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# What Makes a Good Ted Talk?

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CLAREMONT MCKENNA COLLEGE

WHAT MAKES A GOOD TED TALK?

SUBMITTED TO  
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BY  
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FOR  
SENIOR THESIS

SPRING 2015

APRIL 27, 2015



### **Abstract**

Have you ever listened to a speech, seriously attempted to discern the speaker's message, then realize you have forgotten most of, if not, the entire message moments after the speech is finished? Far too often audiences sit through a presentation focusing as best as they can, only to have the speaker craft a message in a way that is nearly impossible for the audience to remember. The best speakers not only deliver a memorable message, but also one that inspires their audience to action or change of mindset. Speakers at Ted Conferences are faced with a difficult challenge: they are given roughly 20 minutes to deliver a speech that is both unforgettable and inspiring. This thesis will examine how to craft speeches that are both memorable *and* inspiring.

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### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Professor Conger for finding time every single week to meet with me. Thank you for all of your insights, flexible deadlines, and guidance throughout the semester. Although I was late on a couple of deadlines, I appreciate you always quickly getting back to me with thoughtful feedback. Without your inspiration, finishing this thesis would have been much more difficult than it already was. I owe a special thank you to Grayson Gunner, who took several hours out of his schedule to help edit my work – you are the man. Finally, thank you Mom and Dad for giving me the opportunity to attend CMC and for your endless supply of support, encouragement, and humor.

## CHAPTER 1

### HOW TO GRAB AN AUDIENCE'S ATTENTION

The goal of effective communicators is to influence how individuals frame an opportunity or problem, as well shape the actions they undertake to address the opportunity of problem. Chapter 1 will explore one critical element in the process – grabbing an audience member's attention so that they can be influenced. Specifically, this chapter will look at the science behind how people's attention works, then show and explain how the best TED speakers gain an audience's attention during the opening moments of their speech.

Although they may not be conscious of it, audience members' engagement level is highest within the first one or two minutes of a speech (Donovan, 2014). While audiences may believe they are able to multi-task during a presentation – e.g. send a text read emails, scientific evidence suggests otherwise. According to molecular biologist John Medina, “research shows that we can't multitask. We are biologically incapable of processing attention-rich inputs simultaneously” (Medina, 2008). Thus, in order for a speech to have any chance at being both memorable and inspiring, the speaker must grab the attention of the audience immediately and retain it. If a speaker does not engage the audience and make an emotional connection during the opening moments, then their attention will be paid elsewhere rather than to the rest of the speech (Gallo, 2014). Journalist Don Wycliff says, “I've always been a believer that if I've got two hours in which to write a story, the best investment I can make is to spend the first hour and forty-five minutes of it getting a good lead, because after that everything will come easily” (Heath & Heath, 2007). So what do communication experts say about capturing peoples'

attention, and where do we see these insights in how the most effective TED talk speakers initially capture their audiences' attention?

There are many different frameworks for analyzing how to capture an audiences' attention; this chapter will focus on two key areas in the beginning of a speech that determine whether or not their attention will be paid to the speaker. First, audiences assess whether or not they believe the speaker is credible, that is, they typically tune-out speakers who they do not believe have sufficient credentials, experiences, or knowledge around the topic of their speech (Heath & Heath, 2007). If the speaker does not gain credibility during the opening minutes, the attention of the audience will be lost and the speaker will not have a chance to influence his or her audience. Secondly, audience members ask themselves whether or not the speaker will be engaging enough for them to pay attention throughout the speech (Gallo, 2014; Heath & Heath, 2007). People feel engaged when they believe they may acquire a new behavior or mindset, hear an unexpected (Donovan, 2014). Even if a speaker establishes credibility, listeners will likely tune-out them out if they do not feel engaged.

### **ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY**

Before discussing what makes a speaker and their ideas appear credible, it should be noted that this section will be examining this question with the assumption that the speaker does not already have a famous and outstanding reputation that automatically makes them appear credible. For example, if Michael Jordan gave a speech on how to play basketball, nearly every listener would believe what he is saying is correct. However, if an average person who had never played basketball gave a speech on how to play basketball, many listeners would be likely be skeptical of his ideas. This section will



examine how the average person can make their ideas appear more credible. So, how does an average person make their ideas appear credible? Humans typically believe ideas that are in accordance with what all of their previous life experiences have taught them to believe (Heath & Heath, 2007). Thus, in order for a speaker to earn credibility from their audience, he or she must establish some form of common ground with the audience. Common ground allows for the audience to connect with the speaker in a way that makes the speaker seem agreeable and reliable, which in turn makes the speaker seem more credible (Giffin, 1967). Many of the most effective TED speakers establish common ground through humorous stories or an “opening callback.”

### **The Use a Humorous Story to Build Credibility:**

In her TED Talk aimed at encouraging people to be more vulnerable, Brene Brown’s introduction creates a strong connection with the audience through her use of a humorous, self-effacing story:

So, I'll start with this: a couple years ago, an event planner called me because I was going to do a speaking event. And she called, and she said, "I'm really struggling with how to write about you on the little flyer." And I thought, "Well, what's the struggle?" And she said, "Well, I saw you speak, and I'm going to call you a researcher, I think, but I'm afraid if I call you a researcher, no one will come, because they'll think you're boring and irrelevant." (Laughter) And I was like, "Okay." And she said, "But the thing I liked about your talk is you're a storyteller. So I think what I'll do is just call you a storyteller." And of course, the academic, insecure part of me was like, "You're going to call me a what?" And she said, "I'm going to call you a storyteller." And I was like, "Why not magic pixie?" (Laughter) (Brown, 2010).

Humor and storytelling are the two components of Brown’s introduction that make it highly successful at establishing credibility. First, let’s look at the role humor plays in establishing Brown’s credibility. According to communication coach Carmine Gallo, “humor lowers defenses, making your audience more receptive to your message. It also

makes you seem more likable, and people are more willing to do business with or support someone they like” (Gallo, 2014). One might reasonably assume that the best way to appear confident and competent in the audience’s eyes would be to list off one’s accomplishments or experiences, but that actually seems to have the opposite effect on an audience. Paradoxically, the most effective TED Talks frequently use self-deprecating humor to establish credibility because it makes the speaker appear more likable. Brown’s accolades include having a Ph.D., being a well-publicized author, and being a research professor at the University of Houston, yet she jokingly asks to be called “magic pixie” during her introduction. Dr. A.K. Pradeep, a researcher who studies the relationship between neuroscience and marketing, has found that humor causes an emotional reaction in people like few other things in the world can do (Pradeep, 2010). In fact, research has found that “humorous people are seen as friendly, extroverted, considerate, pleasant, interesting, imaginative, intelligent, perceptive, and emotionally stable” (Gallo, 2014). Thus, it is no wonder why many of the most effective TED speakers use humor during the introduction as a way of establishing credibility with their audience.

The second component of Brown’s introduction, storytelling, also significantly increases listener’s perception of her credibility. Uri Hasson and colleagues at Princeton University examined the neurological effects of both a speaker and listener during the telling of a story. Hasson (Hasson et al., 2013) discussed the effects of storytelling:

The [listeners] understood [the speaker’s] story, and their brains synchronized. When [the speaker] had activity in her insula, the region of the brain responsible for emotion, the listeners did too. When [the speaker’s] frontal cortex lit up, so did theirs. By simply telling a story, the woman could plant ideas, thoughts, and emotions into the listener’s brains.

Stories have an uncanny ability of connecting a speaker with his or her audience. In fact, research has shown that stories “make it much more likely that the audience will agree with the speaker’s point of view” (Gallo, 2014). Credibility is about getting the audience to trust the speaker. It seems that there a few better ways than storytelling to create a sense of trust amongst an audience.

### **The Use of an “Opening Callback” to Build Credibility:**

In the most viewed TED Talk ever on how current education systems stifle kids’ creativity, Ken Robinson uses humor and an “opening callback” to build common ground with his audience:

Good morning. How are you? (Laughter) It's been great, hasn't it? I've been blown away by the whole thing. In fact, I'm leaving. (Laughter) There have been three themes running through the conference which are relevant to what I want to talk about. One is the extraordinary evidence of human creativity in all of the presentations that we've had and in all of the people here. Just the variety of it and the range of it. The second is that it's put us in a place where we have no idea what's going to happen, in terms of the future. No idea how this may play out (Robinson, 2006).

Robinson’s reference to previous speeches and the creative capabilities of people is a clever way to makes himself and his ideas appear more credible. He leverages previous speakers’ work, as well as the audience members’ pre-existing memories of children’s creativity to create a credible perception. According to Chip and Dan Heath (2007), people decide whether or not to believe things based off their personal experiences, their family beliefs, and authorities’ beliefs. An effective “opening callback” taps into peoples’ personal experiences. When the audience can relate to and agree with the “opening callback,” it evokes feelings and emotions that make the speaker seem more trustworthy.

## **ENGAGING THE AUDIENCE**

Even if a speaker establishes credibility, engaging the audience is still essential in grabbing the audience's attention. So, what causes people to find a speaker engaging or not during the introduction? Far too often speakers think that data, statistics, and wordy PowerPoint slides are effective ways to persuade their audience. Unfortunately, listeners do not experience any sort of emotional reaction from purely logical presentations. Research done on some of the most persuasive and engaging speeches found that emotional appeals take up roughly 65 percent of effective speeches, while appeals to logic take up only 10 percent of them (Gallo, 2014). The key to engaging an audience during the introduction is to make them have an emotional reaction; without it, the audience will likely tune-out the speaker. In order to engage audiences emotionally, the most effective TED Talks rely on three different tactics: storytelling, humor, and offering the audience a sense of utility – they believe they can learn a new behavior or mindset that can improve their lives. There can be overlap amongst all three tactics, as a story can involve humor and potential utility. They can also be used in isolation, as each strategy has the power to successfully entertain an audience.

