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Keynote Speaker
Jody Carrington
Explores Connection

Use Your Voice to
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1:30



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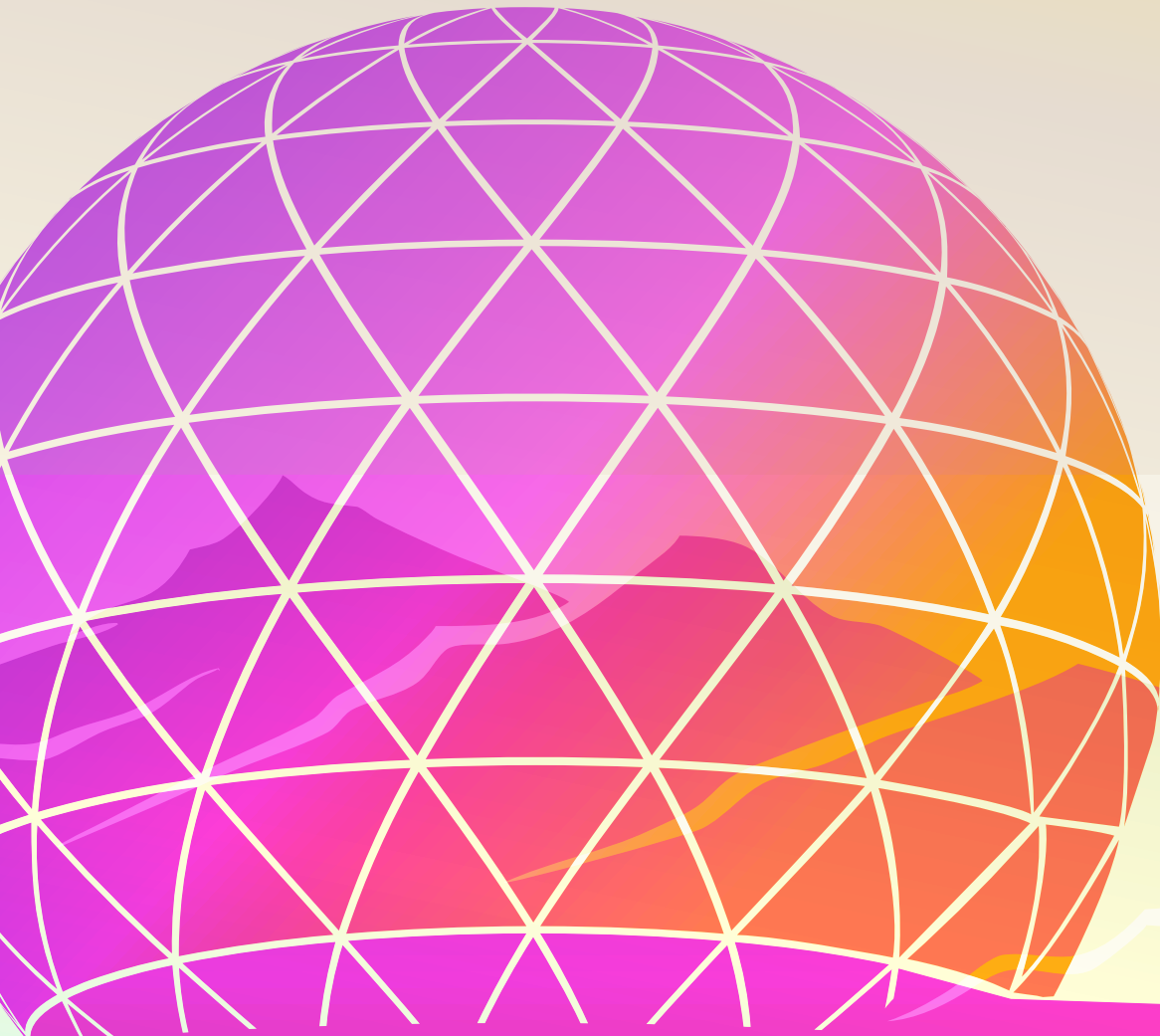


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INTERNATIONAL
2026 CONVENTION

VANCOUVER, CANADA | AUGUST 19-22

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toastmasters.org/Convention

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TOASTMASTERS INTERNATIONAL MISSION:

We empower individuals to become more effective communicators and leaders.



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A Convention to Remember

My first Toastmasters International Convention was unforgettable.

For one thing, nothing prepared me for the scale of the convention itself—so many members from around the world, and so many rooms for all the events. Even the walk from my hotel room to the convention center felt long. By the end of the first day, I learned something important: Comfortable shoes were essential!

In 2012, I had just been elected Club Growth Director (CGD) in District 74, in Southern Africa. That year the convention was in Orlando, Florida—quite a journey from my home in Cape Town, South Africa. It was a bit of a shared adventure with my husband, Rory; while I attended District Leader Training, he spent his days exploring Orlando's theme parks.

Being in training with other leaders from around the world was energizing. I quickly realized I wasn't the only one navigating leadership challenges. Our District Trio had a few issues to work through at the time, and we were fortunate to spend some time with our Region Advisor, Ted Corcoran, DTM—a Past International President. That conversation helped us speak openly, gain perspective, and agree on a way forward.

The convention began with the spectacular Opening Ceremonies and the Parade of Flags from member countries. Watching those flags enter the room was a powerful moment. It made me realize just how global our organization truly is. We may

come from different cultures and continents, but we share the same commitment—to become better communicators and leaders.

Then came the keynote speakers and education sessions, each filled with ideas I couldn't wait to bring back home.

One of my favorite memories from that convention remains the Annual Business Meeting, where the elections take place. I had never seen members so invested in choosing their leaders.

As we waited for the voting results, the DJ filled the room with music—and before long, hundreds of Toastmasters were dancing, laughing, and forming a spontaneous conga line.

Rory was blown away by how professional everything was. Seeing the scale of the event and the dedication of the members helped him understand why Toastmasters meant so much to me.

I left Orlando proud to be a Toastmaster. I carried that sense of pride, global connection, and inspiration back to my club and District.

That's why I encourage you to put the 2026 International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, on your bucket list. Attend in person or online. Broaden your horizons. Meet new friends and mentors.

You'll return home tired—but deeply enriched.

I certainly did. I slept almost the entire flight back to Cape Town, grateful to belong to this remarkable global community.

Aletta Rochat, DTM
International President



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Snapshot



Members of the **Structures College Peru Toastmasters Club** in Lima, Peru, celebrate at the “Noche de Conexión” (Night of Connection) open house and gala dinner in December 2025. The event featured sessions in both English and Spanish, and over 50 professionals, local leaders, and guests attended the event at the Casa Tambo restaurant.

Traveling Toastmaster



Hebah Alnakkas, DTM, Tahani Aleidan, and Adelah Alghemlas, all of Kuwait, sail the Bosphorus strait in Istanbul, Turkey.



Dharsan Valoor of Hyderabad, Telangana, India, shows off his Best Speaker ribbon in Munnar, a hill station in Kerala, India.

CLUB EXPERIENCE



Make Meetings More FUN

Looking for ways to liven up club meetings? Try these ideas to energize your club.

Hold your meeting in a new location.

Head to a public place, like a park or a restaurant, and practice speaking (and listening) while surrounded by distractions and noise. Host a meeting in a local theater or auditorium to practice speaking on a stage with real lighting and microphones. Try something adventurous: Clubs have hosted meetings in places as diverse as a moving train, the top of a mountain, in a swimming pool, and in a cave.

Host a meeting with another club or with a Rotary club.

Gain a larger audience and fresh perspectives. Rotary members will benefit from better understanding the Toastmasters program and discovering how Toastmasters can benefit them, particularly as they do outreach.

