

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

Turn a deaf ear to voices in your head that are barriers to your success.

BY MONICA WOFFORD, CSP

RUNNING A BUSINESS ISN'T EASY.

Speakers, coaches, trainers and authors must be at the ready to help or guide others, draining our own emotional bank accounts. We spend our days motivating, training, guiding and uplifting others, but how do we motivate ourselves when no one is looking? How do we address the difficult voices in our own heads? How do we keep from inhaling a gallon of Häagen-Daz[®], pretending it's a therapy tool? If we cannot manage the conversations in our heads, the voices will become barriers to success. How do you make them disappear?

Here are some important methods to remember when you're off the platform and the audience has left the building.

FIND A NEW THEME

Low self-worth is a familiar theme. We teach others how to overcome negativity, but we are human and susceptible to fear, doubt and worry. After the adrenaline rush of a great speech subsides and the adulations of an enthusiastic audience become a soft murmur, those old themes return and get louder when your audience isn't drowning them out.

"I'm not good enough," and its many variations, is a worn-out chant.

"I am not as smart (or successful or rich or ...)" is an equally tired refrain. Yet, if this is your thought for the day, cleverly disguised in a



blog post with rainbows and sunshine, then it's time to get real and get a new theme. But how?

Read a colleague's book. Listen to the latest self-help trend in music. Katy Perry says you're a firework and it's time to make 'em go "ah, ah, ah". Lady Gaga says you were born this way, and Pink tells you it's freakin' perfect (or something like that!). Facebook shares an uplifting self-help quote every 1.6 seconds. Twitter's "pump you up" stream is even faster. Better themes are screaming at you from all channels, but you have the power to select a new one that builds your confidence and stops the comparisons.

DO IT SCARED

Fear is a common ally when we're surrounded by talk about the dismal economy, fewer bookings, and a big client who might walk instead of renew. Have no fear; instead, walk to the bookstore and get *Take the Stairs*, by Rory Vaden, MBA, a hands-on practical manual on how to apply discipline. Although he never explicitly says it is a book about discipline, he addresses that very topic. In it, he tells the tale of a claustrophobic woman who was deathly afraid of heights and had been tragically caught in a burning office building. She wouldn't go downstairs to evacuate until a fireman, who found her hiding under a desk waiting to die, shouted, "Come on!" She said she couldn't because she was scared. He said, "Well, come on anyway and do it scared!" So, off she went.

OVERCOME YOUR FEAR

Do you tell yourself not to go up to people of a certain position in your association because you're afraid they won't talk to you? Do it scared and marvel at how delighted they are by the company and compliment.

Do you fail to ask for the booking because you assume they'll say no if you

actually ask "what's next?" Do it scared or you'll never know what to do next to get the business.

Do you create new products and marketing every five minutes because you're afraid someone will have already heard what you know? There will always be people who've not received the gift of your information or wisdom. Stick with it and keep moving.

The fear that stops you is nothing more than the voices in your head telling you there is risk ahead. When those voices come from other people, we call those folks difficult. As the author of *Make Difficult People Disappear*, I can tell you there's an easier way, but making your own difficult voices go away is more important. There is always great reward in pushing through the fear and growing from taking the risk.

QUESTION YOUR PERCEPTIONS

On stage and off, there's no question that we talk to ourselves. How many voices do you hear, and what are they saying? Do you question your voices or do you argue with your own data? It is important to pay attention to your perceptions and vigilantly question their validity. Misperceptions can ruin relationships, reduce your productivity and rob you of self-confidence.

Case in point: You are in a hallway filled with people and you make eye contact and say "hello" to a social acquaintance walking right past you. He seems to be looking directly at you, but he doesn't respond. In fact, he doesn't even nod his head in your

direction. What is your perception? Do you instantly surmise that he doesn't like you or he's mad at you? If you assume this perception is true, it eventually will become a belief. When you believe a person who failed to acknowledge you doesn't like you, your brain will look for evidence to support that belief and allow you to use it to explain all future interactions.

One wrongly perceived 10-second hallway encounter could completely change the nature of your relationship with that person. Instead of succumbing to your perception, approach the person later and ask if he saw and heard you earlier in the hallway. There could be many valid explanations for his behavior, such as daydreaming, or he wasn't wearing his contact lenses or hearing aids.

GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

There is a preponderance of information on bookshelves and in blogs, videos and podcasts that encourages us to banish fears and doubts and believe in ourselves. We communicate these same positive messages to our audiences, but only share our personal tales of woe in private conversations with close friends. But what if you took your uplifting messages to heart and applied all of the well-meaning advice to yourself? Then, you can rely on the positive voices in your head to cheer you on during and after your presentations in which you help audiences build their self-esteem and confidence. Your inner voices will give you the energy to stay in business and help more audiences.



Monica Wofford, CSP, is the chair of the Speaker editorial advisory board and a leadership development expert and the CEO of Contagious Companies, Inc. She develops leaders, who were often managers that got promoted, but not prepared to deal with the issues of confidence in leadership. Her most requested training and coaching programs, *Contagious Leadership* and *Contagious Confidence*, have been enjoyed by managers and leaders worldwide. Her latest book, *Make Difficult People Disappear*, deals with the difficult voices and the people who share them. Contact her at Monica@ContagiousCompanies.com. or www.ContagiousCompanies.com, or call 1-866-0121.