### **The Use of Stories to Engage an Audience:**

Storytelling has the power to make a speaker appear credible, but Brene Brown's introduction also illustrates the effect storytelling can have on engaging an audience:

So, I'll start with this: a couple years ago, an event planner called me because I was going to do a speaking event. And she called, and she said, "I'm really struggling with how to write about you on the little flyer." And I thought, "Well, what's the struggle?" And she said, "Well, I saw you speak, and I'm going to call you a researcher, I think, but I'm afraid if I call you a researcher, no one will come, because they'll think you're boring and irrelevant." (Laughter) (Brown, 2010).

FMRI images of the human brain reveal that storytelling actually stimulates and engages the brain, which certainly helps the audience connect with the speaker (Gallo, 2014). In fact, storytelling is so powerful that Hasson et al. (2013) found that when a story is being told, “the listener’s brain responses [mirror] the speaker’s brain responses.” In other words, a speaker can elicit the same emotions in other people as the ones they feel simply from telling a story. A well told opening story creates a deep emotional connection between a speaker and their audience and will surely capture the audience’s attention for the remainder of the speech. Gallo (2014) makes a telling comparison between beginning a presentation with a PowerPoint slide and beginning one with a story:

Researchers have discovered that our brains are more active when we hear stories. A wordy PowerPoint slide with bullet points activates the language-processing center of the brain, where we turn words into meaning. Stories do much more, using the whole brain and activating language, sensory, visual, and motor areas.

The key to entertaining an audience during the introduction is to elicit some sort of emotional reaction, which is precisely the effect of a well told story. It is no wonder, then, why many of the most effective TED Talks begin with stories as a way to capture the audience’s attention.

### **The Use of Humor to Engage an Audience:**

During his speech on how schools kill creativity, Robinson incorporates humor in the introduction to entertain his audience:

I find this very interesting. If you're at a dinner party, and you say you work in education -- Actually, you're not often at dinner parties, frankly. (Laughter) If you work in education, you're not asked. (Laughter) And you're never asked back, curiously. That's strange to me. But if you are, and you say to somebody, you know, they say, "What do you do?" and you say you work in education, you can see the blood run from their face. They're like, "Oh my God," you know, "Why me?" (Laughter) "My one night out all week." (Laughter) (Robinson, 2006).

Earlier it is pointed out how humor can be an effective tool for a speaker to establish credibility, but it turns out humor can also be a powerful tool to entertain an audience and capture their attention. Psychologist Rod A. Martin (2007) makes an argument about the definition of humor:

A method of communication, designed to capture the attention of others, to convey important emotional information, and to activate similar emotions in others...Laughter not only conveys cognitive information to others but it also serves the function of inducing and accentuating positive emotions in others, in order to influence their behavior and promote a more favorable attitude toward the one who is laughing.

Furthermore, humor actually improves breathing and increases energy, which improves the audience's ability to focus their attention on the speaker (Gallo, 2014). Although humor does have the power to engage an audience during the introduction, it is essential that it be done appropriately. Offenses jokes are a quick way to lose your audience.

Interestingly, none of the most effective TED Talks ever employ any joke – offensive or not. Instead, speakers typically elicit humorous reactions from their audience from anecdotes, observations, and personal stories (Gallo, 2014). Many of the most effective TED Talks, including Brown and Robinson, employ self-effacing humor to ensure that no one feels offended. Self-effacing humor ingratiate the speaker with the audience and creates an atmosphere where everyone feels comfortable laughing (Gallo, 2014).

Robinson makes a self-effacing observation of how people respond to academics, which is not intended to make people burst out laughing, but it makes the audience smile.

Humor, like storytelling and engaging questions, elicit emotional reactions in people – the key to engaging and entertaining an audience.

### **The Use of Providing a Sense of Utility to Engage an Audience:**

How does an audience decide whether or not they will gain enough utility to pay their attention to the speaker? Humans thirst for new knowledge “is so powerfully stitched into their experience that some scientists describe it as a drive, just as hunger and thirst and sex are drives” (Medina, 2008). People are interested by information and ideas that challenge their preconceived notions because they inherently have this incredible desire to learn. However, a speaker can potentially lose their credibility when they try to challenge an audience’s preconceived notions. For example, no one will believe a speaker who claims that half of the people on earth are actually disguised aliens. Something overly preposterous will likely not tap into people’s incredibly powerful and natural desire to learn. Assuming a speaker does not claim something over ridiculous, virtually any topic has the capability of engaging an audience; the challenge is finding a way to craft a message that hooks the audience. According to Carmine Gallo (2014), people are most intrigued by speeches that “reveal information that’s completely new to [the] audience, packaged differently, or offers a fresh and novel way to solve an old problem.” When a speaker frames his or her speech in a way that excites the audience about learning something new, dopamine is released in the listeners’ brain (Burns, 2013). Neuroscience professor Martha Burns (2013) has found that the releasing of dopamine causes people to engage in the moment and pay their attention to the speaker. Very simply, the most effective TED Talks improve their speech’s utility in two ways. They either elicit a sense of excitement about learning a new behavior that can potentially improve listeners’ lives, or they elicit a sense of excitement about learning a new mindset than can potentially improve listeners’ lives.

In her speech covering how people's body language affects their emotional states, Amy Cuddy begins by stating the benefits people will gain by listening to her speech:

So I want to start by offering you a free no-tech life hack, and all it requires of you is this: that you change your posture for two minutes. But before I give it away, I want to ask you to right now do a little audit of your body and what you're doing with your body. So how many of you are sort of making yourselves smaller? Maybe you're hunching, crossing your legs, maybe wrapping your ankles. Sometimes we hold onto our arms like this. Sometimes we spread out. (Laughter) I see you. (Laughter) So I want you to pay attention to what you're doing right now. We're going to come back to that in a few minutes, and I'm hoping that if you learn to tweak this a little bit, it could significantly change the way your life unfolds (Cuddy, 2012).

In their book *Made to Stick*, Chip and Dan Heath (2007) argue that the “most basic way to get someone's attention is this: Break a pattern.” Given how prevalent talk is about the use of technology and medicine in improving lives, Cuddy undoubtedly surprises and excites the audience as she proposes a “no-tech life hack” that can “significantly change the way your life unfolds” (Cuddy, 2012). Cuddy does a masterful job of framing her introduction in an exciting manner, as she tells the audience about the significance of the information they are about to hear. Cuddy only offers to teach her audience one thing, which, surprisingly, is a common thread amongst all of the best TED Talks. Her message is very clear: it only takes tweaking your posture to significantly change your life. If a speaker can create excitement around answering just one question or solving only one problem during the introduction, the audience will likely find it worth their efforts to pay attention for the duration of the speech (Gallo, 2014).

In a much less effective speech, *The Social Animal*, David Brooks' introduction fails to state or imply any benefits his audience will receive from paying attention:

When I got my current job, I was given a good piece of advice, which was to interview three politicians every day. And from that much contact with



politicians, I can tell you they're all emotional freaks of one sort or another. They have what I called "logorrhea dementia," which is they talk so much they drive themselves insane. (Laughter) But what they do have is incredible social skills. When you meet them, they lock into you, they look you in the eye, they invade your personal space, they massage the back of your head.

I had dinner with a Republican senator several months ago who kept his hand on my inner thigh throughout the whole meal -- squeezing it. I once -- this was years ago -- I saw Ted Kennedy and Dan Quayle meet in the well of the Senate. And they were friends, and they hugged each other and they were laughing, and their faces were like this far apart. And they were moving and grinding and moving their arms up and down each other. And I was like, "Get a room. I don't want to see this" (Brooks, 2011).

Whereas Cuddy has her excited about learning something that can change their life, Brooks fails to give his audience any reason to believe they will benefit from listening to his speech. No problem or potential solution is presented, so there is no way for Brooks to really "hook" his audience. Cuddy does a great job of sparking her audience's excitement through offering a way to change their lives. Brooks, on the other hand, certainly does not cause much dopamine to be released in his listeners' brains. Because Brooks does not spark any excitement about learning something new or exciting, his speech is far less-effective than Cuddy's. Without questions, statements, or hints that suggest a listener will gain something useful from listening to the speech, Brooks likely lost many of his listeners' attention immediately. He does not offer to tell the audience about a new behavior or mindset that can improve their lives.

In his talk exploring how the best leaders inspire action, Simon Sinek begins with an unanswered and engaging question that proposes to tell his audience about a new mindset that can potentially improve their lives:

How do you explain when things don't go as we assume? Or better, how do you explain when others are able to achieve things that seem to defy all of the assumptions? For example: Why is Apple so innovative? Year after year, after

year, they're more innovative than all their competition. And yet, they're just a computer company. They're just like everyone else. They have the same access to the same talent, the same agencies, the same consultants, the same media. Then why is it that they seem to have something different? Why is it that Martin Luther King led the Civil Rights Movement? He wasn't the only man who suffered in pre-civil rights America, and he certainly wasn't the only great orator of the day. Why him? And why is it that the Wright brothers were able to figure out controlled, powered man flight when there were certainly other teams who were better qualified, better funded -- and they didn't achieve powered man flight, and the Wright brothers beat them to it. There's something else at play here (Sinek, 2009).