Have a friends-and-family meeting.

Encourage members to invite people they know, and plan the theme accordingly. Speeches and Table Topics® could revolve around relationships and storytelling. Afterward, invite everyone to stay for socializing.

Change up the room layout. For an easy but remarkably effective shake-up, move the placement of the lectern, chairs, and tables. Put the lectern at the opposite end of the room, group the tables differently, or just have a row of chairs.

Hold a backward meeting. Start the meeting with closing remarks, have evaluators deliver their remarks before the speeches (speakers need to incorporate the evaluators' comments into their speeches), and answer Table Topics before questions are given, challenging the Table Topicsmaster to determine the question.

Host a theme meeting. Revolve your meeting—from the Toastmaster's remarks to the speeches to Table Topics—around a cohesive theme. Consider anything from seasons, a topical event (e.g., Academy Awards or the Olympics), a popular movie, or a recent decade. You can gain inspiration from some of the many national and [international days](#): Women's Day, Star Wars Day, Poetry Day, Book Day, Friendship Day. For additional pizzazz, encourage costumes or play music.



TOASTMASTERS NEWS

Smedley Fund

Assists Malaysia YLP

Money from the Toastmasters [Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund](#)® helped improve the communication skills of a group of young students in Malaysia. The Sutera Utama Toastmasters Club used the funds to run a Youth Leadership Program (YLP) at a local school.

The club applied for and received funds to cover the costs of YLP materials and resources, a move approved by the Toastmasters Board of Directors. The Sutera Utama club, located in Johor Bahru, Johor, the southernmost state in Malaysia, conducted the 2025 YLP for students ages 15 to 17. Toastmaster

Ying Yii Leong coordinated the program, held at the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Skudai school.

Yves Tan Wei Zhi, DTM, a past Club President of Sutera Utama, said of the program's success: "We have excited parents who witnessed their children transform into better young communicators."

The Smedley Fund, honoring Toastmasters' founder, Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, was established in 1965 to ensure everyone has access to the benefits of Toastmasters.

CARTOON



"I brought my grandson to translate, just in case someone mentions some tech terms during their speech."

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“
Humor is the great thing, the saving thing. The minute it crops up, all our irritations and resentments slip away, and a sunny spirit takes their place.”

—Mark Twain, American writer and humorist

93% of previous members report that Toastmasters helped them improve their public speaking skills.

Source: World Headquarters Research and Analysis Department 2025 Alumni Satisfaction Survey

How I Found My Voice

Toastmasters helped me replace silence with intention and combat anxiety with action.

By Avery Matteo



When people envision someone with communication confidence, they often picture someone who has always been comfortable speaking up—raising a hand without hesitation, leading conversations, or commanding attention in a room. I've never identified with any of those traits or behaviors.

While I'm proud of the strides I've made in my public speaking journey, my road to comfort with verbal communication began not with confidence, but with silence. Some of my earliest memories are shaped by my experiences with selective mutism, an anxiety disorder that makes speaking to unfamiliar people feel impossible. Public spaces were overwhelming, and even small interactions—such as asking a question to my teacher at school or expressing a need—felt out of reach.

While I eventually developed coping strategies and a better understanding of my anxiety, the progress I made did not cause the discomfort to wane entirely. As I grew older, the symptoms changed, but the underlying fear remained. Speaking to new people was still challenging, and presentations in school filled me with dread well into adolescence. Soon, avoidance became my most reliable—but limiting—strategy.

Growing up, I had a steady advocate in my father, James Matteo. A Toastmaster since 1996 and a Distinguished Toastmaster since 2020, he believed deeply in the idea that growth happens by diving headfirst into discomfort. When I turned 18, he encouraged me to join Toastmasters. In true teenage fashion, I wasn't ready

to hear it and shelved the suggestion. In hindsight, my dismissal wasn't a rejection of Toastmasters—it was an implicit admission of fear. It took six more years before I was willing to consider attending a club meeting.

Joining The Toast of Celebration club in Kissimmee, Florida, at age 24, marked a turning point I didn't fully anticipate. There wasn't a dramatic breakthrough moment or a sudden arrival of confidence. What I found instead was a process—incremental, sometimes uncomfortable, and consistently characterized by support from fellow club members.

Within a year, I experienced growth that once felt out of reach. I did impromptu speaking and delivered club speeches. I worked up to my biggest stretch: I moderated an educational panel at my former company's trade show in November 2025. That moment mattered because it demonstrated what was possible when I stopped waiting to feel "ready" and instead dived into the discomfort.

What Toastmasters has taught me isn't how to eliminate my fear, but how to work alongside it.

What Toastmasters has taught me isn't how to eliminate my fear, but how to work alongside it. By design, members face challenging situations in our club: standing up to speak, thinking

on our feet, and receiving feedback. For someone with a history of anxiety, that structure was initially intimidating, but the predictability of the discomfort mattered. Each meeting offered a controlled environment where I could face fear incrementally rather than avoid it altogether.

Over time, what once felt overwhelming became familiar. Familiarity didn't remove the nerves, but it made them manageable.

The experience also reinforced the importance of a support system. Toastmasters clubs are built on shared participation, encouragement, and constructive evaluation. Fellow members offered me thoughtful feedback, practical suggestions, and—just as importantly—belief in my ability to succeed. Often, they recognized progress I was too quick to overlook. Their encouragement and support made it easier to keep showing up, even on days when self-doubt took hold.

Looking back, I'm grateful that my dad urged me to join Toastmasters. What once felt like an intimidating step became a resource that reshaped how I approach fear, growth, and communication. The experience did more than strengthen my speaking skills—it changed my expectations of what I can achieve.

Avery Matteo is a writer and editor with more than five years of experience collaborating with associations, nonprofits, and educational institutions. She belongs to The Toast of Celebration club in Kissimmee, Florida. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).

Official Notice of



Vote for the Board of Directors Candidates.

Your International Officer and Director Candidates for the 2026–2027 Board of Directors

You will have the opportunity to vote for the International Officer and Director candidates of your choice at the Annual Business Meeting on Wednesday, August 19, at 12 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (UTC – 7), in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and online.

The International Leadership Committee nominated International Officer candidates for the positions of International President-Elect, First Vice President, and Second Vice President. International Director candidates were nominated from Regions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The Committee's nominations are presented in accordance with the [Bylaws of Toastmasters International, Article VIII](#).

Visit the Toastmasters International website to [view the qualifications](#) of each officer and director nominee.

International Officer Candidates



International
President-Elect
**Gauri
Seshadri, DTM**



First Vice President
**Jean
Gamester, DTM**



Second Vice President
**Anwasha
Banerjee, DTM**



Second Vice President
**Pawas
Chandra, DTM**

International Director Candidates

From Region 2
Christine Brady, DTM

From Region 4
Charlene Burroughs, DTM
Jacqueline Houser, DTM

From Region 6
Sandra Orland, DTM
Sravanthi Vallampati, DTM

From Region 8
Niteash Agarwaal, DTM
Balaji Nagabhushan, DTM

From Region 10
Ilona Ruitenber, DTM

From Region 12
Denise Buckby, DTM
Christine Lennon, DTM

From Region 14
Matthew Mak, DTM

It is the right and duty of all Member Clubs to participate in the vote at the Annual Business Meeting, through a proxyholder either from their membership or the organization's membership. Additional nominations for International Officer and Director candidates who were evaluated by the International Leadership Committee in this election cycle will be made from the floor.

Jody Carrington Wants to Connect

2026 keynote speaker highlights empathy and emotional intelligence.

By Ruth Nasrullah

Who would you envision as the ideal speaker for these times? It would have to be someone brash enough to cut through the truth crisis, someone charismatic enough to cut through the attention crisis, and someone with a strong enough message to get the audience truly thinking.

