



DEAR HIGHLY SENSITIVE PEOPLE WHO ARE FINDING THAT THEY NEED TO SPEAK OUT

Are all the “should be doings” to establish your personal brand, your online presence, and social media getting overwhelming, even defeating the object of having your own business in the first place? And now, in addition, you have to jump into public speaking to promote your ideas, but it’s just not your comfort zone?

Don’t panic. With a few key strategies you can lean in and actually enjoy it. You don’t have to suddenly develop the thick skin of a rhino: *you can adapt*.

Most importantly, know that you don’t need to feel completely at ease to deliver a super powerful speech.

Some of my friends and clients recently asked me to put together a cheat sheet for speakers who find it hard to be in the spotlight. I am a highly sensitive person myself and yet have been drawn to broadcasting and voice acting careers over the years, so I have had to figure out how to jump through some excruciating loops. I am also a Transformational Coach, and have been studying consciousness, and practicing healing modalities for over two decades. I now specialize in coaching speakers from the inside out, and have gleaned some insights that I want to share with you.

There are many conflicting versions of introversion and extroversion, whether you consider yourself a textbook introvert, or an outgoing introvert, a contemplative extrovert, or a [highly sensitive person](#). If you are a deep thinker, a deep processor, thin-skinned, sensitive to stimuli, emotionally reactive, solitude-seeking—the chances are that public speaking is intimidating. It is for virtually everyone.

Know that taking on the challenge of a public presentation will be a transformational journey. Accept the challenge of embodying yourself more deeply, and shifting into deeper levels of discernment and mindfulness. Use the hurdles that arise as a catapult to freedom and expansion.

Your voice matters. In the words of MLK, "Who are you not to shine?"

What if your sensitivity is your greatest gift? *It is. And it's ok to reveal it. Rather like casting light into a crystal cave.*

Artists, Intuitives, Introverts: Stop using your intuition and imagination against yourself. Stop imagining all the hideous ways that you could be shamed and judged, and instead realize that every voice counts and must be heard, including yours.

♥ *What if you are already wearing the sparkly red shoes?*



SO, MY HIGHLY SENSITIVE SPEAKERS-TO-BE, HERE ARE A FEW CRUCIAL POINTS TO ZOOM IN ON FOR WHEN IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE STAGE:

1. What is it that makes your heart *sing*? Get clear.

What **MUST** you say? Why do you care? What's your your *raison d'être*? What are you absolutely convinced of? If you are not convinced, don't say it at all.

Once you have clarity, 99.9% of your work is done, because you will be naturally, passionately engaged.

When you are engaged fully, it takes the onus off you.

What if you are not giving a TED Talk or launching your dream, but are just having to present something for your horrible boss? Find something to believe in and weave it in. You can do it, you can find a way. This will be your North Star.

2. Once you have established what you **ABSOLUTELY MUST convey, shape your story.**

Can you sum up your guiding principle in a couple of sentences? Create your elevator speech. Summarize what your talk is about into one potent statement.

Your purpose and conviction will be the backbone of your presentation. The stories, data, facts all serve this purpose.

Find the shape of the story. A good place to start is to think of it as a small play with three acts.

Stories connect us; if we connect with the story, our brains start to mirror the brain of the storyteller. Stories open the gateway to emotion and empathy which is the most powerful persuasive device of all.

Make it personal, so that the audience understands why *you* specifically are telling them this. This will connect your audience to the message.

3. Dealing with the Fear

Question 1. Who's talking?

When the voices in your head start telling you that the audience is hostile, that you will be judged horribly, that you would literally rather die than be so exposed, ask yourself, Whose voice exactly am I listening to? Am I in present time?

If it does not make you feel energetic and joyous, uplifted and excited, one thing we know for sure is that it is *not* the voice of God. No doubt you are listening to a voice from your childhood. Once you realize it, you can dismiss it.

If the voice keeps heckling you, take your inner child who is trembling by the hand, and with your adult capable self, stay connected. By that I mean: Keep your kind, loving attention with that part of you. There is no need to send a child out onto the frontlines. Visualizing holding your child self by the hand is very useful. It will immediately switch your perspective. It is impossible to underestimate how powerful doing this is.

When you differentiate yourself from the part of you that is a child, the You who makes this discernment is the Observer, the Big You, the New Hero of our Journey – *my favorite topic*.

Question 2. What are you afraid that the audience is thinking?

Don't make up stories about what other people are thinking about you. You don't know.

Question 3. How do you deal with your shaking hands and cold sweats?

Adrenaline is useful. Once you have established who in your head is talking and taken the reins, remind yourself that the adrenaline will convert into not only excitement, but also being exciting. Adrenaline can go a long way to making words sparkle and shimmer, and brings in unexpected dramatic emphasis that can't be rehearsed.



The great British actress Dame Judy Dench remarked in her seventies that she had never ever performed on stage without suddenly feeling, five minutes before the show, every single time, that she should never have tried to be an actress, that she was going to be sick, pass out, or would rather be dead.

In other words, leaping off the cliff into the unknown is part of the course if you want to fly. Make a decision. Again, you don't need to be completely comfortable to be effective.