Sinek's questions work incredibly well at drawing in the audience's attention because he frames his speech in a way that makes the audience feel like their minds are missing some significant information about what makes people successful. When humans feel a gap in their knowledge, they become very curious to fill that void (Heath & Heath, 2007). Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) argue: "When we want to know something but don't, it's like having an itch that we need to scratch. To take away the pain, we need to fill the knowledge gap." Sinek does a brilliant job of posing questions that force the audience to wonder what qualities do only the most successful humans share. Everyone knows Apple has been incredibly innovative, but when Sinek asks the question of why they are so innovative presumably no one in the audience has an answer. By highlighting a gap in his audience's knowledge, they become totally engaged on the speaker as they want to fill in their "knowledge gap." Furthermore, Sinek does a masterful job of exposing people's gap in knowledge by making it seem as though all of the most successful people, whether it be Martin Luther King or the Wright Brothers, share the same underlying principles. The audience cannot help but wonder what the greats possess that everyone else is missing. Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) argue: "To make our communications more effective, we need to shift our thinking from 'What information do I need to convey?' to 'What

questions do I want my audience to ask?” Unanswered and engaging questions that tap into people’s natural curiosity for knowledge are an incredibly powerful tool for capturing an audience’s attention because they sense that they may potentially gain a significant amount of utility from paying attention.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SIMPLE STRUCTURE OF THE BEST TED TALKS

Although grabbing the audience's attention in the opening moments of a speech is essential, a speaker still must skillfully structure his or her speech if it has any hopes of being both memorable and inspiring. Though it may seem that packing as much evidence and information into a speech as possible is the most effective way to persuade an audience, the most effective TED Talks do just the opposite. In fact, if there is one thing that all of the most persuasive TED Talks have in common, it is simplicity. Rather than listing off a plethora of different lessons or trying to cram a ton of evidence into a speech, the best speeches revolve around one simple idea that can typically be summed up in only a few words. Why do the best TED Talks only focus on one core message? In *Made to Stick* Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) argue that "if you say three things, you don't say anything." In other words, a single message is much easier for an audience to remember than several messages. Typically, the most persuasive TED Talks are made up of one core message with two or three key supportive arguments that are brought to life through stories. Every story, anecdote, and piece of evidence serves the purpose of reinforcing the speaker's one key message; the best speeches keep an unwavering focus on two or three key arguments that support one core message. This chapter is purely meant to show the structure of effective speeches: one core message supported by two or three key arguments that are illuminated with stories; Chapter 3 will explore what memorable devices the best speakers use to fill in that structure. This chapter will look at why simplicity is better than complexity, explore how the best speakers boil down complex

ideas into a single simple message, and show examples of how the best TED talks bring their arguments to life through focused stories.

### **WHY SIMPLICITY IS BETTER THAN COMPLEXITY**

Although lots of concrete evidence and facts may be persuasive in a science lab, it turns out that too many facts and arguments actually make a speech less persuasive.

Many of the most persuasive speeches share a very similar format: one core claim supported by two to three key arguments. The reason most persuasive stories share such a simple format: according to research done by communication expert Paul King (2012), too much information presented at one time leads to “cognitive backload...As more and more stuff you need to remember piles on, it creates greater and greater pressure and pretty soon you’re going to drop it all.” Once a speaker identifies and introduces their core message, the rest of the speech is about convincing the audience to believe their message. So how many argument points should a speaker use to support his or her claim? Research suggests that “people can remember three pieces of information really well; add more items and retention falls off considerably” (Gallo, 2014). When a speaker tries to overload their audience with arguments to support their claim, it “forces the listener’s brain to work hard and to consume energy. Your brain cells need twice as much energy as other cells in your body. Mental activity rapidly depletes glucose” (Gallo, 2014). Essentially, one core idea supported by two or three key arguments is all the brain can remember. Anything more is a waste of time, as the audience will experience “cognitive backload” and not be able to remember the message. Thus, it is no wonder that the best TED Talks revolve around one simple message – people can actually remember it.

Perhaps comparing the core themes from the top five most viewed TED talks ever with

five less effective speeches on similar topics will shed light on how powerful simplicity can be. The five most popular TED talks ever given are incredibly simple.

Top 5 Most Viewed TED Talks Ever:

Name	Theme(s)
1. How Schools Kill Creativity	Current education systems suppress children's natural creativity
2. My Stroke of Insight	People can find happiness by choosing to tap into their right brain hemisphere
3. How Great Leaders Inspire Action	People buy why you act, not what you do
4. The Power of Vulnerability	Opening up will make you happier
5. Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are	Your pose influences your mental state

5 Comparison TED Talks:

Name	Theme(s)
1. Let's Use Video To Reinvent Education	Videos would allow kids to learn at their own pace  Videos allow for more student-to-teacher time
2. The New Era of Positive Psychology	Psychology can help heal mental illness  Psychology can also help regular people be happier
3. What it Takes to be a Great Leader	Time management is essential for leaders  Leaders must be good at networking  Leaders must have courage
4. The Danger of Hiding Who You Are	Don't follow along with the crowd  Society needs to be more accepting of minorities
5. The Hidden Power of Smiling	Forcing yourself to smile actually makes you happier  Smiling can make you live longer

## HOW TO MAKE COMPLEX IDEAS SIMPLE

Far too often presenters choose to focus on several important ideas during their speech, instead of solely focusing on the most significant idea. Creating a very simple core message can be difficult, as it inevitably requires a speaker to cut out valuable ideas. Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) eloquently state the challenge speakers face when forming their core message:

Forced prioritization is really painful. Smart people recognize the value of all the material. They see nuance, multiple perspectives – and because they fully appreciate the complexities of a situation, they're often tempted to linger there. This tendency to gravitate toward complexity is perpetually at war with the need to prioritize.

The temptation to for speakers include all of their ideas and create a more comprehensive message ruins a lot of speeches. The best speakers are able to “[discard] a lot of great insights in order to let the most important insight shine” (Heath & Heath, 2007). So how do the best speakers construct a core message?

Creating a core message involves prioritizing between different ideas, identifying the single most important one, and having the discipline to cut everything else out. One may believe stripped-down ideas are fundamentally worse than well explained ones, but creating a core message is not about dumbing-down an idea. Rather, constructing a core message is “about elegance and prioritization” (Heath & Heath, 2007). The best speakers are able to form core messages that are both short and meaningful. For example, a weak core message would be to say that “leaders inspire action.” Although this message can be expressed in a couple of words, it does not contain much meaning. Imagine being the CEO of a small company and hearing that message. Chances are the message would

never change the CEO's behavior because it does not tell anyone how or what to change; it contains no meaning. Everyone already knows that leaders should inspire action. Compare that message with Sinek's core idea: "People don't buy what you do; people buy why you do it" (Sinek, 2009). Sinek's message can also be expressed in a couple of words, but his message contains a significant amount of meaning. Now imagine being the CEO of a small company and hearing Sinek's message. The chances of the CEO changing his or her behavior are significantly higher under this condition. It is easy to imagine a scenario where the company has to create an advertisement, and their actions are tangibly changed by Sinek's message. Perhaps instead of advertising that their firm has the best product, the firm may instead choose to advertise that their product was the result of them wanting to change the world. Although it may be time-consuming to identify and construct a core message that is both short and meaningful, it is surely the best way to persuade an audience.

Although creating a core message that is both meaningful and simple is essential, it is also important that a speaker boil down their key arguments into simple ideas. Because many TED Talks explore complex topics, many of the best speakers use a technique called polarization to simplify their key arguments. Polarization typically involves boiling down ideas, thoughts, or people into two distinct groups. For example, Brene Brown uses polarization in her TED Talk about vulnerability when she tells her audience that there are two kinds of people: those who believe they are worthy of love and belonging, and those who do not believe they are worthy of love and belonging (Brown, 2010). Polarization should not over-simplify an idea, but it can be incredibly useful at making a complex idea simpler and more memorable.



## EXAMPLES FROM THE BEST TED TALKS

Nearly all of the most persuasive TED Talks share a remarkably similar format. In accordance with what memory research says to do, the best TED Talks revolve around one core message that can be summed up in just a few words. After the introduction, the rest of the speech is dedicated toward persuading the audience to believe the speaker's core message. The most persuasive speeches choose two to three facts, insights, or opinions that support their core message. Each piece of evidence supporting their claim is immediately reinforced by stories, anecdotes, or analogies that illuminate those facts, insights, and opinions. Surprisingly, the most persuasive speeches usually only spend a matter of seconds discussing arguments and pieces of evidence that support the speaker's claim. The rest of the speech is filled with stories that bring the evidence to life. Perhaps comparing the most effective TED Talks with less-than-effective ones will clarify the structure of the most persuasive speeches, as well as show the importance of simplicity.

In one of the most viewed and successful TED Talks ever, Simon Sinek argues one core idea: people are inspired by why leaders act the way they do, not what they do. He follows this with a powerful story supporting his claim:

Let me give you an example. I use Apple because they're easy to understand and everybody gets it. If Apple were like everyone else, a marketing message from them might sound like this: "We make great computers. They're beautifully designed, simple to use and user friendly. Want to buy one?" "Meh." That's how most of us communicate. That's how most marketing and sales are done, that's how we communicate interpersonally. We say what we do, we say how we're different or better and we expect some sort of a behavior, a purchase, a vote, something like that. Here's our new law firm: We have the best lawyers with the biggest clients, we always perform for our clients. Here's our new car: It gets great gas mileage, it has leather seats. Buy our car. But it's uninspiring. Here's how Apple actually communicates. "Everything we do, we believe in challenging the status quo. We believe in thinking differently. The way we challenge the status quo is by making our products beautifully designed, simple to use and user

friendly. We just happen to make great computers. Want to buy one?" Totally different, right? You're ready to buy a computer from me. I just reversed the order of the information. What it proves to us is that people don't buy what you do; people buy why you do it (Sinek, 2009).