You might be surprised to learn someone like this exists: Jody Carrington, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist in Canada, is just that person. She has both a loud voice and a soft tone, she's eloquent and analytical but also uses casual language when among friends. Most critically, she has an uplifting approach to surviving what she says is society's real crisis—a loneliness epidemic.

Carrington will give the keynote presentation, titled "Decoding Emotional Intelligence," at the 2026 Toastmasters International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, this August.

If you're not familiar with emotional intelligence, the phrase may strike you as mere buzzword. But with her training in psychology, her breadth of subject matter expertise, and her passion for helping people connect, there will be no room for platitudes in Carrington's talk.

"She wants to on-the-ground inspire people, to invigorate people every day," says Jeff Lohnes of Talent Bureau, a

Canadian speakers bureau and talent advisory firm that manages Carrington's speaking engagements. "But she also wants to make an impact and help guide the right policies both at national and global levels."

Carrington has addressed audiences of several distinguished entities, including the United Nations.

"In this very noisy, overwhelmed world, we're losing access to the best parts of humanity."
—Jody Carrington, Ph.D.

"What I said at the United Nations is if I had an opportunity to intervene, where I think the biggest bang right now is looking for the helpers that do the most [emotional] regulation.

"I think it will be the greatest lesson we teach our children and so it has to be the greatest lesson we teach leaders like our teachers, our police officers, our foster parents."

So where does emotional intelligence fit into that goal?

"The heart of everything I talk about regarding decoding

emotional intelligence is really about 'how do we get back to the best in us?'" says Carrington. "In this very noisy, overwhelmed world, we're losing access to the best parts of humanity."

An Evolving Education

Her current vision began in a less expansive, less visionary field. She earned a master's and Ph.D. in clinical psychology and focused her research on police psychology.



“I wanted to understand organizational stress and trauma,” she says. She was encouraged to do a hospital rotation treating children during her residency, but she had to be talked into it because she preferred working with adults. Once she started working in a locked inpatient psychiatric unit for children with significant behavioral challenges, she embraced the opportunity to work with them directly.

“I love those babies,” she says. “They really taught me about asking this question—not ‘What is wrong with this one?’ ... but ‘What happened to this one?’”

After her experience at the hospital, she eventually married and had children of her own. The family moved to a small town, where she started a private practice and began consulting with both educators and police departments, focusing on “the complexities of humanness,” as she frames it.

“Then it just evolved into a speaking career,” she says.

A Speaking Journey

She started with small conferences, spoke for free, and even brought snacks for the audience. Today she has a formidable speaking career, focused primarily on the discoveries she made in her clinical practice. She has authored three books, with a fourth on its way; she hosts a podcast called *Unlonely*, which features episodes with titles like “Modern Day Relationships” and “What Happens After the Worst Day of Your Life?”; she is still a practicing therapist.

Lohnes, of the Talent Bureau, has observed her growth as a speaker. “There are two groups I find sometimes have an outsized response with Jody,” he says. “One of those is business owners—very highly motivated individuals. Then also a lot of frontline workers, specifically educators and healthcare workers, absolutely love her—they’re out there doing the hard work healing. She helps them feel seen, re-energizes them, and reconnects them to the purpose of why they’re doing this.”



Jody Carrington shares hugs while promoting one of her books.

In today’s world, Carrington is particularly concerned with human connection, recognizing in all aspects of her work that we are more disconnected from each other than ever in this world of increasingly fragmented interactions.

“We’re neurobiologically wired for connection,” she says. “If you think about the square footage of the house that your grandparents were raised in and the square footage of the house in which we raise our babies, you’ll know that even the size of the beds that our grandparents slept in was smaller.”

She also addresses the role of advancing technology in the decline of connection.

“It is so fascinating in this lifetime to have a front-row seat into the technological explosion that is AI—but I promise every organization I’m in front of that if they understand that the only

‘AI’ that’s going to matter to grow a business, to maintain relationships, is authentic interaction, their organization will change in this time where we are desperate for connection.”

Her advice resonates for business owners, employees, and public speakers. “We’re talking about how we manage our anxiety, because when anxiety takes over it steals your brilliance,” she says of perhaps the most common foil to confident public speaking.

“I’ve never had so much hope for humanity,” she adds. “But we’ve never been this sleep deprived, this attention fragmented, and this divisive; it’s a world where we have never needed connection more. I love when I get to take the stage and the conversation’s really going to be about the role of speakers to sew back together and inspire people to come back together as humans.”

“We were never meant to do any of this alone.”

Ruth Nasrullah is a freelance journalist based in Houston. She has a master’s degree in journalism and a master of fine arts degree in creative nonfiction. She has written on an array of subjects and has bylines in publications such as the Houston Chronicle and The Washington Post. She is married with an adult daughter and two adult stepsons.

Don’t miss
Jody Carrington’s
keynote presentation
on August 19!

Register for in-person and
online attendance at
toastmasters.org/Convention.



Must-See Vancouver Experiences

From culture and cuisine to outdoor adventure, the convention city has it all.

To help prepare you for the 2026 International Convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, convention host co-chairs Tom Jones, DTM, and Carole Murphy, DTM, put together a list of some must-see spots. Whether you're looking for a cultural experience or an outdoor adventure framed by water and mountains, Vancouver has something for everyone. As Jones and Murphy are quick to point out, the city isn't the backdrop for convention but part of the whole experience.

Local Culture and Food

Gastown



Just under one mile (one km) from the Vancouver Convention Centre East Building—the convention

site—is Gastown, 12 street blocks blending modern eats and shopping with historic landmarks and cobblestone streets. Labeled a National Historic Site of Canada, Gastown is a neighborhood filled with entertainment and boasts one of only a few steam clocks in the world. Built in 1977, the clock expels steam, and whistles every hour on the hour.

gastown.org

Robson Street



With more than 150 businesses, Robson Street is one of Vancouver's oldest shopping districts. The area dates back to the late 1800s and is now home to many internationally known brand-name storefronts, making it one of the most popular retail districts in the city. A little

over a mile (almost two km) from the convention site, the area is also home to a variety of high-end restaurants, casual eateries, and pubs. At the bottom of the street is BC Place Stadium—host to concerts and soccer matches, including some 2026 FIFA World Cup games.

robsonstreet.ca

Granville Island

Home to the Public Market, which houses more than 50 independent food vendors, Granville Island is a culinary destination. The area of Granville was originally a large sandbar used by the Salish, the Indigenous people of the area, for hunting and gathering. In the early 1900s, the sandbar was covered to create an industrial area. However, in the 1970s, Granville began its transformation into a food and culture hub.



