

HOW TO SPEAK SUCCESSFULLY
WHEN YOU'RE PUT ON THE SPOT

THINK FASTER



TALK SMARTER

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Book Key Takeaways

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Main Idea

Spontaneous speaking is a skill we can develop.

We improve by managing anxiety, lowering the pressure to be perfect, listening carefully, and using simple structures to organize and convey our thoughts. Trying to sound impressive usually gets in the way.



Calm the Body First

Anxiety is a normal response to being put on the spot.

- **Exhale longer than you inhale**
- **Hold something cold**
- **Use a calming word or mantra**
- **Bring attention back to the present**



Maximize Mediocrity

Perfection uses the same mental bandwidth we need to think and respond.

Giving ourselves permission to be mediocre eases self-monitoring and frees us to communicate naturally.



Connect Not Perform

**Impromptu speaking is
harder when we ask:**

- **How do I sound?**
- **Am I making a mistake?**
- **What do they think of me?**

**Focus instead on the people
in front of you. What do they
care about? What are they
really asking? What would be
useful to them now?**



Listen Before You Respond

Listening is blocked by three kinds of noise:

**physical, physiological,
psychological.**

Pace: Slow the interaction.

Space: Pause, paraphrase, or ask a clarifying question.

Grace: Allow yourself and others to be imperfect.

Better talking begin with better listening.



Structuring Spontaneity

Improvisation works best within a structure. Jazz musicians know this. Good spontaneous speakers too.

A good framework is:

What → So What → Now What

For proposals, another is:

Problem → Solution → Benefit



Focus

Clear communication gives the listener what they need, without making them work through everything we know.

A focused message has four qualities:

- **Precision: What is my point?**
- **Relevance: Why should they care?**
- **Accessibility: Can they understand it?**
- **Concision: Can I say it more simply?**



Mistakes as Missed-Takes

**A mistake becomes more
damaging when we keep
thinking about it.**

**Reframing errors as missed-
takes helps.**

**What we do (or say) next
matters much more than
what we did (or say) earlier.**



So What?

For good spontaneous speaking, try these:

- **Calm the body**
- **Lower the pressure to be perfect**
- **Listen fully**
- **Give the answer a structure**
- **Focus on what the listener needs**
- **Keep moving when a sentence misses**