Sinek's story about Apple clearly illustrates his core message in a meaningful way. His story does not focus on proving any other points or insights; it very simply focuses on showing that his core message is meaningful. His ability to craft an 18 minute speech that solely focuses on his one core message makes his TED Talk one of the most successful ones ever done. After Sinek's claim that people are inspired by why people do stuff, he surprisingly only presents two pieces of evidence the rest of the speech. During his 18 minute presentation Sinek spends 46 seconds explaining how human biology supports his claim, and he spends around 25 seconds informing the audience about the "law of diffusion of innovation" (Sinek, 2009). The rest of the time is dedicated towards telling stories and anecdotes that bring his claim and key arguments to life, as well as explaining how the evidence relates to his claim: a much more effective strategy for persuading an audience than over loading your speech with claims, evidence, and insights.

In a speech covering a similar topic as Sinek, *What it takes to be a great leader*, Roselinde Torres asks her audience to focus on seven different questions, instead of one core idea:

What makes a great leader today?...Is my company helping me to prepare to be a great 21st century leader?...Why are the leadership gaps widening when there's so much more investment in leadership development?...What are the great leaders doing distinctly different to thrive and grow?...Where are you looking to anticipate the next change to your business model or your life?...What is the diversity measure of your personal and professional stakeholder network?...Are you courageous enough to abandon a practice that has made you successful in the past (Torres, 2014).

Although she does have one core message (what makes a great leader today?), it is not very meaningful, and she asks her audience to focus on an unreasonable amount of areas to help support her core idea. It is also ambiguous as to how her arguments even relate to her core message; clearly her speech does not maintain the same focus around one core message as Sinek's. Whereas Sinek tells a series of stories exclusively focusing on how great leaders inspire people, Torres asks questions and gives her opinion on too wide a range of topics: "What makes a great leader?...Is my company helping me to prepare to be a great 21<sup>st</sup> century leader?...Why are the leadership gaps widening when there's so much more investment in leadership development?" (Torres, 2014). By lacking a series focus on her core idea, her speech becomes far less persuasive and memorable. Torres would have benefitted from Gallo's (2014) rule: never use more than three ideas to support a claim. Furthermore, she only tells one brief story during the opening minutes. The rest of her speech is filled with advice and opinions relating to her seven questions. As opposed to the most persuasive TED Talks that have one core idea and two or three support arguments woven in between stories that illuminate those arguments, Torres has one core idea and six support arguments that are not brought to life through stories. Perhaps Torres' speech would have been more persuasive had she used a format similar to Sinek. For example, her core message could have been around the idea that networking and courage are the two most important leadership qualities. To support her core message, she could have picked one piece of leadership research that shows the importance of networking and one piece of evidence showing the importance of courage. Stories that illuminate her key argument points could include ones about Steve Jobs' courage to try never-before-done work at Apple and Heidi Roizen's vast Silicon Valley

network. Had Torres constructed her speech in this fashion, it likely would have been significantly more persuasive. Although it may seem overly simple or boring, the principles used by Sinek and many of the other most successful TED Talks clearly lay the ground work for a persuasive speech. One core claim, two or three key arguments, and the use of stories to highlight the arguments seems to be a highly effective way to organize a persuasive speech.

In her amazingly persuasive TED Talk, *Your body language shapes who you are*, Cuddy uses a very similar format to Sinek. Her message is very simple: “If you learn to tweak [your body language] a little bit, it could significantly change the way your life unfolds” (Cuddy, 2012). Cuddy supports her claim with two primary arguments. First, she discusses what research says about the relationship between our mental states and our body postures, and secondly, she examines whether someone’s body pose can actually “change their life in meaningful ways” (Cuddy, 2012). After telling the audience about recent studies showing how people’s body posture is correlated with their mental state, Cuddy does a masterful job of using a story to drive home her point:

So what we tend to do when it comes to power is that we complement the other's nonverbals. So if someone is being really powerful with us, we tend to make ourselves smaller. We don't mirror them. We do the opposite of them. So I'm watching this behavior in the classroom, and what do I notice? I notice that MBA students really exhibit the full range of power nonverbals. So you have people who are like caricatures of alphas, really coming into the room, they get right into the middle of the room before class even starts, like they really want to occupy space. When they sit down, they're sort of spread out. They raise their hands like this (very high in the air). You have other people who are virtually collapsing when they come in. As soon they come in, you see it. You see it on their faces and their bodies, and they sit in their chair and they make themselves tiny, and they go like this when they raise their hand (barely lift their hand up at all). I notice a couple of things about this. One, you're not going to be surprised. It seems to be related to gender. So women are much more likely to do this kind of thing than men. Women feel chronically less powerful than men, so this is not

surprising. But the other thing I noticed is that it also seemed to be related to the extent to which the students were participating, and how well they were participating (Cuddy, 2012).

Similarly to Sinek, Cuddy's story stays very focused on proving one point. She does not try and drill home several points in her story, rather she simply focuses on tying a real life example in with one key argument. After hearing (or reading) Cuddy's story, one can take away a very simple and clear message: confident mental states are associated with body postures that take up a lot of space, and intimidated mental states are associated with body postures that occupy less space. Had Cuddy merely told the audience of her research findings, and then moved onto more facts supporting her core argument without telling a story, the audience likely would have forgotten everything. By telling a colorful story that supports a simple idea, Cuddy is able to create a lasting impression on her audience. There is no ambiguity or off-topic thought in her story. By having two key arguments and every story revolve around proving her core message, Cuddy creates a very persuasive speech that is both memorable and inspiring.

In a speech covering a similar topic, *The hidden power of smiling*, Ron Gutman less successfully uses a much more complex structure than Cuddy. Although the title of the speech gives some idea about Gutman's core message, he never even states exactly what his core message is. The closest Gutman comes to stating the intent of his speech comes about 50 seconds into the speech when he says that by measuring a student's smile, "researchers were able to predict how fulfilling and long-lasting a subject's marriage will be, how well she would score on standardized tests of well-being and how inspiring she would be to others" (Gutman, 2011). Perhaps Gutman's message is that smiling makes one healthier and more powerful, but the exact message is far vaguer than

Sinek or Cuddys' message. Gutman supports his ambiguous core message with seven different studies, but he fails to build his speech around two or three argument points. Rather, Gutman merely lists off several different research findings and sparingly chooses to illuminate them with stories. After citing research done by a French neurologist, Gutman proceeds to state two more studies without ever telling a story or anecdote that illustrate the results:

In addition to theorizing on evolution in "The Origin of Species," Charles Darwin also wrote the facial feedback response theory. His theory states that the act of smiling itself actually makes us feel better --rather than smiling being merely a result of feeling good. In his study, Darwin actually cited a French neurologist, Guillaume Duchenne, who used electric jolts to facial muscles to induce and stimulate smiles. Please, don't try this at home.

In a related German study, researchers used fMRI imaging to measure brain activity before and after injecting Botox to suppress smiling muscles. The finding supported Darwin's theory by showing that facial feedback modifies the neural processing of emotional content in the brain in a way that helps us feel better when we smile. Smiling stimulates our brain reward mechanism in a way that even chocolate -- a well-regarded pleasure inducer -- cannot match (Gutman, 2011).

Although Gutman has good analogies and credibility, his lack of structure and clarity causes his speech to lose persuasiveness. Unlike Sinek and Cuddy, he does not give the audience a core message or any key arguments to take away from the speech. Rather, the audience is merely left with a bunch of studies that list the benefits of smiling. Gutman's speech contains solid argument points and a potentially powerful core message, but he focuses on too many ideas and fails to highlight the most important ones. Perhaps his speech would have been more memorable and inspiring if he used a structure similar to Sinek and Cuddy. A core message along the lines of, "if you want to feel better, start smiling," supported by stories that bring to life the two studies mentioned above likely

would have improved the speech's effectiveness. Stories revolving around people smiling and their perceived happiness would be a much more powerful way to drive home his message than listing off a bunch current research. By simplifying the structure, the audience would be able to more easily understand and internalize his message.

## CHAPTER 3

### MEMORABLE STORIES MAKE FOR MEMORABLE SPEECHES

One of the most common ways of conveying information is through storytelling, and an especially strong characteristic of the most outstanding TED speakers. Stories have certain advantages when it comes to conveying information that make it a highly effective to make information compelling and memorable. Chapters 1 and 2 highlight the importance of grabbing the audience's attention during the opening moments of a speech and arguing in a simple structure. Both the introduction and format of a speech are necessary for a speech to be memorable, but they are not always sufficient. Many speeches have well-done introductions and are structured appropriately, but for some reason they are very forgettable. There are certain techniques within the structure of a speech necessary to make it memorable. Because all of the most successful TED Talks ever given rely on the usage of stories, this chapter is going to look at retention in the context of storytelling. In other words how do the best TED Talks effectively communicate insights, research, and facts through stories? In order to answer this question, this chapter is first going to briefly examine the basic structures of stories. Then, three sections will be dedicated towards explaining and showing examples of the most powerful retention techniques.

Before examining different structures for memorable storytelling, it is important to highlight one similarity that all effective stories share: simplicity. Just like the overall structure of a speech, a story should also only attempt to send one simple message. A story that only attempts to tell a single message makes it "easier for your audience to process the content" (Gallo, 2014). Regardless of the structure used for telling a story,



simple stories are nearly always more effective. Recall Cuddy's story on the correlation between her business school students' body language and their confidence in speaking from Chapter 2. Gutman, on the other hand, tells a story about different studies that support the notion that smiling can make you feel better. Cuddy's story only focuses on one situation, while Gutman focuses on several different, isolated situations. Although it may seem that Gutman's story would be more effective because he has more concrete evidence, Cuddy's story is likely much more memorable because it is simple, which makes it easier to remember. I will rely on a very simple format for which to tell effective stories: a beginning that sets up some sort of conflict, a middle that explores the conflict, and an ending that resolves the conflict.

