



Martinsburg Toastmasters

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Welcome to our first Martinsburg Toastmaster Newsletter

The purpose of this newsletter is to introduce you to members of our club and keep you informed of upcoming events. This month we have two featured articles: one from Beth Young our club Vice President of Education, and one from Daniel Hayes.

Both of these individuals are outstanding members of our club and I hope you enjoy their articles. If you would like to submit an article for next month's newsletter feel free to send it to me at bodendawn@msn.com

September Highlights

September 11, 2006

The first meeting of the month will be our Fall Speech Contests. This will include Table Topics and International Speech contests. You don't have to participate to come. Meeting starts right at 6:30pm. Come and cheer on your fellow Toastmasters.

September 25, 2006

A regular meeting, there are still slots to be filled please sign on to our Martinsburg Toastmaster Website and volunteer.

Communication, Manipulation and Ethics – by Beth Young

I am an author, a speaker, and also a member of Toastmasters International. And I am also the survivor of an extremely manipulative relationship, which began my journey so long ago to understand manipulation and to help others overcome and/or avoid the devastation that it engenders.

Recently, I have been having more and more 'conflict' between these two aspects of myself...the person who wants to become the best communicator she can while also helping her peers to deepen their own communication skills, and the person who battles against the depredations of manipulators who use their (usually excellent) communication skills to control and harm others.

All of us can benefit from deepening and strengthening our communication skills. As our communication skills grow, we feel more competent, we gain more respect from others as they more easily grasp the concepts we are trying to impart, we increase our ability to gain promotions and recognition in our jobs, and we strengthen our friendships and familial bonds (just to name a few benefits). But this strength carries with it a distinct responsibility.

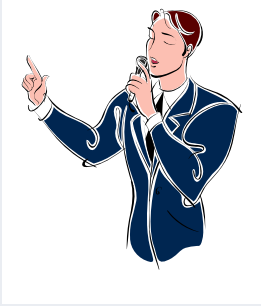
Spoken language, voice tone and inflection, body language, facial expression, other nonverbal cues, and written language. All of these forms of communication carry responsibility with them, whether or not we acknowledge that responsibility or, yes, are even aware of it. We are responsible for what we send outward to and toward others. We cannot force that primary responsibility onto the listener/viewer/reader.

When we commit ourselves to the action of communication, we inevitably (albeit sometimes inadvertently) take that primary responsibility.

Not to say that the listener/viewer/reader is free of all responsibility themselves. No, they are indeed responsible for their reaction (or lack thereof) to what we have said, and how it was stated, but it must be in the context that firstly we are responsible for that initial action...that action of communication.

Therefore, I urge you all to consider the ethics of your communication skills. Are you using your communication skills to enhance your own AND others' quality of life?

Certainly, many of us enjoy being the center of (good) attention. There is nothing inherently unethical in this. I love to tell a story well and watch other people's faces light up in mirth! And sure as my puppy barks (and oh boy does she), I get a high from having affected others that way. I'll bet you feel the same way. It feels good to instigate a smile!



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Important

"Dues were due on 9/1/06. If you haven't already paid your 6 month dues, please do so right away. They are \$32.00 and can be paid by check made out to Martinsburg Toastmasters. Please give this to Jeannette Lewis. Thanks so much for your prompt attention."

And *sheepish smile* yes, maybe I told the story just to get my listeners' good attention (their smile or laughter). But at the same time, I have not manipulated another to get something from them...their enjoyment was freely given and not coerced. In its own way, it is a form of exchange, just like trading some cookies for a bottle of pop would be.

The better communicator you become, the bigger that 'payoff' is likely to be; you give a better 'product' (your honed communication style) for a better reward. And that's okay!

Conversely, however, we need to recognize that not only do we need to be aware of the ethics of our own communications, we also always need to consider the ethics of another's communications as well. Are they merely playing sincere, or are they truthfully sincere? Do their actions match their words? Do their actions, especially those actions that they do not realize are under observation, continue to match with their communications over a span of time and circumstances?

Charismatic communication skills do NOT equate with TRUTHFUL communication skills!

If we are to protect ourselves, we MUST become critical listeners. We must part the curtain of charisma to see what is lurking backstage. What are the person's motives in their communications? What payback do they get and/or take? What payback do they ask of you? What payback have they asked for (or invited through implication) from others?

A person's ethical stance (or lack thereof) will show up throughout their communications (especially 'off-the-record' communications), attitudes, and worldviews. Peer around that backstage area. Look for those underlying attitudes. Is there a bedrock of ethical behavior? Is there respect for other people's choices and autonomy?

Engaging in incoming and outgoing communication is part of what makes us human. It is what allows us to grow as individuals and engage in meaningful relationships with others. Grasp the opportunity to connect!

Become a compelling communicator! Listen to compelling communicators! But also always evaluate your own and others' ethical base in those communications!

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Beth Young is not only a CTM and VPE in our club, but also the author of the book, *People Who Play God*. She is an expert on extreme manipulation, an active peer counselor for those who have been touched by manipulation, and an avid advocate of personal autonomy. She has presented seminars and workshops in several venues including Frostburg University and the Barber National Institute.

For more information on the Toastmasters and our Martinsburg Toastmaster club visit our website: www.martinsburgtoastmaster.org

“Why I Joined Toastmasters” by Daniel Hayes

Toastmasters is an organization which develops leaders and speakers, in business, government, and all areas of life. To fully realize the benefits one can receive from an organization such as Toastmasters, one must decide on the reason that they choose to participate. By determining your purpose at the outset, you can then set goals to attain, and tailor your efforts towards achieving these goals. I hope to explain to you what I wish to get out of my involvement with Toastmasters, describing my history with the organization, and explaining my personal objectives.

I attended my first Toastmasters meeting in 1994 in Granbury, Texas. I found the atmosphere friendly and supportive, the manuals provided by Toastmasters to be simple yet thorough, and the programs to be challenging. Unfortunately, two factors conspired to force me to leave after only three months, a lack of time and a lack of vision. I did not know what I wanted to accomplish at Toastmasters. Because I lacked this vision, I was unable to justify attendance at meetings whenever time got tight. It was easy to attend at first, when it was new and fresh, but as the meetings become routine and other responsibilities and options presented themselves, my attendance began to slack. After a short while, I stopped going altogether. Often, through the intervening years, I have considered joining again, but the right circumstance has never presented itself.

When I returned to Toastmasters earlier this year, I had specific objectives in mind. My first goal was to become more proficient and spontaneous during existing speaking opportunities. I am very comfortable with the technical aspects of my presentations, as long as I prepare myself sufficiently. Yet, I often come off as stiff and programmed. I have found that the prepared speeches in the Toastmaster Communication and Leadership Program Manual are good practice. A more fearful position is when I am forced to speak spontaneously, to speak on my feet. For this, the Table Topics portion of the meeting has proven invaluable.

An additional secondary goal is to develop my listening skills. To become a good listener is important in any avenue of life. To really listen to other people is an important tenet of Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People." Or, to paraphrase the sixth habit of Stephen Covey's "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", "seek first to understand, then to be understood." If one truly believes you have listened and understood their position, they will be more apt to hear your position. At Toastmasters, every meeting is an opportunity to listen. To listen for form, for style, for effect.

No conversation about Toastmasters would be complete without mention of the side benefits. Kindness, friendship, support and camaraderie abound during Toastmaster events.

To fully benefit from the time you spend at a Toastmasters event, creating speeches, speaking, listening, participating in meetings, socializing, running a club, contest or convention, you must decide for yourself what your objective is. You should also set specific goals that will allow you to meet your objectives.