



## Communication **SUCCESS**

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### **BEGINNINGS**

#### VIDEO 9: REHEARSE YOUR TALK

KENNEDY:

Welcome back.

It's rehearsal time! The most critical element of your preparation.

Yes. It's that important. Just by rehearsing your talk once, you'll see a huge improvement. If you put in the work to rehearse it three, four, five times...you're going to see exponential improvement. It's worth the time and effort.

Why is it so important? Speaking is a physical act. Giving a talk is a physical performance, just like in sports or music.

Do football teams prepare for a game by flipping through the pages of the playbook? Does a musician play a new piece for the very first time when she is in front of an audience?

Rehearsal is an integral part of performance, or more specifically, improving performance.

How much should you rehearse? I tell my clients that the magic formula is 50/50. You should spend 50% of your preparation time putting your content together and the other 50% rehearsing.

So, how much time have you invested in preparing for your talk so far? Can you spend the same amount rehearsing? Even if you spend only half-as much, you're going to be so much better. And your audience will greatly appreciate it... Because you don't rehearse for me or for you... You rehearse for your audience.

I love this quote from the musician Miles Davis, "Sometimes it takes you a long time to sound like yourself."

Rehearsing is how you become the best you. It's where you can safely experiment and push your boundaries. Rehearsal is where you build confidence in what you say and how you say it.

For this Communication Success: Beginnings course, We'll review 3 rehearsal focus areas: time, negative space, and embracing imperfection.

First is time. Or, I call it, owning time. When you're in presentation mode your fight-or-flight reflex kicks in and your perception of time changes. You feel like time is going by much faster than it really is. You worry that if you

stop talking, even for a second, you'll lose the attention of your audience.

Giving a talk is very similar to performance in sports. You have to let the game come to you. You have to stay in the moment. In basketball, you can't shoot until you're close enough to the basket.

In a gymnastics floor exercise, you can't flop until you've flipped.

Patience is important.

It's the same in rehearsing a piece of music. You can't play bar seventeen while you're in bar three.

Everything has to happen when it's supposed to happen.

When you start to "own the time," it will feel a little uncomfortable. Maybe like you're going too slowly. And that's ok. Because if it feels good at this point, you're probably doing it wrong!

The second focus area is negative space. This is a concept from the world of graphic design where the space around an image is as important as the image itself. The white, or negative space helps the viewer better experience the image.

The same goes for your big ideas, your conclusions. Think about using a pause to emphasize. Instead of saying: This is important. Say, This... is important.

Do you see the difference?

Also, by creating this negative space around messages, you actually end up saying less, which clarifies your messages even more.

These pauses are a gift to your audience. It's giving your messages time to breathe and giving your audience time to understand, to think about questions or responses. The negative space is where you engage an audience.

The third focus area is to learn how to embrace imperfection. As humans, we're not perfect. But that makes us real. Stumbling over a word, pausing to collect your thoughts, or even an occasional "uhm" does not break your connection with the audience. It strengthens it.

John Ruskin, the 19th Century British art critic wrote, "And in all things that live there are certain irregularities and deficiencies which are not only signs of life, but sources of beauty... to banish imperfection is to destroy expression, to check exertion, to paralyze vitality."

When you rehearse, don't rehearse to be perfect. Rehearse to fail. Push your boundaries. Choose a part of your delivery, like lengthening your pauses, slowing your tempo, or being more emotional, and give it your all.

For your actual talk, sure, pull back a bit. Play it a little more safe.

One more reminder... The time limit for this talk is 5-minutes. Not a second more. In every speaking opportunity, it's critical that you respect the time limit... and in doing so, you're showing your respect to the audience.

The Rehearsal Tool will help you in Owning Time, creating Negative Space around your big ideas, pushing your boundaries, and embracing imperfection.

The more time you dedicate to rehearsal, the better your talk will be. Your audience deserves nothing less.

Good luck on your rehearsal and see you next time when you will deliver your powerful performance!

Thank you.