In Robinson's speech on how schools kill creativity, he tells a very short story but one that highlights the basic format of well-told stories:

We moved from Stratford to Los Angeles, and I just want to say a word about the transition. My son didn't want to come. I've got two kids; he's 21 now, my daughter's 16. He didn't want to come to Los Angeles. He loved it, but he had a girlfriend in England. This was the love of his life, Sarah. He'd known her for a month. (Laughter) Mind you, they'd had their fourth anniversary, because it's a long time when you're 16. He was really upset on the plane, he said, "I'll never find another girl like Sarah." And we were rather pleased about that, frankly -- (Laughter) Because she was the main reason we were leaving the country (Laughter) (Robinson, 2006).

In the beginning, Robinson sets up a conflict by telling the audience that his son did not want to move to America. Listeners likely wonder why Robinson's son did not want to move. In the middle, Robinson explores the conflict when he tells the audience that his son's girlfriend is the reason he does not want to move to America. Although it is a playful story, in the end he resolves the conflict by telling the audience that his family decided to move to America despite his son's desire to stay in Stratford. Despite

Robinson's story being very short, it is a good example because many of the most memorable stories follow a similar format.

Perhaps even more important than the format of the story, though, is the way in which it is framed and delivered. Research performed by Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) suggest that there are six key qualities that make an idea memorable: it should be simple, delivered in an unexpected way, come from a credible source, employ concrete details, elicit emotion, and be communicated through storytelling. Because the importance of credibility and simplicity, as well as ways to make a message credible and simple, has already been discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, this chapter only focuses and expands upon the ideas of unexpectedness, concreteness, and emotion within the context of a story. Regardless of the type of story, delivering it in an unexpected, concrete, and emotional way is essential for creating a memorable speech. Let's take a look at why these techniques are so powerful and how the best TED Talks leverage them to create unforgettable speeches.

### **UNEXPECTEDNESS**

Chapter two explores how speakers grab attention by shedding light on gaps in their audience's knowledge. Unexpectedness during a story works similarly, as it has a remarkable ability to keep people's attention and make a lasting impression on their mind (Chip Heath & Dan Heath, 2007). When people hear the same messages communicated in the same way they have heard many times before, the message loses its ability to make an impression on people. Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) found that "unexpected ideas are more likely to stick because surprise makes us pay attention and think. That extra attention and thinking sears unexpected events into our memories." According to

neuroscientist Gregory Berns, the human brain is “a lazy piece of meat...The brain must be provided with something that it has never before processed to force it out of predictable perceptions” (2008). Unexpected messages challenge the brain to learn something new, to force it out of its normal perceptions, and to create lasting memories; predictable messages do not challenge the brain and, thus, they are quickly forgotten. Research done by Martha Burns (2013) at Northwestern University helps explain the science behind what happens in the brain when it hears an unexpected message:

Learning about new things is an adventure and very rewarding, and dopamine levels increase in the brain to help us retain that new information. [Burns likes] to refer to dopamine as the ‘save button’ in the brain. When dopamine is present during an event or experience, we remember it; when it is absent, nothing seems to stick...Increase novelty in a classroom and you increase the dopamine levels of your students.

Dopamine is the same chemical released during the most significant moments of our life; it is why people are able to remember so vividly their wedding day, their child’s birth, and traumatizing experiences (Gallo, 2014). Stories that take an irregular turn or teach an unconventional lesson hit the “save button” in people’s brain and have proven to be one of the most effective strategies for telling memorable stories.

In Dan Pink’s speech, *The puzzle of motivation*, he does a masterful job of using unexpected twists in his stories to create one of the most persuasive and memorable TED Talks ever given. When telling a story about an experiment designed to test what motivates people, Pink says:

I want to tell you about an experiment using the candle problem, done by a scientist named Sam Glucksberg, who is now at Princeton University. This shows the power of incentives. He gathered his participants and said: "I'm going to time you, how quickly you can solve this problem." To one group he said, "I'm going to time you to establish norms, averages for how long it typically takes someone to solve this sort of problem."

To the second group he offered rewards. He said, "If you're in the top 25% of the fastest times, you get five dollars. If you're the fastest of everyone we're testing here today, you get 20 dollars." Now this is several years ago, adjusted for inflation, it's a decent sum of money for a few minutes of work. It's a nice motivator.

Question: How much faster did this group solve the problem? Answer: It took them, on average, three and a half minutes longer. Three and a half minutes longer. This makes no sense, right? I mean, I'm an American. I believe in free markets. That's not how it's supposed to work, right? (Laughter) If you want people to perform better, you reward them. Right? Bonuses, commissions, their own reality show. Incentivize them. That's how business works. But that's not happening here. You've got an incentive designed to sharpen thinking and accelerate creativity, and it does just the opposite. It dulls thinking and blocks creativity. What's interesting about this experiment is that it's not an aberration. This has been replicated over and over again for nearly 40 years (Pink, 2009).

Instead of merely telling his audience that research shows people are not that motivated by rewards, Pink frames his story in a way that surprises his listeners. He challenges his audience when he asks them, "How much faster did [the second] group solve the problem?" Most of the listeners' likely heard this question, and because of their preconceived notions, believed that the group incentivized with a monetary reward would have performed the task quicker. However, Pink causes the release of dopamine in his listeners' brains by deliberately setting up his story in a way that "jolts them out of their preconceived notions" (Gallo, 2014). He adds to peoples' surprise when he refers to popular American clichés that he has just proven wrong. Most Americans presumably have had the idea ingrained in their head that monetary rewards and incentives are the best way to motivate people. High level executives, sales people, and coaches are just a couple examples of positions that are highly incentivized. The executives' pay increases if their firm's net income increases, the salesmen's gets more commission for each deal

he or she closes, and the coach gets a significant bonus for winning a championship. It turns out that this schema people had been carrying most of their life about the relationship between incentives and motivation is wrong. In fact, Pink discloses to his audience that these “incentives designed to sharpen thinking and accelerate creativity [actually do] just the opposite” (Pink, 2009). The genius in Pink’s speech is not the actual message he sends his audience. He does not present groundbreaking research (studies have replicated this result for nearly 40 years), and listeners likely had heard and forgotten about this message before. The genius in Pink’s speech lies in the way in which it is delivered. By tapping into audiences’ existing schemas, then unexpectedly proving those schemas wrong, Pink presses the “save button” in his listeners’ brains and ensures they will not soon forget his message.

### **CONCRETENESS**

Similarly effective as unexpectedness, concreteness helps speakers communicate abstract ideas in a memorable way. Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) contend that “if you can examine something with your senses, it’s concrete.” In other words, a concrete idea is essentially the opposite of an abstract idea. For example, the word “car” is considered concrete, while the word “fairness” is considered abstract. When someone hears the word “car,” an image of a car pops into their brain because it is a tangible thing that people have seen before. When someone hears the word “fairness,” it is less likely a vivid image appears in their brain because no one knows what fairness looks like. The distinction is important because research has shown that concrete ideas, which elicit very vivid images, are much more memorable than abstract ones (Sadoski et al., 2000). Thus, in order for a story to be memorable it is crucial that it paint a vivid image in listeners’

minds. In memory research performed by psychologist Rebecca Todd (2013), she found that “how vividly a person experiences an event influences how easily he or she can recall the event or the information later.” So how does a speaker tell a story in a way that creates a vivid image in the listeners’ minds? Research done by John Medina (2008) sheds some light on how to create vivid images in others’ brains: “If you hear information, you are likely to remember about 10 percent of that information three days later. Add a picture, however, and your recall rate will soar 65 percent. To put that in context, a picture will help you remember six times more information than listening to the words alone.” Although having strong visual images present during a speech is one way to paint a vivid picture in a listener’s brain, research done by Dr. Pascale Michelon (2013) shows that concrete words and stories can have the same effect:

The brain cannot tell the difference between what’s real and what’s imagined. If you can think of something vividly – really imagine it – the same brain areas are activated as if you were actually seeing the event. That’s why metaphors, analogies, and imagery are powerful ways to paint a picture in a mind’s eye, in some cases even more effective than an actual image...Use concrete examples as much as possible. Simply put, the brain is not designed to grasp abstractions.

The best way to make something concrete is to involve people’s senses. When people hear things that make them feel or see something, they are much more likely to remember it (Gallo, 2014). Turning abstract ideas into concrete stories can be a difficult task, but it will surely improve the quality of a speech.

In one of the most viewed TED Talks ever given, brain scientist Jill Bolte Taylor tells an incredible story of her experience going through a stroke. She argues that the left side of the brain makes people separate from the energy and people around them, while the right side of the brain connects people with each other and promotes peace. During

her stroke and the left side of her brain shut down; she tells her audience the following story:

On the morning of the stroke, I woke up to a pounding pain behind my left eye. And it was the kind of caustic pain that you get when you bite into ice cream. And it just gripped me -- and then it released me. And then it just gripped me -- and then it released me. And it was very unusual for me to ever experience any kind of pain, so I thought, "OK, I'll just start my normal routine."

So I got up and I jumped onto my cardio glider, which is a full-body, full-exercise machine. And I'm jamming away on this thing, and I'm realizing that my hands look like primitive claws grasping onto the bar. And I thought, "That's very peculiar." And I looked down at my body and I thought, "Whoa, I'm a weird-looking thing." And it was as though my consciousness had shifted away from my normal perception of reality, where I'm the person on the machine having the experience, to some esoteric space where I'm witnessing myself having this experience.