In addition to the Public Market, Granville Island has a wide selection of other restaurants, boutiques, entertainment, and a variety of activities and attractions. Explore the Net Loft shops and the Artisan District, areas that include Indigenous-owned galleries and stores.
granvilleisland.com



Richmond Night Market

The largest night market in North America is the Richmond Night Market, which has become an international attraction, welcoming over one million visitors each year. This market hosts rows of booths offering a wide variety of food vendors and shopping opportunities. While it is only open from 7 p.m. to 12 a.m. on weekends, the market has more than 500 food options, over 100 retail booths, live international performances, and carnival games. This year's theme is "The World Unites Here!" zeroing in on the excitement of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

richmondnightmarketva.com

Experience the Outdoors

Kitsilano Beach



This lively spot, also known as Kits Beach, has tennis courts, basketball courts, a playground, and Canada's longest swimming pool. The beach is one of the most popular in Vancouver and has great views of the city and mountains.
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/kitsilano-beach.aspx



Capilano Suspension Bridge Park

You've likely seen pictures of The Capilano Suspension Bridge, spanning 450 feet (137 m) long and 230 feet (70 m) above the Capilano River and surrounded by rainforest. If walking across a swinging bridge with views of rushing waters below isn't for you, there is more to explore, such as the Rainforest Canopy Walk—platforms and slightly lower suspension bridges that reach up to 110 feet (33 m) above the forest floor—and Kia'palano, the park's education cultural center. There you can learn about the tradition of placing totem poles and the history and cultural significance of the Capilano Suspension Bridge Park area, which is home to the unceded traditional territories of the Skwxwú7mesh Nation and Tsleil-Waututh Nation.
capbridge.com

Stanley Park Seawall

The six-mile (10 k) paved, one-way loop is the perfect area for a stroll. The seawall is accessible by foot, bike, and rollerblades, and is part of the world's longest uninterrupted waterfront path. Start on the east side of Stanley Park Drive near Coal Harbour, and enjoy good

views, landmarks, monuments, and sculptures along the way.
vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/stanley-park-seawall.aspx

Deep Cove

If you're looking for an outdoor experience close to the convention site, visit Deep Cove—a seaside village boasting opportunities for walking, hiking, kayaking, and paddle boarding.
vancouvernorthshore.com/neighbourhood/deep-cove

Embrace the Coast

Steveston Village



Stroll a charming fishing village and learn about its rich history. Steveston Village, on the main estuary of the Fraser River, has been a location for fishing and harvesting beginning with the people of the First Nations. To this day it is one of Canada's busiest fishing harbors, and home to multiple heritage sites, including the Britannia Shipyards. Visitors can explore heritage buildings, the Steveston Museum and Post Office, and London Farm, and step inside the Tram Car 1220.

historicsteveston.ca/historic-steveston

Embark on a Cruise

After convention ends, Vancouver is a gateway to many cruise ship-accessible destinations. Alaska is the most popular location to head to, but the United States' Pacific Coast (Washington, Oregon, and California) is also easy to explore by boat. Bon voyage!

Wide-Open Communication: 2026 International Convention

Head to Vancouver, Canada, for inspiration, decoration, and connection.

By *Toastmaster* magazine staff

Are you open to the many opportunities to improve yourself at the annual International Convention? Join your fellow Toastmasters in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, a city of expansive beauty and site of the [2026 convention](#), taking place August 19–22. With a theme of “Wide-Open Communication,” the four-day program will offer an exhilarating mix of educational and social opportunities.

Expand your knowledge and skills by attending education sessions and workshops, as well as the always highly anticipated World Championship of Public Speaking® (and the semifinal contests leading up to it). In addition to learning from experts and top-rate speakers, take advantage of the chance to connect and swap ideas with members from around the globe. Don't miss out on networking opportunities and Smedley Fund social events throughout your time in Vancouver!

Opening Ceremonies

The convention fun starts with the festive Opening Ceremonies. The popular, and moving, Parade of Flags will unfurl its display of pageantry and international spirit, where members from around the world, many decked out in native attire, carry the flags of their countries onstage in a colorful procession. Attendees will also be introduced to the organization's newly elected Board Members and hear from this year's keynote speaker.

Keynote Speaker

Psychologist and author Jody Carrington, Ph.D., will deliver her keynote presentation, "Decoding Emotional Intelligence," after the Parade of Flags. Carrington has worked with Fortune 500 companies, professional sports teams, educators, and health-care leaders, is the author of three books, and hosts her own podcast. Her talk will focus on how to better perceive, control, and evaluate emotions to allow for more impactful leadership.

Hall of Fame

The Hall of Fame program highlights the achievement of varied goals by Districts and members around the world during the 2026–2026 program year. This year's ceremony will mark the accomplishments of Distinguished

Districts and individual members in the 2025–2026 program year. Districts are recognized as Smedley Distinguished, President's Distinguished, Select Distinguished, and Distinguished. Presidential Citations are given to members who display dedication and exemplary service in their clubs or Districts, or at the international level.

Golden Gavel Award Presentation

Jennifer Moss is this year's recipient of the Golden Gavel Award, which is given annually to someone distinguished in the fields of communication and leadership. She will be delivering her speech, "Why Are We Here? Creating a Workplace Culture Everyone Wants." A resident of Ontario, Canada, she has written three books on that topic and is cofounder of the Work Better Institute. In addition, she is a tech entrepreneur and syndicated radio columnist. Moss, who touts the value of gratitude and optimism, tracks workplace trends and focuses on how workplace culture can be revitalized in the wake of COVID.

Education Sessions and Workshops

This year brings even more education sessions than recent conventions! Each day will begin with a general education session geared toward all attendees.

On Thursday, AI expert Mariam Tariq will discuss using AI to craft pitches and presentations that attract new members. On Friday, workplace expert Joshua Evans will present tools to help you escape the grind of daily minutia and keep your focus on real purpose. And Saturday, come out to hear the Golden Gavel honoree, Jennifer Moss, offer her insights and perspectives on creating a healthy work culture.

On Friday afternoon, choose from one of two exciting extended learning sessions. Joel Schwartzberg, bestselling author and regular *Toastmaster* magazine contributor, will teach attendees how to simplify and sell a message regardless of field, background, or audience. Meanwhile, award-winning thought leader Dai Manuel, DTM, will motivate members to infuse new vision into club meetings.

Back by popular demand, Toastmasters Journey Workshops will be held concurrently on Friday morning. Participants will have six workshops to choose from, with each session held once in the morning and repeated later in the day. These workshops are geared specifically toward member and leader needs, and cover a variety of topics, including reviving struggling clubs, Speechcraft®, branding, membership growth, speech contests, and Pathways tips.

Meet the Speakers



Jody Carrington
2026 Keynote Speaker
Decoding Emotional Intelligence



Jennifer Moss
2026 Golden Gavel Honoree
Why Are We Here?
Creating a Work Culture Everyone Wants



Club Meeting Experience

For the first time, Toastmasters will be able to participate in a club meeting on the convention stage. Two speakers will have the opportunity to present to a worldwide Toastmasters audience and all meeting roles, including evaluators, will be selected through an application process. Table Topics® speakers will be able to volunteer in the moment to practice their impromptu speaking skills. Don't miss out on witnessing this exciting club meeting!

The Marketplace and Toastmasters Central

Stop by the Marketplace throughout the convention to meet education session speakers, engage with our valued sponsors, learn about the Ralph C. Smedley Memorial Fund®, and visit the Convention Store to stock up on Toastmasters merchandise!

New this year, and housed within the Marketplace, will be Toastmasters Central, a convenient setting where you can directly connect with other members, leaders, and the World Headquarters Team on a wide variety of Toastmasters topics. The Toastmasters Events App will have more details and specific times.

New Leadership

Every vote counts! This year the Annual Business Meeting will be held at the start of convention, on Wednesday, August 19. All Member Clubs and Delegates at Large will have the opportunity to vote in person or by proxy in the elections of the [2026–2027 International Officer and Director candidates](#). As a reminder, this year the Candidate Showcase will take place online before the convention.

World Championship of Public Speaking

Find out who will emerge as this year's World Champion of Public Speaking as eight finalists compete for the title. The International Speech Contest Semifinals take place on August 20 in four separate contests, with two contests running at a time. Speakers representing different parts of the world will compete in each semifinals contest, and the top two from each one will advance to the World Championship of Public Speaking®, held on August 21.

Accredited Speaker Program

Show your support as you listen to fellow Toastmasters give their final presentation in the Accredited Speaker Program. Candidates will share their expertise in a subject as they speak to

a live audience and panel of judges on August 20. The speakers who earn the Accredited Speaker designation will be announced at the World Championship of Public Speaking on August 21.

