans, unzipped his pants and they hit the floor, and very shortly thereafter so did mine. We are standing on opposite sides of the bed looking at each other. I am sure that going through his mind was, why is he staring at me like that. Going through my mind was what is he going to do next? Well, he did the most wonderful thing, he got down on his knees beside that bed. I am the son of a minister, I needed a prayer! I went down on my knees too, bowed my head with great respect, but kept one eye open. I noticed that he was looking at me in the most peculiar way, then he asked, "What'er you doing?" Being the quick wit that I am, I said, "Same thing you are!" He said, "Well, I hope not, because the pot's on this side of the bed." That is embarrassment folks. It took me 17 years to laugh at that.

My wife and I have a ritual in our household. On Sunday nights, we sit down at the table, take out all the bills that came in during the week, and write the checks for those bills. If we have been so fortunate as to have any checks come in, we write out the deposit slip and get everything ready for the next morning's mail and a trip to the credit union where we do the banking. She also is a UK employee, so we can alternate this chore. One Sunday night during this ritual, we had filled out the checks and deposit slips and she slid that deposit right across the table towards me. "It's your turn," she said. "I'd love to," I replied, "but I've got an 8 o'clock meeting at the University." She replied, "So do I, it's still your turn." I said, "Okay." So, I went to the credit union at 7:10 the next morning, and there were four cars ahead of me in line, with the credit union window line opening at 7:30. Sitting next to me is my paper-clipped deposit slip and checks all filled out in blue ink and everything looking beautiful. I'm thinking, "Hey, if this thing opens at 7:30, I've got it made. You see, we have this wonderful ritual at UK. Did you know that we have 17,500 parking spaces here? This is true, we have 17,500 parking spaces here--but we have 23,000 cars! So, if you want to get one of those 17,500 spots, you get here before 8:00 or you're not going to get one. Then you get to do what we call "hunting"--you creep along in the parking structure hoping to find someone backing out. When a space opens, five cars try to squeeze into one place at the same time and they wave gestures at each other. It's a wonderful experience. To avoid that, I'm sitting in line at the credit union with this deposit made out. Finally at 7:30 the credit union opens up and the first car goes right straight through. The second car moves right straight through. The third car took a little longer, but then the car in front of me--you know what

happened! The drawer goes out, the drawer goes in, the drawer goes out, the drawer goes in, the drawer goes out, the drawer goes in, and through all this they negotiate a UMW contract. I'm sitting there looking at my watch realizing with each passing minute, 125 parking spaces are evaporating. And, I'm also realizing as I glance in the mirror there are now 10 cars behind me and all of them are doing the same thing as I am--tapping my fingers on the steering wheel. It has an unsettling effect when you get up in line (which finally happened) the drawer comes out and this little voice says, "May I help you?" I took the opportunity and said, "Yes, I'd like to make a deposit. I'd also like to register a complaint and I'd like to make a suggestion all at the same time." She looked at my deposit and said, "Okay, Mr. Bruce, what's on your mind?" I replied, "My complaint is that we have members of this credit union who are so inconsiderate of their fellow members that they fail to plan their transactions when they come to this drive-in window thereby creating long lines such as exists behind me. My suggestion, therefore, is that we put a time restriction on the transactions in the drive-in window." She said, "You know Mr. Bruce, that's a great idea--would you mind signing all of your checks?"

Well, the difference between story number one and story number two (both of which are true) is that it took me only 17 seconds to laugh at story number two. As I got to the edge of the driveway at South Broadway, I realized that later in the morning that teller was going to go to the coffee pot and see one of her friends and they were going to have a great deal of fun at my expense. And, I thought, "Gosh, if they can laugh at that, why can't I?"

You see, here's the key to handling embarrassment, folks--it is not the fact that you have done something wrong, you will. The key is turning it around quickly and giving it the proper perspective where you can learn from the experience, and learn to laugh at it, and begin the process of self-forgiveness. If you don't forgive yourself first, I guarantee that you will walk around with a chip on your shoulder, you will hate the world if you hate you, because you are the only person you take with you wherever you go. Self-forgiveness is vital, and the first step to doing that is giving it perspective through your sense of humor. Learn to laugh liberally.

The second problem is resentment and it doesn't take quite so long to illustrate. We have this little problem in our country where we hoard resentments, then we savor them, and let them accumulate interest until we generate enough anger that we go into McDonald's Restaurants with UZIs. And, if that waitress doesn't get our order right, we will let her know in no uncertain terms that this is exactly what we ordered and we expected better. Or, if someone pulls in front of you in traffic and slows down, you address their lineage, accuse them of acts which are biologically and physiologically impossible, and sometimes give them gesticulations which let them know that they are number one. That is what we do with resentment.

There is a great story I love about how to manage resentment. There was an elderly couple (and I say elderly because they are 20 years older than I am) sitting in their rocking chairs on their front porch one Saturday morning reading the newspapers. They are rocking back and forth very gently, very absorbed in what they are reading, so much so that their breathing is virtually imperceptible. Finally, she stops rocking, folds up her newspaper, then rolls it up and pops him right over the top of the head. He says, "Golly, woman, what was that for?" She says, "For 50 years of bad sex." Well, he looked at her and shook his head, just couldn't believe it. She glared at him, and suddenly her breathing was very audible. Finally, she just took that paper and unfolded it and gave him one more good stare, and then settled back into rocking and reading. He is still sitting there holding his paper in amazement. After a moment, he folds up his paper, and rolls it up and pops her over the head. She asks, "What was that for?" He answered, "For knowing the difference!"