And it was all very peculiar, and my headache was just getting worse. So I get off the machine, and I'm walking across my living room floor, and I realize that everything inside of my body has slowed way down. And every step is very rigid and very deliberate. There's no fluidity to my pace, and there's this constriction in my area of perception, so I'm just focused on internal systems. And I'm standing in my bathroom getting ready to step into the shower, and I could actually hear the dialogue inside of my body. I heard a little voice saying, "OK. You muscles, you've got to contract. You muscles, you relax."

And then I lost my balance, and I'm propped up against the wall. And I look down at my arm and I realize that I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can't define where I begin and where I end because the atoms and the molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. And all I could detect was this energy -- energy.

And I'm asking myself, "What is wrong with me? What is going on?" And in that moment, my left hemisphere brain chatter went totally silent. Just like someone took a remote control and pushed the mute button. Total silence. And at first I was shocked to find myself inside of a silent mind. But then I was immediately captivated by the magnificence of the energy around me. And because I could no longer identify the boundaries of my body, I felt enormous and expansive. I felt at one with all the energy that was, and it was beautiful there (Taylor, 2008).

Without having to re-read or re-hear Taylor's story, one can easily recall how the story went. Taylor does a masterful job of eliciting vivid images in peoples' brains through her

use of concrete details. Taylor makes the pain behind her left eye very concrete by comparing it the feeling one gets when biting into ice cream. For anyone who has ever bitten into ice cream, her analogy likely sends tingles down their spine. She brings the pounding sensation to life as she describes the feeling as gripping her, then releasing her. Once again, her analogy gives the audience a very clear image and feeling that allows them to experience something similar to what she actually went through. As she begins to workout, she tells the audience her hands looked “like primitive claws grasping onto the bar” (Taylor, 2008). The idea of claws grasping onto a bar evokes a lucid picture because claws and a bar are so concrete – everyone has seen those images before, and thus can recreate them in their imagination. Taylor fills the entire story with vivid details that capture her audience’s imagination, and the result is a very memorable story that helps people remember the different functions of the left and right hemispheres. Had Taylor merely told her audience that the left hemisphere controls brain-chatter and the right hemisphere brings energy and peace, very few people, if any at all, would have remembered her message. However, after hearing Taylor’s story and having specific images and feelings seared into one’s mind, it becomes very easy for someone to retell her story and remember the different functions of the brain’s two hemispheres – the right hemisphere provides energy and peace, while the left hemisphere brings logic and sometimes stress. Taylor’s use of concrete details is one of many examples illustrating the power vivid details, tangible nouns, and eloquent analogies have in making abstract ideas unforgettable.

## **EMOTIONAL**



Although concreteness and unexpectedness significantly improve a listener's ability to retain information, causing an emotional arousal within listeners is a necessary condition for delivering a memorable speech. When a strong emotion appeal aids a speaker's concrete details and/or unexpected twists, it amplifies their effectiveness. Psychologist Rebecca Todd (2013) found that people have a significantly higher retention rate of moments in their life when they experience a strong emotional arousal. Todd (2013) argues that when people have strong emotional arousals, they experience "emotionally enhanced vividness" and it is like the flash of a flashbulb that illuminates an event as it's captured for memory." Vivid details combined with a strong emotional arousal combine to form a remarkably powerful retention technique. Emotional arousals are important in crafting a memorable message because they force people to care about the ideas being presented (Heath & Heath, 2007). When people care about the topic being discussed, they are much more likely to remember it (Heath & Heath, 2007). So how can speakers make the audience care about their stories? Chip Heath and Dan Heath (2007) offer the following answer:

We get them to take off their analytical hats. We create empathy for specific individuals. We show how our ideas are associated with things that people already care about. We appeal to their self-interest, but we also appeal to their identities – not only to the people they are right now but also to the people they would like to be.

If a speaker hopes to make their audience care, their voice, gestures, and body language are equally as important as their actual story (Gallo, 2014). This section is going to lump voice, gestures, and body language into a simpler concept: conversational presence. If a speaker does not have a conversational presence, they will not connect emotionally with their audience (Gallo, 2014). Causing an emotional arousal within listeners requires that a

speaker have a strong conversational presence. Thus, this section will cover the role a conversational presence plays on eliciting an emotional arousal, as well as explore how speakers establish a conversational presence. Then, the most effective storytelling strategies for causing an emotional arousal within people will be analyzed.

### **Establishing a Conversational Presence:**

A speaker's conversational presence dictates whether or not an audience will feel an emotional connection to their speaker (Gallo, 2014). Without an emotional connection, a speaker stands no chance of creating an emotional arousal. Speakers can use components of a conversational presence, such as whispering or yelling tone, to create an emotional arousal, but many times the conversational tone plays the role of creating an emotional connection with the audience. Only once an emotional connection has been established and the audience trusts the speaker can the speaker even begin to think about creating an emotional arousal. Thus, a conversational presence often is a prerequisite for eliciting an emotional arousal within listeners (Gallo, 2014). So what exactly is a conversational presence?

When a speaker talks as if he or she is having a conversation, their language, pace, and tone usually align in a fashion that allows them to create an emotional connection with the audience (Gallo, 2014). According to research done by James R. Williams (2013), the most effective pace of speaking for audiobooks is around 150 to 160 words per minute. Although findings like this suggest there may be a single gesture and pace that is most effective, basic analysis of TED Talks seems to suggest otherwise. Bryan Stevenson, one of the best public speakers in the world according to Carmine Gallo (2014), speaks at around 190 words per minute. Contrast that with the most viewed

and undoubtedly one of the most memorable TED Talks ever, and it shows that in his speech on how schools kill creativity Ken Robinson said an average of 240 words per minute (Gallo, 2014). Both Stevenson and Robinson have been studied for their amazing ability to speak in a conversational tone, yet they speak at completely different rates. This suggests that there is no exact metric that captures how to appear conversational, but clearly appearing conversational is more important than having gestures, body language, and a pace that appears staged. Perhaps the best way to capture a conversational presence comes from watching Bill Clinton's 2012 Democratic National Convention Speech. He does not appear to yell or overly project his voice, he appears very unscripted, and he often talks in the present tense. As opposed to recalling stories that happened in the past, it seems to appear more conversational and memorable when stories are retold in the present tense as if it is happening when the speaker is telling the story.

### **Causing an Emotional Arousal:**

Once a speaker establishes a conversational presence, the next challenge is to craft their stories in a way that emotionally touches the audience. Statistics and data are important for supporting an argument, but they are useless when they are not framed in a way that elicits a strong emotional arousal. The best persuasive speakers masterfully create an emotional arousal within their listeners through stories that tap into ideas their audience cares about (Heath & Heath, 2007). In 2006 Tony Robbins gave an incredibly memorable TED Talk aimed at persuading people to give and appreciate more in life. David Brooks gave a much less persuasive TED Talk in 2011 aimed at persuading listeners to become more adept at talking about their emotions, as he claims that many people are only comfortable talking about material things. Perhaps comparing the

following stories from their talks will shed light on how the most effective speeches create an emotional arousal through tapping into ideas their audience cares about.

Robbins told the following story:

When 9/11 happened, I'll finish with this, I was in Hawaii. I was with 2,000 people from 45 countries; we were translating four languages simultaneously for a program I was conducting, for a week. The night before was called Emotional Mastery. I got up, had no plan for this, and I said -- we had fireworks, I do crazy shit, fun stuff, and at the end, I stopped. I had this plan, but I never know what I'm going to say. And all of a sudden, I said, "When do people really start to live? When they face death." And I went through this whole thing about, if you weren't going to get off this island, if nine days from now, you were going to die, who would you call, what would you say, what would you do? That night is when 9/11 happened. One woman had come to the seminar, and when she came there, her previous boyfriend had been kidnapped and murdered. Her new boyfriend wanted to marry her, and she said no.

He said, "If you go to that Hawaii thing, it's over with us." She said, "It's over." When I finished that night, she called him and left a message at the top of the World Trade Center where he worked, saying, "I love you, I want you to know I want to marry you. It was stupid of me." She was asleep, because it was 3 a.m. for us, when he called her back, and said, "Honey, I can't tell you what this means. I don't know how to tell you this, but you gave me the greatest gift, because I'm going to die." And she played the recording for us in the room. She was on Larry King later. And he said, "You're probably wondering how on Earth this could happen to you twice. All I can say is this must be God's message to you. From now on, every day, give your all, love your all. Don't let anything ever stop you" (Robbins, 2006).

Brooks uses the following story to highlight how kids are raised to chase after superficial and material things:

Kids are raised in a certain way, jumping through achievement hoops of the things we can measure -- SAT prep, oboe, soccer practice. They get into competitive colleges, they get good jobs, and sometimes they make a success of themselves in a superficial manner, and they make a ton of money. And sometimes you can see them at vacation places like Jackson Hole or Aspen. And they've become elegant and slender -- they don't really have thighs; they just have one elegant calve on top of another. They have kids of their own, and they've achieved a genetic miracle by marrying beautiful people, so their grand moms look like Gertrude Stein, their daughters looks like Halle Berry -- I don't know how they've done that. They get there and they realize it's fashionable now to have dogs a third as

tall as your ceiling heights. So they've got these furry 160-pound dogs -- all look like velociraptors, all named after Jane Austen characters.

And then when they get old, they haven't really developed a philosophy of life, but they've decided, "I've been successful at everything; I'm just not going to die." And so they hire personal trainers; they're popping Cialis like breath mints. You see them on the mountains up there. They're cross-country skiing up the mountain with these grim expressions that make Dick Cheney look like Jerry Lewis. (Laughter) And as they whiz by you, it's like being passed by a little iron Raisinet going up the hill.