Experience Convention Online

If you can't make it to Vancouver, or aren't able to attend every session, you don't have to miss out! As in previous years, nearly all convention events will be available for viewing online.

All events from the main stage will be livestreamed, allowing you to watch as they happen: Opening Ceremonies, Golden Gavel presentation, Annual Business Meeting, the Toastmasters Club Meeting Experience, and the World Championship of Public Speaking. Other events, such as the Toastmasters Journey Workshops, will be recorded and available after the event has concluded. All in-person attendees will automatically receive access to the online experience for 60 days when the event concludes.

You can access the online convention experience from any internet-connected device, including your phone, tablet, computer, or TV. Livestreamed events will be in real time; check the agenda, where they are listed in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)/Coordinated Universal Time (UTC). On Demand replay,

Meet the Speakers



Dai Manuel, DTM
Let's Get (Club) Creative!



Joel Schwartzberg
Get to the Point: Simplify, Sharpen, and Sell Your Best Ideas



including the International Speech Contest Semifinals, will be available soon after the event.

Socializing Opportunities

Throughout the convention, you will have the opportunity to network with others and make lasting memories. Don't miss your chance to get to know fellow Toastmasters at these social activities. Many of these events require tickets, which can be purchased during the registration process.

- Connect with others and learn tips for your first convention at the First-Timers' Gathering.
- Enjoy a meal with fellow members at the Toastmasters Lunches.
- Form connections as you meet new people at the Speed Networking event.
- Start your mornings with the Smedley Fund Morning Yoga.
- Have fun as you play with fellow Toastmasters during the Smedley Fund Bingo Night.
- Enjoy the views during the Smedley Fund Evening Harbor Cruise.
- Welcome in the new International President with dinner and dancing.
- Show off your singing skills at the sing-along, a convention tradition started by Past International President Ted Corcoran, DTM.

Convention Information

The convention will take place in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and all events and activities will be in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT)/ Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) -7, which is the local time in Vancouver. A time zone converter is listed at the top of each agenda page.

Be sure to follow the convention on social media channels, including [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [LinkedIn](#). Use the hashtag #Toastmasters2026.

Accessibility

The Vancouver Convention Centre follows all Canadian accessibility laws. Learn more [here](#).

The Toastmaster magazine staff

is composed of four editorial team members.



Toastmasters International Convention

August 19-22, 2026

Vancouver Convention Centre East

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

[Register Now!](#)

Advance rates end July 26.

Don't forget to purchase additional events during the registration process, including Evening Harbor Cruise, Toastmasters Lunches, Bingo Night, Morning Yoga, Legends and Sacred Ceremony, #Toastmasters2026 Bag, and the President's Celebration.



Meet the Speakers



Mariam Tariq

Using AI to Craft Pitches That Attract New Members



Joshua M. Evans

Purpose or Perish. Leading with Meaning.

THE TOASTMASTERS PODCAST: Reflecting Back



Hosted by Greg Gazin, DTM

How a simple podcasting project developed into an incredible journey.

By Greg Gazin, DTM

After 20 years and 300 episodes of *The Toastmasters Podcast*, I have learned a lot. Not only about podcasting, but about myself. My interview style has changed, and my skills have been supercharged.

Podcasting was relatively new back in 2006 when I was looking for a High Performance Leadership project, but I thought creating a podcast would be a great fit. That project, originally titled *ToastCaster*, marked the beginning of a journey I could not have fully anticipated.

Two years later, I met Bo Bennett, DTM, and Ryan Levesque, DTM, who had started their own podcast focused on Toastmasters. I assisted on a few early episodes of *The Toastmasters Podcast*, becoming part of the official team in 2014. A few years later, we formed a working partnership with the *Toastmaster* magazine and solidified our purpose—to amplify the magazine’s words, pictures, and stories. In 2024, I became the sole host, editor, producer, and audio engineer.

At first my passion for podcasting came from my geeky side combined with my love of Toastmasters. It was more about the recording, making sure the interview sounded great, and sharing the episode with the world.

I’ve mastered those podcasting skills, and now my passion revolves

around creating quality content and bringing out the guests’ best stories. The technical aspect now involves research, preparation, careful selection of questions, and giving the audience something they can take away.

Improving My Conversation Skills

Podcasting is an excellent training ground for becoming a better speaker and storyteller. Just like a speech, a podcast can entertain, persuade, educate, and inspire, and it needs a message, a point, and a takeaway. Without visuals, it has to create pictures in the listener’s mind.

Curiosity is powerful,
but good storytelling
also requires focus.

Prepping for a speech or a podcast requires thinking carefully about the audience ahead of time and the message you want them to take away. But in podcasting, the interview aspect adds another dimension. As the host, I constantly adjust the conversation in real time. It’s almost like using a GPS.

The destination may be clear, but the path can change depending on where the discussion leads. I’m always thinking about the listener’s experience: *Is this resonating with them? Is it clear? Where should I go next?*

Through podcasting I’ve honed skills like adaptability, situational awareness, and how to drive a conversation. I’ve learned to veer from prepared questions if I notice I need to adjust the direction of a conversation. It’s now easier for me to know when something isn’t working, and if I know I’ve flubbed something, I’ve become comfortable saying, “Let’s consider a different approach,” or even, “I messed up.”

Over time, my interview style has evolved. Early on, I obsessed over asking all the right questions. I had a list and often tried to cover everything. An editor once told me, “Greg, you’re too interested.” At first, I took that as a compliment. But over time, I realized what he meant. Curiosity is powerful, but good storytelling also requires focus.

As I gained experience, I began to understand that great conversations do not come from clever questions. They come from genuine curiosity and the willingness to be open. I began to see my role less as someone asking questions and more as a story builder. I learned to listen more carefully, give space for stories to unfold, and guide the conversation as it developed.

Occasionally, a podcast conversation reveals layers of a story that were not immediately visible in print. In one episode, my former cohost, Ryan, and I interviewed former police chief Robert A. Nevarez (#208). The [magazine article](#) focused on how he had overcome his fear of public speaking to honor his father. During the conversation, the story deepened as he described the difficult speeches he had to give to grieving families who had lost loved ones to gang violence. Moments like that remind me how powerful conversations can be and what you can discover when you go deeper.

Overall Growth

One of the unexpected benefits of hosting hundreds of interviews is that it's allowed me to study communication in action and those lessons have become part of my skills library.

Every guest teaches me something, but not always in the way I expect. Sometimes the lesson comes from the subject matter they share or through their expertise, but other times it comes from how they communicate and tell their stories.

I've had the pleasure of interviewing communication expert and 2025 Golden Gavel recipient Matt Abrahams a few times, and I frequently listen to his podcast, *Think Fast, Talk Smart*. I noticed that when he interviews someone, he summarizes a guest's point in real time before moving to the next question. That ability to paraphrase helps clarify understanding, guide the conversation, and ensure the audience stays with the story, and it's something I try to do as well.

I also found his insights helpful in improving my impromptu skills, not just by answering a question on the spot, but by using various practical techniques. On *The Toastmasters Podcast* (#235) and *ToastCaster* (TC176) he shared a number

of useful approaches. One example was "What? So What? Now What?" Define the facts, explain why they matter, and outline the next steps.

Another lesson I learned was a powerful one about difficult, sensitive, or personal questions. Greg Van Borssum, AS, speaks openly about how he considered taking his own life, and we discussed this in his episode (#089). Later, I struggled with how to ask someone to share their thoughts, concerned that I might be asking them to relive a dreadful experience. I reached out to Greg for advice. "Use phrasing like, 'Do you mind if I ask you a personal question because it might help me or the audience?'" he explained. "If it comes from a place of learning or sharing knowledge, you'll likely get a positive response." And I did.

