

Memorizing Your Talk vs. Connecting with Others

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If you've been practicing a script in your head trying to get the words perfect, it might be time to redefine practice.

When I first started giving presentations, I was so nervous I had to memorize every single line. It was a lot of work. Even with all that preparation, there was a good chance that if one word was out of place, I would go blank and forget my next line. It was the only way I knew how to get through a speech back then. Now, my heart goes out to clients who come to me with a memorized script for an online video or upcoming presentation. I know how much effort it takes and how it actually disconnects us from our potential clients. Have you ever spent so much in your mind you forget you have a body? Or you don't really see the person in front of you?

Practicing in your mind is different than mastering the skill of being present with yourself and others.

Our body is continually giving us clues. I've noticed times when I had an intuitive gut feel to say something but let my mind talk me out of it. It's pretty tough to collaborate with others when we haven't even got our own parts working together! The more we practice listening to our body and environmental clues, the more access we have to a greater intelligence. This turns practice into mastery. Mere repetition of words will only get us so far.

Most of us have seen formulas for writing an elevator speech like "I work with _____ to help them _____ so that they can _____." We've talked with really cool people who genuinely care about their business. But when they give us their pitch, the essence of who they are fades into the background. Formulas give us a good start, but spending time remembering why we're in business and how we want our clients to feel will be the magic love potion that ignites new business.

What feeling do you want people to have when they work with you? Have you heard the old saying, "People may forget what you said, but they'll never forget how you made them feel." With that in mind, doesn't it make sense to put attention on the feeling we want people to experience rather than merely memorizing a script?

When we're really connected with the person in front of us, we tap into their intelligence for something much more profound than we can come up with on our own. Listen with your eyes as you speak to your audience. There's a wealth of information just waiting to be shared. Stuart Wilde writes about a technique (in his book *Silent Power*) where you energetically put yourself in the shoes of the person you're talking to while looking back at yourself. A little trippy, yes, but that kind of connection can take you into a whole new world. If you're talking to a camera, visualize your ideal client or have someone interview you. It beats a rehearsed script almost every time.

I recently worked with an herbalist who had over 20 years experience. With all this knowledge, she was still uncomfortable giving a speech. Like many of us who have years of experience, getting to the next level doesn't necessarily mean more practice; sometimes it means less. Know your basic outline then, put all your attention on these three tips. See what happens with your next speech:

1) Take yourself lightly. A successful person who feels they must maintain their image can experience even more stress than a beginner who has nothing to lose. Remember we're all beginning at one stage or another. Balance your expertise with a beginner's mind. When we've spent years collecting information, it's easy to become righteous with that knowledge. Learn to share what you've learned and allow space for new ideas to come in. Be open to audience members challenging your ideas and work with them for even greater knowledge.

2) Trust your voice without going through the filter of your mind. Simply allow what comes up naturally. The response that was perfect in the past was perfect in the past. Don't try to bring it forward and replay it in a new situation. Let each moment be new and alive.

3) Connect at a deeper level with each person. That's the beauty of knowing your content and the ultimate purpose of your business. It's like playing a guitar. At first you have to have all your concentration on the chords and the right finger positions. Once you have that down, you can play with it and enjoy it. It's the same with speaking. When you know your material, you'll have more attention to put on each person. Notice their uniqueness. Have fun and be in the moment.

What does practice mean to you? When you know your business inside and out, what's the best way for you to get to the next level?