And so this is part of what life is, but it's not all of what life is. And over the past few years, I think we've been given a deeper view of human nature and a deeper view of who we are. And it's not based on theology or philosophy, it's in the study of the mind, across all these spheres of research, from neuroscience to the cognitive scientists, behavioral economists, psychologists, sociology, we're developing a revolution in consciousness. And when you synthesize it all, it's giving us a new view of human nature. And far from being a coldly materialistic view of nature, it's a new humanism, it's a new enchantment (Brooks, 2011).

Comparing Robbins' very emotionally-arousing story with David Brooks' story illustrates the power of appealing to ideas and identities that people care about. Brooks uses more concrete evidence to support his story, as he mentions research being done in many different fields that support his point, but clearly his story does not have the same effect as Robbins'. Robbins does not use any analytical data or evidence to support his argument, rather he simply tells a profound story that involves events and ideas that nearly everyone cares about: 9/11, love, sorrow. Although Brooks uses very concrete details, the ideas presented in his story do not emotionally resonate as well as Robbins'. Robbins' story about a specific person creates a strong feeling of empathy in the audience (Heath & Heath, 2007). People feel for the women whose boyfriend died during 9/11, but there is no one to feel anything for in Brooks' story. Furthermore, the majority of people do not care about cognitive scientists and behavioral economists nearly as much as a tragic love story from 9/11. Robbins' incredibly memorable story is one of many

examples which shows the most memorable stories rely on evoking feelings within listeners, rather than relying on analytics.

Robbins' story involves several very intense emotional ideas and events, but tapping into things people care about does not have to be so dramatic to still be memorable. In the most viewed TED Talk ever examining how schools kill creativity, Robinson told the following story:

I'm doing a new book at the moment called "Epiphany," which is based on a series of interviews with people about how they discovered their talent. I'm fascinated by how people got to be there. It's really prompted by a conversation I had with a wonderful woman who maybe most people have never heard of, Gillian Lynne. Have you heard of her? Some have. She's a choreographer, and everybody knows her work. She did "Cats" and "Phantom of the Opera." She's wonderful. I used to be on the board of The Royal Ballet, as you can see. Anyway, Gillian and I had lunch one day and I said, "How did you get to be a dancer?" It was interesting. When she was at school, she was really hopeless. And the school, in the '30s, wrote to her parents and said, "We think Gillian has a learning disorder." She couldn't concentrate; she was fidgeting. I think now they'd say she had ADHD. Wouldn't you? But this was the 1930s, and ADHD hadn't been invented at this point. It wasn't an available condition. (Laughter) People weren't aware they could have that. (Laughter) Anyway, she went to see this specialist.

So, this oak-paneled room, and she was there with her mother, and she was led and sat on this chair at the end, and she sat on her hands for 20 minutes while this man talked to her mother about the problems Gillian was having at school. Because she was disturbing people; her homework was always late; and so on, little kid of eight. In the end, the doctor went and sat next to Gillian, and said, "I've listened to all these things your mother's told me, I need to speak to her privately. Wait here. We'll be back; we won't be very long," and they went and left her. But as they went out of the room, he turned on the radio that was sitting on his desk. And when they got out, he said to her mother, "Just stand and watch her." And the minute they left the room, she was on her feet, moving to the music. And they watched for a few minutes and he turned to her mother and said, "Mrs. Lynne, Gillian isn't sick; she's a dancer. Take her to a dance school."

I said, "What happened?" She said, "She did. I can't tell you how wonderful it was. We walked in this room and it was full of people like me. People who couldn't sit still. People who had to move to think." Who had to move to think...they did ballet, they did tap, jazz; they did modern; they did

contemporary. She was eventually auditioned for the Royal Ballet School; she became a soloist; she had a wonderful career at the Royal Ballet. She eventually graduated from the Royal Ballet School, founded the Gillian Lynne Dance Company, and met Andrew Lloyd Webber. She's been responsible for some of the most successful musical theater productions in history, she's given pleasure to millions, and she's a multi-millionaire. Somebody else might have put her on medication and told her to calm down (Robinson, 2006).

By creating empathy for a specific person, Robinson creates a story that causes people to deeply care. Listeners likely would not care if Robinson had told a vague story broadly describing how schools kill creativity, but by choosing to tell a story about a single person the audience feels an emotional connection (Heath & Heath, 2007). Furthermore, Robinson frames his story around someone finding their natural talent, which is an area of deep concern for many people. Nearly everyone cares about finding their talent, or “purpose,” in life, and Robinson leverages this idea to make his story even more emotionally arousing. Both Robbins and Robinsons exemplify ways in which the best speakers tap into people’s natural curiosities to create emotionally arousing stories.

## CHAPTER 4

### INSPIRING PEOPLE TO ACTION OR CHANGE OF MINDSET

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 examine ways to structure and deliver a memorable speech. Remember, though, the goal of any persuasive speech is to be both memorable *and* inspiring. There are two key ingredients necessary in moving people to action: passion and significance. The speaker must appear passionate about his or her topic, and the speech must frame the topic in a way that makes it seem important. Without these two components, a speech stands little chance of inspiring its listeners. Chapter 4 will look at the science behind inspiring people, and then explore how the most effective speakers use passion and significance to inspire their audience.

#### PASSION

Although it is a widely used term, passion can be a very elusive concept. Management researcher Melissa Cardon et al. (2009) defines passion as a “positive, intense feeling that you experience for something that is profoundly meaningful for you as an individual.” In other words, someone can be considered passionate about something when he or she deeply cares about it. Although it may be nearly impossible for a speaker to fake being passionate (Gallo, 2014), it is only important that the audience perceive the speaker to be passionate about his or her topic (Cardon et al., 2009). If a speaker does not appear passionate about their speech, the audience will not feel a meaningful connection to the speech (Gallo, 2014). According to research done by Cardon et al. (2009), there is a direct correlation between the perceived passion of an entrepreneur and the amount of funding they receive. Furthermore, psychologists Howard Friedman and Leslie Martin (2011) found that when people are perceived as passionate, their energy affects those



around them and makes them significantly more persuasive than people who are perceived to have “low-passion.” Thus, appearing passionate clearly seems to play an important role in influencing others, but what exactly makes someone appear passionate? Both Gallo (2014) and Cardon et al. (2009) believe that passion involves enthusiasm and excitement, and audiences easily notice when a speaker attempts to fake their enthusiasm and excitement. According to Cardon et al. (2009),

People who are genuinely passionate about their topic make better speakers. They inspire their audiences in ways that nonpassionate, low-energy people fail to do. When you are passionate about something you can't help yourself from thinking about it, acting on it, and talking about it with other people.

Research suggests that in order for a speaker to appear passionate, he or she must actually be passionate about their topic – it should be “core to their identity” (Gallo, 2014).

Another framework that may be useful in analyzing how and why some appear more passionate than others involves looking at passion in terms of one's charisma. Dr. Signorello (2014) at University of California Los Angeles says, “My research shows that charismatic leaders of any type in any culture tend to stretch their voice to the lower and higher limits during a public speech.” Thus, it seems being authentically passionate about a topic and consciously varying the tone of one's voice is the best recipe for appearing passionate.

Precisely identifying passion and explaining how to let one's true passions shine through makes for a difficult task, but insights from TED speaker Jill Bolte Taylor shed some light on one way to effectively show your passion. Taylor reveals,

When I was at Harvard, I was the one winning awards. I wasn't winning the awards because my science was better than anyone else's. I was winning the awards because I could tell a story that was interesting and fascinating and it was mine, down to the detail (Gallo, 2014).

Although there is little research exploring the differences between “real” passion and “fake” passion, perhaps Taylor seems to be correct in noting that telling a highly personalized story is an effective way to reveal one’s passion. Although personalized stories are often about the speaker, they also include stories about other people or experiences close to the speaker. During one of the most viewed commencement speeches ever given, Steve Jobs told Stanford graduates the following story:

When I was 17, I read a quote that went something like: "If you live each day as if it was your last, someday you'll most certainly be right." It made an impression on me, and since then, for the past 33 years, I have looked in the mirror every morning and asked myself: "If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?" And whenever the answer has been "No" for too many days in a row, I know I need to change something.

Remembering that I'll be dead soon is the most important tool I've ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything — all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure — these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor on my pancreas. I didn't even know what a pancreas was. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor's code for prepare to die. It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you'd have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes.

I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy, where they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas and got a few cells from the tumor. I was sedated, but my wife, who was there, told me that when they viewed the cells under a microscope the doctors started crying because it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and I'm fine now.

This was the closest I've been to facing death, and I hope it's the closest I get for a few more decades. Having lived through it, I can now say this to you with a bit more certainty than when death was a useful but purely intellectual concept: No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life's change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new. Right now the new is you, but someday not too long from now, you will gradually become the old and be cleared away. Sorry to be so dramatic, but it is quite true.

Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma — which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary (Jobs, 2005).

The key message in Jobs' story – to have the courage to follow your passions – is a very cliché message. However, unlike the many other times people have heard this message, Jobs' story presumably (given its popularity) inspires people to actually believe the message and change their actions. By using vivid details that are unique to his story, Jobs' creates a highly personalized story that allows his passion to shine through. Furthermore, he chooses a story that easily and profoundly connects to the key message, which explains the effectiveness of his speech compared to others who try and deliver a very similar message about following your heart. When speakers tell very personalized stories that connect with their core message, chances of appearing passionate and inspiring listeners to action significantly increase.