I also learned that good conversations sometimes require vulnerability from the host, not just the guest. Even after hundreds of interviews, not every conversation goes smoothly, and there were moments when I questioned whether I was doing it right. I felt impostor syndrome.

In my interview with Maureen Zappala, DTM, AS, on that topic (#267), she described our circle of expertise as a dot. She suggested that we say, "I'm proud of my dot. I have a cool dot." When impostor syndrome surfaces, I remind myself of my dot, and that what I know and my experiences have value.

Podcasting has been transformational. It's been an incredible experience where I continually learn new skills and uncover more about myself. And I also get to meet some amazing people along the way.

But most of all, podcasting is a lot of fun. Here's to the next 300 episodes!

EDITOR'S NOTE: You can listen and subscribe to The Toastmasters Podcast wherever you get your podcasts, including Spotify, Apple, and YouTube. For more information, including episode notes, visit toastmasterspodcast.com.

Greg Gazin, DTM, is a Past District Governor and recipient of a 2009 Toastmasters Presidential Citation. He is a veteran podcaster, hosting [The Toastmasters Podcast](#) and producing the award-winning [ToastCaster](#). He is also a writer, author, speaker, and member of Spiritual Living Toastmasters in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.



Master the Art of *TELLING A JOKE*

Add a Jokemaster role to your meeting lineup and give members a place to practice their funny.

By Phyllis May, DTM, Ph.D.

Humor is one of the most effective tools in any type of communication—it builds rapport and trust, boosts engagement, and relieves boredom. If you're presenting a serious topic, [adding a joke](#) lightens the mood and helps audiences relax and lean into the message.

But using humor successfully is a skill that often doesn't come naturally. This is where Toastmasters can help. If your club wants to provide more opportunities for members to hone their funny bone, add a Jokemaster to your meeting roster.

The Jokemaster role benefits not only the person telling the joke but the other members as well. It's not only a fun learning opportunity, but it also livens up meetings, and provides an additional speaking role. My club has incorporated the role for years, and I've seen the difference it can make.

The skills needed to tell a joke successfully often feel intimidating. How many times have you heard someone tell a joke and then completely fumble the punch line? Have you ever cringed when someone asked, "Does anyone know a good joke?" knowing that either you or the other person is likely to embarrass themselves?

Think of telling a joke like giving a short speech. Both require using carefully chosen words and expressions (and remembering them!), as well as vocal variety, gestures, and of course, perfect timing.

PRACTICE THOSE JOKES

Knowing how to tell a joke doesn't mean you're aspiring to be a stand-up comedian—although perhaps you will find you have that talent. Here are some ideas to keep in mind when you practice telling a joke at your club, or anywhere:

Know your audience. Like any other presentation, before selecting your joke, consider your audience. Toastmasters,

like the workplace, is not the place for off-color selections and language. Keep it clean and inoffensive.

Keep it simple. Few people can pull off telling a long, complicated story with a funny ending. Unless you're a professional, you'll lose people and deliver an anti-climactic ending. Until you have more experience, stick with a short dialogue that's easy for your audience to follow.

Personalize if possible. Let's say your club includes a member who is a lawyer. If they are a good sport, incorporate their name into the joke. It's easy to hook your audience into thinking you're telling a real story ... until you get to a ridiculous ending. That surprise element at the end makes the joke even funnier.

For instance, a joke might start with "A group of lawyers were having lunch ..." You could adapt it by saying, "I don't know how many of you heard what happened to John recently, but he and some of his lawyer friends were having lunch when ..." You've immediately grabbed the attention of all the members who know him. They know you are telling a joke, and suddenly they feel privy to a funny and perhaps embarrassing story about John. You continue to reel them in and then finish with a strong punch line that makes them realize the story was all a buildup.

Be sure to rehearse the punch line. Your joke-telling success rests in the delivery of those last words. This is especially true if the ending is complicated or a tongue twister and easily confused.

SUCCESSFUL JOKESTERS

Being able to tell a joke and then receive a genuine positive reaction via smiles and laughter is a terrific feeling for anyone who has ever said, "Oh, I could never tell a joke."





The Elements of **COMEDIC** Surprise

By Dean Lewis



The Jokemaster role is not only a fun learning opportunity that livens up meetings, it also provides an additional speaking role.

One of our past Club Presidents was always afraid to sign up as Jokemaster and only did so reluctantly when no one else came forward. After a few years of this, she had to speak at a Division club officer training session. She stood onstage holding a microphone and successfully told a joke to nearly 100 attendees.

Her obvious pride at realizing she had overcome one of her biggest fears made those of us at her club who knew her struggle ecstatic. That year, she was our club contestant in the Area Humorous Speech Contest.

Taking on the Jokemaster role requires preparation and practice. If you add it to your meeting role roster, provide expectations of what is required. Having someone sign up for the role and then read internet jokes is a waste of meeting time, and a missed learning opportunity. Nip that in the bud! The fine skill of joke-telling is no joke.

If you'd like to add humor to your speeches or presentations but aren't comfortable or don't know how, a Jokemaster role is a great way to start small. The laughter that follows will tell you if you're successful.

While many Toastmasters recommend that members have a "speech in their pocket," all of us could have a "joke in our pocket," not just for club meetings but to surprise people the next time someone asks, "Does anyone have a joke?" You might surprise yourself when you raise your hand!

EDITOR'S NOTE: If the Jokemaster role inspires you, consider the [Engaging Humor](#) path in Pathways, or compete in a Humorous Speech Contest.

Phyllis May, DTM, Ph.D., is a member of Key West Toastmasters in Key West, Florida. A Toastmaster since 1999, she has earned three DTMs, held numerous District leadership positions, and been recognized as District 47 Toastmaster of the Year. She is a retired educator who has since written two books.

Laughter is created when surprise is present. Specifically, laughter is created when there is a *comedic element of surprise*. Your electric bill doubling can surprise you, but that doesn't result in a laugh. Or you could be surprised when your teenage son wrecks the car, but again, no laughter.

A comedic surprise is a twist without serious repercussions. A joke can be structured perfectly but still flop because listeners feel the twist has serious repercussions. You may hear, "That's mean!" instead of a laugh.

A joke structure that works means the audience believes one thing to be true; however, it is gradually revealed that something else is actually true. The involuntary psychological reaction is usually laughter.

The techniques for making a surprise humorous include:

- Conciseness
- Misdirection
- Revealing the punch word or phrase at the last possible moment

In a well-structured joke, it's not only about having a good twist; it's about connecting the setup and punch line in a logical way.

It helps to have a buildup to the twist. Usually, the first part of the joke is informative, lulling the audience into having a certain expectation. This also creates tension, which the twist releases. Here's an example of a joke from Steven Wright, an American stand-up comedian:

"I've been getting into astronomy, so I installed a skylight. The people who live above me are furious."

When he talks about installing a skylight, we are imagining his roof. He is luring us into thinking he'll view the stars from his home. This makes the twist even stronger!

Now here's the joke *without* misdirection.

"I've been getting into astronomy, so I installed a skylight."

It's not as funny because it's just a setup and a twist. Without misdirection, the twist is too abrupt.