Do you hold onto resentments for 50 years or do you deal with them now? Herein lies the key. Not everybody is going to live up to your expectations. In our society, we have rewarded passive-aggressive behavior. For instance, "Guess what's on my mind. I'm not speaking to you so you have to guess why I'm mad right now." That is passive-aggressive behavior. Or, it is the motherly sigh (my mother had a master's degree in this sigh). "I'll do it myself" is a way that we lay guilt trips on people instead of saying, "This is the expectation and I have the authority to see to it that it is carried out." Or, "This is a partnership and this is what I expect out of it, and this is what I am going to give." We are not very clear about our communication. Instead, we wait for someone to screw up, then we smile and passively forgive them for a while until resentment accumulates to the point that we become aggressive. That is passive-aggressive behavior. It is much more effective to be clear up front and let people know what we need.

Third, managing the ego. This is probably the trickiest of all but I can simplify it for you greatly by making a very important distinction. You all have been talking about quality here and I applaud you for that. People who have been in engineering have been working on quality all along--refining, refining, refining, refining, refining. That is what practical research is and that is what common sense is. We have been doing quality for a lot longer than Deming has, but we have not formally recognized it. Finally, we are recognizing it and that is good.

Part of what drives quality is ego. The difference between self-esteem and ego is this: self-esteem is what you believe about you, ego is what you believe other's believe about you. Those are two very distinct ways of looking at the world. When you are looking at quality, real quality, self-esteem drives it, because what you are looking for is living up to the expectation from within. Fear is one of the motivators that comes from ego, i.e., I fear that I may not be living up to your expectation. Probably the greatest myth that exists today is the myth of perfection and that it can be attained. The Japanese do have an edge on us there, because they

have acknowledged that there is no perfect state, there is only perfect effort. One acknowledges that times and conditions are dynamic, and motivation and the way you approach your task is the only way to adjust and be flexible.

To close, I would like to tell you a very wonderful experience that I had in bed with my wife. When Rick Pitino first came to the University of Kentucky five years ago, the state of Kentucky basketball was very sad indeed--NCAA probation, national embarrassment. *Sports Illustrated* magazine used the headline "Kentucky Basketball Shame" on the cover. We had that first season with Rick as coach--we were not predicted to win more than six games but we won fourteen. We had a break-even season; I remember it all very well. I remember that team probably better than any other, and I remember one night better than any other. It was when UK played LSU at Rupp Arena and it had the largest crowd in the history of Rupp Arena to that date. Since then, we have had larger crowds but we have never had a louder crowd! Even the alumni stood, and all this time I thought many of them were handicapped because they stayed seated. But this time they stood up the whole game--it was like the whole student section on the lower arena. LSU was ranked sixth in the nation that year; they had Shaquille O'Neal as a freshman and he turned that program around. Do you all remember when we went down to Baton Rouge for a game and they had the tiger that rappelled from the ceiling? At the end of that game, Rick Pitino and Dale Brown were nose-to-nose--and they weren't exchanging telephone numbers for Christmas cards! I remember well because we had what I called a furrowed-brow meeting at UK in President David Roselle's office. A furrowed-brow meeting is one in which people gather around a table and worry a lot. We knew after that Baton Rouge trip, there was a rematch in Lexington and there would be a lot of people there who automatically hated Dale Brown. They were going to need to be managed--and do you know who is in charge of crowd management at Rupp Arena? Twenty-four thousand two hundred people to one--and that one was me! I remember this night very well; happily the crowd behaved well, they were wonderful. We were picked to lose by 18, we won by 6! When I left Rupp Arena, (and this is not an exaggeration) I felt pain in my ears from the crowd. I don't know if you have every had 24,000 people yelling in the same direction at the top of their lungs at one time before--it sounds like you are standing behind a jet engine that is getting ready to take off! There is nothing like it in the world!

As my wife and I were driving home that night, we were listening on the radio to Caywood Ledford and Rick replay the game and dissect the plays. We had the radio turned up to pain threshold because that was the only way we could hear it. Finally, we got home, climbed in bed, and somewhere around 1:00 am, the adrenaline began to subside I began to fall asleep. At 2:05, I got the proverbial finger in the back--poke, poke, poke. "Are you awake?" I responded, "Well, I am now." My wife said, "I've had a bad dream." Being the loving and dutiful husband that I am, I sat

up in bed and turned on the light and said, "Tell me about it." She said, "Well, I dreamt that we were in Rupp Arena for last night's game and I dreamt that you and Rick Pitino got in a fight over me." I said, "That is a terrible dream!" She said, "That is not the worst of it." I asked, "What could be worse?" She answered, "You were winning." That was her very gentle way of saying to me, "Doug, you didn't shoot a single basket in that game, don't let your ego get involved." You see, when we were driving home, I had the unmitigated gall to say to her, "It was a pretty good performance tonight, wasn't it, honey!" Instead of telling me how arrogant I had been, she very gently brought me back to earth. This is why I refer to her as Mother Teresa, that is her disposition. If you are to be critical of another, use a soft glove, that way the defenses go down and the ears remain open and more can be accomplished.

My wish for you as you go through the rest of this forum, and on through your careers (because I do drive on the roads for which you have great responsibility), is that you have many moments when you can breath a sigh of satisfaction, and not a sigh of relief. Thank You.