Through comparing a story Martin Seligman tells with Jobs' story will perhaps shed some light on the effectiveness of a very personalized story. Seligman's key message is essentially that "people should play to their strengths in life." Like Jobs, Seligman's story attempts to drive home a somewhat cliché message, but he does so far

less effectively. Instead of delivering a unique personalized story filled with vivid details, he tells the following story:

One person I worked with was a bagger at Genuardi's. Hated the job. She's working her way through college. Her highest strength was social intelligence, so she re-crafted bagging to make the encounter with her the social highlight of every customer's day. Now obviously she failed. But what she did was to take her highest strengths, and re-craft work to use them as much as possible. What you get out of that is not smiley-ness. You don't look like Debbie Reynolds. You don't giggle a lot. What you get is more absorption (Seligman, 2008).

Aside from being a very unmemorable story, Seligman fails to tell a story he is actually passionate about. Whereas Jobs tells a story that profoundly affects his life, Seligman frames his story in a way that barely impacts anyone. Perhaps Seligman could have appeared more passionate if he included vivid details of the bagger and how her life changed after she began “playing to her strengths,” but the way he tells it only says she got more “absorption” from incorporating her strengths into her work. Even from reading Jobs story, it is clear that he cares about his message – he talks about crying, life, and death. Seligman, on the other hand, does not seem to care nearly as much, as his story about the bagger is clearly not “core to his identity” (Gallo, 2014).

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

Although there is not much research directly examining the role significance plays in inspiring people, nearly all of the most viewed TED talks frame their message in a way that makes it seem very significant. Making a speech significant involves conveying to the audience the importance of the speech’s core message. In order for an audience to be inspired to action or change of mindset, they must be convinced that the core message really matters. The best speakers show their core message really matters by “[emerging] from the deep trenches we spend our working lives digging...[stepping] out

and [seeing] the big picture and how the trenches interconnect” (Anderson, 2007).

Providing a memorable core message, showing how it connects to something meaningful (i.e., children or self-improvement), and offering people simple ways to implement the core idea into their lives empowers people because they feel like their actions can have a meaningful impact on something that really matters. When people feel empowered their behavior changes and they take more responsibility for their actions (Van Dierendonck, 2011). In many cases, the most effective speeches make their message seem significant by warning the audience about the potentially disastrous consequences that could occur if people do not listen to their message. In other cases, speakers inspire people by challenging the audience – the speaker informs the audience that if they accept and act on the core message, they will have a much brighter future. A third inspiration tactic commonly used by group or team leaders is to reveal a profound vision of the future that energizes and excites their followers.

Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, a Harvard neuroscientist and presenter of one of the most effective TED talks ever, gave a profound speech about her experience undergoing a stroke. Instead of simply detailing her experience, Taylor makes her speech extremely inspiring by connecting her personal story with a powerful life lesson:

So who are we? We are the life-force power of the universe, with manual dexterity and two cognitive minds. And we have the power to choose, moment by moment, who and how we want to be in the world. Right here, right now; I can step into the consciousness of my right hemisphere, where we are. I am the life-force power of the universe. I am the life-force power of the 50 trillion beautiful molecular geniuses that make up my form, at one with all that is. Or, I can choose to step into the consciousness of my left hemisphere, where I become a single individual, a solid. Separate from the flow, separate from you. I am Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor: intellectual, neuroanatomist. These are the "we" inside of me. Which would you choose? Which do you choose? And when? I believe that the more time we spend choosing to run the deep inner-peace circuitry of our right

hemispheres, the more peace we will project into the world, and the more peaceful our planet will be (Taylor, 2008).

Taylor tells her story about the peace she felt when her left hemisphere had a stroke. Her stress and anxieties left her, and she felt an incredibly powerful sense of happiness and contentment. Although she could have just told her story and nearly every listener would have remembered it, she took the next step of inspiring her audience by challenging them to choose and embrace the more free-flowing part of their brain. Her speech inspires people because she challenges people to make a decision that could significantly change the world. That is not to be overdramatic and claim that every listener will all of a sudden completely change all of their negative behaviors into more peaceful ones, but she does create a very memorable and thought-provoking message that will stick in people's minds and likely change at least some of their behavior.

In his famous speech encouraging adults not to suppress children's creativity, Ken Robinson challenges his audience to let children explore and make mistakes while also cautioning them about the consequences that may ensue if adults continue suppressing the youth's creative side:

What TED celebrates is the gift of the human imagination. We have to be careful now that we use this gift wisely and that we avert some of the scenarios that we've talked about. And the only way we'll do it is by seeing our creative capacities for the richness they are and seeing our children for the hope that they are. And our task is to educate their whole being, so they can face this future. By the way -- we may not see this future, but they will. And our job is to help them make something of it. Thank you very much (Robinson, 2006).

Instead of simply telling memorable stories of how creative kids can be when adults do not restrict them, Robinson inspires his audience by challenging them to give children space to explore and cautioning them of the consequences if they do not. Had he simply

told the audience memorable stories about children's creativity, it is much less likely the audience would have felt compelled to change the way they treat children. However, Robinson connects his story to something meaningful for the audience by claiming that his message will affect our children's future – something nearly all parents deeply care about.

University of Kentucky men's basketball coach John Calipari is a master of inspiring people. He began coaching at Kentucky in 2009, and before his first season he delivered the following speech to his team and 24,000 Kentucky fans:

Look at this atmosphere you have created tonight. It's that energy, this buzz that will attract the best and brightest student athletes to our program. They will see our players hugging and high-fiving; chest-bumping and celebrating and they will realize this is where they want to play – at the University of Kentucky, at the place where players are revered, adored and emulated. They will reach their dreams while we live out our own through their efforts and accomplishments.

In closing, I have this question for you – if these players are having a ball, breaking barriers, doing more than they have ever done in their collective lives – don't you think they'll try to extend our season? So let's have fun. All of us. And let these guys take us where they want to go. If they are really having fun they will not want this season to end. My vision is one of celebrations and banquets; diplomas and banners; rings and parades...A return of this legendary program back to its rightful place atop the mountain of college basketball...A vision that sees you, the greatest fans in all of sports, once again puffing your chests and chanting in whatever language you choose, and however loudly you want to shout, *Go Big Blue! Go Big Blue! Go Big Blue* (Calipari, 2009).

Although he may come across as arrogant to some, Calipari makes Kentucky basketball seem like the most significant sports team in the world. Instead of challenging his audience like many TED speakers, Calipari simply reveals his incredible vision for the program. Similar to the strategy Martin Luther King used during his "I Have a Dream" speech, Calipari paints an incredible picture of the future that energizes Kentucky fans and players. In the 2008-2009 season Kentucky had a record of 22-14. The following

season under Calipari, Kentucky had a record of 35-3 and was ranked the number one team in the country the majority of the year. Although other factors were at play, Calipari's vision surely played a role in inspiring their incredible turnaround.

In her speech, *The Brain in Love*, Helen Fisher explores the chemical changes that occur in the brain when someone falls in love. Although her content is interesting, she delivers an uninspiring speech as she fails to connect it with anything significant.

So, I will close with this. These are my older people. Faulkner once said, "The past is not dead, it's not even the past." Indeed, we carry a lot of luggage from our yesteryear in the human brain. And so, there's one thing that makes me pursue my understanding of human nature, and this reminds me of it. These are two women. Women tend to get intimacy differently than men do. Women get intimacy from face-to-face talking. We swivel towards each other, we do what we call the "anchoring gaze" and we talk. This is intimacy to women. I think it comes from millions of years of holding that baby in front of your face, cajoling it, reprimanding it, educating it with words. Men tend to get intimacy from side-by-side doing. (Laughter) As soon as one guy looks up, the other guy will look away. (Laughter) I think it comes from millions of years of standing behind that -- sitting behind the bush, looking straight ahead, trying to hit that buffalo on the head with a rock. (Laughter) I think, for millions of years, men faced their enemies; they sat side by side with friends. So my final statement is: love is in us. It's deeply embedded in the brain. Our challenge is to understand each other. Thank you (Fisher, 2008).

Unlike Calipari, Robinson, and Taylor, Fisher does not challenge, caution, or present a profound vision. The audience does not hear anything that tells them why they should be challenged to understand each other, so her message does not seem very important.

Perhaps if Fisher explained how understanding each other could change people's lives or make a more peaceful world then her audience may feel inspired. Even though Fisher may have a more important message than Calipari, Robinson, and Taylor, her failure to connect the core message with something significant makes her speech significantly less impactful. The most effective speeches inspire their audience through cautioning their



audience about the future, challenging them to make something of the future, or presenting a profound vision that energizes listeners.

## CONCLUSION

Although many assume the best speakers have a natural gift, the factors that contribute to a memorable and inspiring speech are very learnable. Capturing an audience's attention during the opening moments of a speech involves establishing credibility through tapping into an idea that listeners are curious about, giving the audience reason to believe they will receive some utility from paying attention, and providing some sort of entertainment either through humor or captivating stories. Once an audience's attention has been grabbed, a speaker should tell simple stories that highlight and support the one core message the speaker wishes to convey. Many speakers attempt to overload their audience with several messages, but the best speeches nearly always have a simple structure that focuses on one key idea. Once a core message has been identified, bringing it to life through well-told stories has been proven to make speeches incredibly memorable. Well-told stories include having unexpected twists, concrete details, and emotionally arousing plot lines. When a memorable core message becomes connected with something very significant and meaningful in people's lives, listeners feel inspired to action or change of mindset. In order for a speaker to make their core message seem significant, they must show how their message can or will change something very meaningful to the listeners (i.e., the future of the world or their lives). Following these simple principles can make anyone appear like they are the naturally gifted public speakers.

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