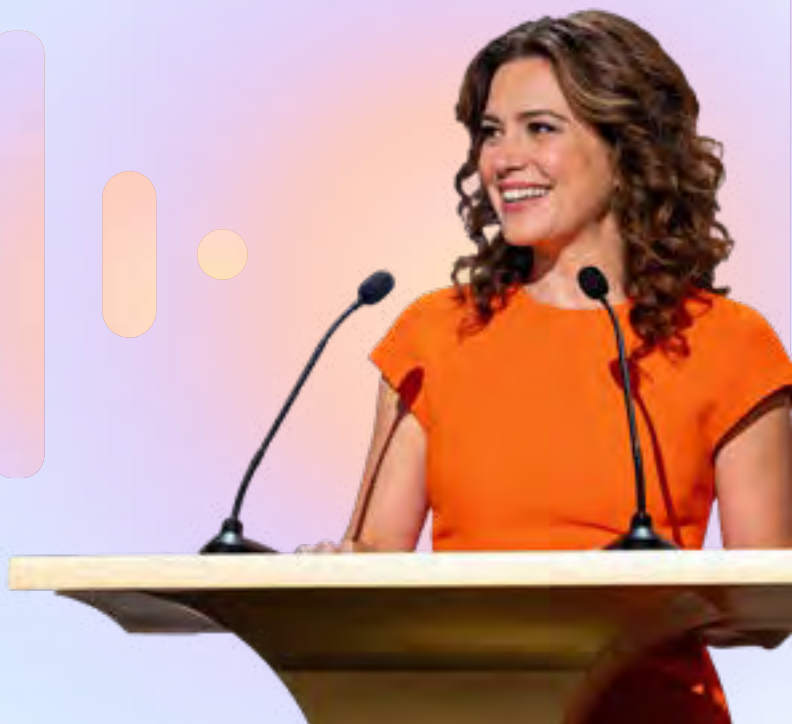
With the misdirection statement, "The people who live above me are furious," we are led away from the punch line, which makes it more effective.

Adapted from a July 2018 Toastmaster magazine article

Charisma Unlocked

How to build the “It Factor” in your speaking.

By Jillian Mitchell



Let’s talk charisma—the crown jewel of public speaking, captivating audiences worldwide with every word, gesture, and pause. Whether it is someone presenting a TED Talk or speaking during a meeting at work, we know it when we see it: That person has the “It Factor,” and we can’t help but be drawn in.

Who doesn’t want some of that?

Here’s the good news: Like many sought-after speaking traits, you don’t have to be born with it. Charisma isn’t magic; it’s a skill you can practice, refine, and develop.

What Is Charisma?

I’ll admit, this question stopped me in my tracks. As a vocal coach, my instinct would be to default to video examples (Oprah, Steve Jobs, Simon Sinek), maybe toss in a mention of the “It Factor,” and call it a day. But to explain it properly, I dug into the research.

Here’s the consensus: Charisma is a personal quality; it’s a magnetic charm, attractiveness, or appeal that inspires devotion, loyalty, or influence. Or a more tangible definition: It’s the ability to communicate with energy, clarity, and authenticity so people don’t just hear your message, they feel it.

In other words, charisma is about what others *perceive* from your internal alignment and energy management—not your actual emotional state.

Charisma isn’t just another word for confidence. Confidence is how you feel about yourself—your sense of competence and self-esteem. Charisma is the effect you have on others: the energy, presence, and connection that draws them in. You can be confident without charisma, and charismatic without confidence (nervous yet magnetic). It’s all about how you connect with the audience.

Charisma isn’t magic; it’s a skill you can practice, refine, and develop.

The Core of Charismatic Speaking

Many experts have found that charisma can be developed by understanding and practicing certain key traits. While their approaches vary, they all share a common foundation.

Chris Anderson, curator of TED Conferences, identifies three qualities

that define unforgettable speakers: presence (being fully engaged in the moment), passion (emotional connection), and practice (rehearsal that aligns purpose with expression). Olivia Fox Cabane, author of *The Charisma Myth*, also highlights three elements of charisma: presence, power (influence), and warmth (goodwill). True charisma, she says, arises when these align, creating trust and impact.

These ideas reflect what sociologists observe in charismatic leaders. Sociologist Max Weber, for instance, notes that leaders’ power comes from combining vision, confidence, and emotional expressiveness—qualities that naturally inspire trust and devotion.

All three frameworks overlap, pointing to three universal elements: presence (being fully engaged in the moment), purpose (passion or vision), and projection (how you express yourself through voice, body, and energy).

How Charisma Takes Shape

The real work of developing charisma happens internally: managing your inner state (presence), connecting to your why (purpose), and intentionally allowing both to shape your voice, body language, and energy (projection). When these align, your

audience doesn't just hear you, they *feel* you. And that is what makes speaking magnetic, memorable, and charismatic.

Let's explore how to put this into practice.

Presence

Are you fully present in the moment? Or are you distracted—thinking about your inbox, what others think of you, or the laundry waiting at home? Is a bad mood stealing some of your energy and attention? To connect powerfully, you need to let all of that go and be completely present—with yourself and your audience.

Purpose

Purpose is your “why”—your reason for showing up and speaking. Why this topic? Why now? Why you? It goes deeper than “I have to for work.” It's more like, “I'm doing this to create a better world for my children,” or something of that magnitude. Connecting to your purpose also helps you stay present. When you're fully absorbed in that deeper reason, your mental chatter fades, your attention is focused, and your authenticity shines.

Projection

Voice, body language, energy, words—it all matters here. While these often flow naturally when your presence and purpose are aligned, let's break down the specific attributes that make the biggest impact.

From a voice perspective, research shows charismatic speakers use varied pitch, intentional pauses, strong projection, and few filler words—making them engaging and easy to follow. Build vocal presence through regular warm-ups (breathing, humming, diction drills) and allow your purpose and authentic nature to influence your delivery.

Body language matters just as much. When we're present and connected to our purpose, our body reflects this. We use open gestures, grounded

posture, steady eye contact, and genuine expressions. Avoid fidgeting or overacting—authentic movement builds trust.

Finally, your words shape charisma. Ask questions and use audience-focused, values-based phrasing. Instead of saying, “I'm going to tell you about ...,” try “Imagine what could happen if ...” or “What might change if we tried ...?” Frame ideas around shared ideals like courage, curiosity, or community, and cut extensive self-references or negative phrasing.

How to Keep Building Charisma

Charismatic speakers make audiences feel seen, understood, and fully engaged. And when presence, purpose, and projection align, you do more than convey information; you captivate, inspire, and leave a lasting impression.

To start building your own charisma, record a one-minute talk on a topic you care about. Focus on three things—staying present, speaking with genuine emotion, and allowing your delivery to naturally flow from this place. Watch it back. Notice how changes in voice, gestures, and/or phrasing connect to presence and purpose, and how that affects projection (and audience perception). Repeat this exercise regularly.

Charisma is absolutely a skill you can cultivate. Over time, presence, passion, and projection will become second nature, and that magnetic “It Factor” you admired in others will start appearing in your own speaking.

Jillian Mitchell is a vocal coach, recording artist, podcast host, and all-around voice advocate. She is the founder of *Voxsana*, an online platform dedicated to voice empowerment. Jillian resides in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, with her husband and two children.

Tips for Charismatic Connection

When you believe in your message and your ability to deliver it, your audience can feel it immediately. Here are some practical ways to strengthen that connection:

- 1. Anchor your presence.** Take a deep breath, relax your shoulders, and check in with yourself. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being fully at ease), how are you feeling mentally, emotionally, and physically? Integrate your purpose with small, intentional practices to bring yourself into alignment. Once grounded, turn your focus fully to the audience. Being present matters far more than being perfect.
- 2. Channel nervous energy.** Transform jitters into expression. Nerves are just excitement without the breath. Take a few deep breaths and channel that energy into expressivity. You may want to do a few jumping jacks to shift the energy.
- 3. Show authentic connection.** Engage emotionally, respond naturally, and let a touch of vulnerability shine. People trust speakers who feel real.
- 4. Balance energy with calm focus.** Avoid monotone or forced enthusiasm. True charisma blends lively presence with grounded authenticity.
- 5. Practice and reflect.** Record yourself often, notice what works, and refine. Over time, your inner conviction and outward expression align naturally, creating effortless charisma.

