

Carnegie,DaleHow to Develop Self-Confidence & Influence People By Public Speaking

6. Developing Courage and Self-Confidence

The opening chapter of a public-speaking course argues that fear of speaking is normal, common even among the famous, and fully curable. Carnegie uses success stories and a four-step method to show that anyone with real desire can learn to speak with confidence. The point: courage in front of an audience is a trainable skill, not an inborn gift.

Key takeaways

- Nearly everyone who takes the course wants the same thing: to conquer nervousness and speak clearly on their feet.
- Speaking well is learnable, like golf — not a rare talent given to a few. Ordinary men (Mr. Ghent, Dr. Curtis) became strong speakers fast.
- Even Lincoln, Bryan, Lloyd George, Disraeli and others were paralyzed by fear at first, so your case is not unusual.
- Step 1 — Start with a strong, persistent desire; the depth of your desire sets the speed of your progress.
- Step 2 — Know thoroughly what you'll talk about; you can't feel confident unless you're prepared.

- Step 3 — Act confident: behave as if brave and the feeling of courage follows (William James; Teddy Roosevelt trained himself this way).
- Step 4 — Practice, practice, practice — the never-failing cure. Fear comes from lack of experience, so build a record of successful attempts.

Passages worth keeping

“To feel brave, act as if we were brave, use all of our will to that end, and a courage fit will very likely replace the fit of fear.”

William James's principle behind the 'act confident' step

“The first way, the last way, the never-failing way to develop self-confidence in speaking is—to speak.”

Sums up the chapter's core prescription: practice