Modulate to Motivate

How vocal variety supercharges your charisma and captivates an audience.

By Jillian Mitchell



Variety is the spice of life—and in public speaking, it's the spark that turns sound into impact. Voice modulation isn't just about being heard; it's what makes your message felt. Vocal variety gives your words texture, emotion, and resonance, making it one of the true engines of charisma.

What Is Vocal Variety?

Toastmasters often talk about vocal variety. Simply put, vocal variety (or modulation) is the intentional shifting of your voice to create meaning, emotion, and audience engagement. It transforms a competent delivery into one that truly resonates and captivates. So it's worth exploring, especially if you lead, coach, or aim to inspire others.

The Core Elements

Used skillfully together, these elements transform your delivery from black and white to full color.

Pitch—how high or low your voice sounds

Pace—how quickly you speak

Volume—how loud or soft you speak

Tone (Quality)—the emotional color of your voice: warmth, sharpness, smoothness, playfulness

Why Does Modulation Matter?

In a word: connection. A whisper that draws the room in, a pause that settles the message, a lift in pitch that sparks energy—these choices captivate an audience and communicate confidence, presence, and intention.

How To Do It Well

The hard truth? Effective modulation can't be forced or just rehearsed. While technical practice teaches you the basics, true vocal variety comes from a deeper, more connected approach. When I work with my clients on vocal variety, I distill it into two essential parts: 1) using an open and free voice; and 2) having a deep connection to purpose—your “why.” Think of it this way: An open voice gives you the instrument; purpose gives you the music to play.

A whisper that draws the room in, a pause that settles the message, a lift in pitch that sparks energy—these choices captivate an audience.

When the voice feels closed or restricted, it simply can't express your full range. Opening and freeing your vocal instrument lays the physical groundwork. (It's about returning our voice to its natural, effortless state—think of a baby!) But without the emotional fuel of a clear purpose (Why you? Why now? Why this message?), that sense of expression can feel empty or forced. Purpose provides the meaning and authenticity that bring modulation to life.

When you release that tension in your voice and reconnect to your purpose, that's when an audience doesn't just hear you—they feel you.

I've created a routine to help you practice the vocal elements that will connect you authentically with an audience.

But first, an expert tip: Mindset matters. Some people learn that expressing emotion isn't “safe,” which can cause either monotone delivery or, at the other extreme, overdoing it. If this sounds like you, it's crucial to approach your practice objectively and without judgment. You are safe to take risks.

Exercises for Vocal Variety

There's a time to practice technique (vocal variety) and a time to let it flow naturally. The five-step practice routine that I describe later will cover both. Here are some exercises to use during the technique section of the five-step routine.

Pitch

What it does: shows excitement, questions, seriousness, or finality.

Try this:

- Staircase Drill: Say a sentence while gently lifting your pitch upward (make your voice go higher). On the next sentence, start from where you ended and step your pitch downward.
- Highlight the Key Word: Choose the most important word in your sentence and lift it slightly in pitch, or drop it a bit, to signal weight.

Pace/Rate

What it does: controls energy, suspense, clarity, and emotional impact.

Try this:

- Fast → Slow Contrast: Speak an energetic line quickly, then follow it with a slowed, reflective line.
- Strategic Pauses: Insert a 1-to-2-second pause after key moments to create emphasis and let meaning land.

Volume

What it does: signals urgency, intimacy, authority, and emotional color.

Try this:

- Soft → Loud → Soft Drill: Begin a sentence moderately soft, increase volume on the key word or idea, then return to softness.
- Punch the Word: Choose one important word in each sentence to deliver slightly louder for emphasis.

Tone Quality

What it does: adds emotional color (warmth, authority, curiosity, playfulness).

Try this:

- Emotional Coloring: Read the same line three different ways—warm, serious, playful—to expand your options.
- Intention Switch: Say a sentence while holding a clear intention (e.g., reassure, challenge, inspire). Switch intentions and repeat.

Putting It All Together

This five-step vocal practice will help you master vocal variety. You'll notice the technical exercises (i.e., where you purposefully practice vocal variety) are intentionally placed later in the sequence. First, warm up your instrument (and do a quick mental/emotional/physical check-in). Reconnect to your purpose. Notice where your voice feels stuck and apply the appropriate technique.

The 5-Step Practice Routine

1. Warm Up and Connect to Your Purpose

- Check in (assess your mind, body, and emotions) to center yourself.
- Connect to your purpose.
Release tension with micro-practices. Breathe. Do light stretches—head, neck, and shoulder rolls—then warm up your voice with hums, lip trills, and sweeping siren sounds.

2. Delivery

Run through your speech as if talking to a friend over coffee. Don't try to correct things, just *be*. Let it flow. Record it.

3. Self-Review

Listen back to your speech. Note what works and what needs refinement.

4. Technique

This is your intentional practice. Choose one or two items from your self-review findings and observations and use targeted exercises (e.g., mini-sirens, tone drills) to address them.

Repeat steps 2 through 4 until you feel a natural improvement. Move on to Step 5.

5. Cooldown and Notes

Cool down by repeating the gentle warm-up exercises. Capture any notes you have for your next session.

And, lastly, there's your mantra: *Practice over perfection.*

Jillian Mitchell is a vocal coach, recording artist, podcast host, and all-around voice advocate. She is the founder of Voxsana, an online platform dedicated to voice empowerment. Jillian resides in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, with her husband and two children.



5 QUESTIONS WITH...

Carole Murphy, DTM, and Tom Jones, DTM

Behind the scenes with the 2026 convention co-chairs.

More about Carole

Hometown:

Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada

Number of years in Toastmasters:

≧ 31 ≦

Profession:

Event Coordinator

Hobbies:

Golf and Toastmasters

More about Tom

Hometown:

Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Number of years in Toastmasters:

≧ 21 ≦

Profession:

Management Consultant and Entrepreneur

Hobbies:

Chess and Prompt Engineering

This month we're talking to Carole Murphy, DTM, and Tom Jones, DTM, the 2026 International Convention co-chairs. Carole and Tom, a Past International Director, are working together with the World Headquarters (WHQ) staff to prepare for the convention in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Here are their insights into their experience as convention co-hosts.

What do you do in your role as the co-chairs of the convention, and what has been your favorite experience so far?

Our roles are to serve as the main point of contact between the [WHQ] Meeting Planning Team and the committee chairs and to aid in enhancing the convention experience. So far, our favorite experience has been the opportunity to work with the World Headquarters staff and observe their extremely professional approach to planning every detail of the convention.

What is it like working together?

We play off each other's strong points. We have different strengths, respect each other, and agreed early that we would make all decisions together, ensuring that we put our members' needs first.

What does the theme "Wide-Open Communication" mean to you?

"Wide-Open Communication" is an outstanding theme for this year's convention because we bring together cultures from around the world, and we celebrate our shared gift of humanity and communication devoid of politics and religion, focusing only on our commonality.

What are you most excited about for this year's convention?

First, it is happening in our hometown, where we have the opportunity to showcase our beautiful city and our local Toastmasters in District 21. We are also excited for the World Championship of Public Speaking and the Marketplace—where you can shop at the convention store, meet speakers, and talk to sponsors.

What advice would you give to someone attending the International Convention?

Attend with an open mind and with a burning desire to learn, have fun, and to explore beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada!

Struggling to fill roles?

Show your members what's **in it for them!**





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