4. Most highly sensitive people and introverts prefer a one-on-one conversation to talking to a room full of people at once.

Make the audience your friend, and engage as if you are having a one-on-one conversation with a friend. To do this, as you look out into the crowd, connect with one set of eyes and then another, and so on. For many people it is useful at the beginning to connect one face with the next with an imaginary colored thread,

and to go around the room connecting person to person with that thread. It doesn't have to be for too long, just do whatever feels comfortable, but the contact must be there. Keep the connection human to human. You will not be thinking about yourself if you are fully engaged, and self-consciousness will dwindle.

5. A way to check if the audience is engaged and to further engage them is to ask questions.

Ask for a show of hands or head nods to answer: "Raise your hand if you have ever..." or "Are you with me? Are we on the same page?"

6. How do we balance our stance, in terms of approachability and authority?



Susan Fiske's interesting work on stereotypes and Amy Cuddy's work in leadership at Harvard have identified warmth and competence as the two fundamentals which people use to describe others. This means that to be heard to full capacity and even to be admired by others, we must be perceived as both warm and competent, firing on both these cylinders. (A classic example of someone who radiates both is Barack Obama. By comparison, Hilary Clinton comes across much colder when speaking in public, although she is apparently warmer behind the scenes).

An HSP's empathic countenance can sometimes look somewhat acquiescent as they listen and absorb and digest multiple streams of information. They can sometimes appear a little lost and dreamy rather than precise. If this is you,

assuming some of the more authoritative stances can be very helpful when it comes to presenting with simplicity and clarity.

For greater authority, take up more space, stay still, keep your shoulders and head level, keep the volume up and consistent. But watch out for over-emphatic gestures, locked facial expressions, and punching words.

If, on the other hand, you are an introvert who has been spending a lot of time alone or in listening mode, you may not be exuding much warmth. If this is the case, to become more approachable, employ greater fluidity with your body language and facial expressions, and try to use more vocal range. But watch out for too much smiling, head bobbing, weak posture and low volumes. Excessive approachability undermines your authority.

7. Avoid distraction.

Whatever you do, maintain eye contact, and don't fidget, tap, or jingle coins in your pocket. It's distracting and detracts from your message. Try to eliminate unnecessary filler words such as "um," "like," "oh." Keep it clean.

If someone is rustling the chip packet or dabbling with their cell phone in the audience, don't let it distract you. Try to feel friendly not furious. Smile and address that part of the room more directly. Lean in.

8. Have a good look at your strategies of disconnection in order to find blind spots.

In a stressful situation do you tend towards pleading behavior, dissociation, or aggression? These strategies are often going to show up in your body language. For example, people who dissociate often tend to ramble. If you notice yourself rambling, stop, take a breath, regroup and continue more slowly. Aggression can show up as talking *at* rather than engaging, as shouting and punching words. If

you have a pleading pattern, your voice may rise up into a high whine with lots of upward inflection, without your realizing it. It can be hard to recognize these patterns when you are on your own: ask trusted friends for feedback if you are not working with a coach.

9. Silence is absolutely golden.

Do not be afraid of silence as you enter the room and don't be scared to pause. If you stumble or forget what you are saying—pause—until you have collected yourself. Do not apologize if you make a mistake, just move on.

Experiment with walking onto the stage and sweeping the room with your eyes. Take your time. Connect—First. With yourself and with the audience. OCCUPY the Space so that you are comfortable in the spotlight. Breathe and ground.

I like the metaphor of becoming a tree on the stage, with roots digging deep down into the earth and branches that spread outwards and upwards. Stand Tall.



I remember a conversation I had with a girl many years ago on a boat in Indonesia that was going to the Gillie Islands. She was a stripper and had won some sort of National Stripping prize in Australia. She said, “Look at me, I’m far from a top beauty but I have a secret: Before I take off one single piece of clothing, I know I have the whole room in my hand because I’ve made eye contact with every single person before I begin.” She had a powerful presence. I have never forgotten her.

10. Practice, Practice, Practice your presentation.

Practice skydiving.

Practice a small leap every day.

Perhaps it's just singing *Happy Birthday* or talking at the school parent teacher meeting.

Practice something anticipated, rather than something spontaneous. It's the anticipation that's frightening, not the actuality, and you need to get used to getting over the anticipation.



So, all in all, what's going to get you out there is a purposeful, passionate, pre-rehearsed, story-laden talk, some demon-confrontation, and a decision to get personal.

The great thing about taking the stage is that it is a definitive action. So it is *you* who is in command of your stimulation levels. This can be a welcome surprise for HSP 's who can find being in the audience at a large event overwhelming.

Cultivating meditation and mindfulness is obviously super helpful for presence. I also use hypnosis and breathwork with my clients if we are encountering a particularly stubborn barrier. One-on-one sessions are ideal for developing a personalized strategy, but workshops specifically for HSP's and Introverts can also be very effective.

I love to coax a performance out of someone and I have a good feel for blindspots. But most of all I love the deep dive that one-on-one work allows.

Speaking our truth out loud is ultimately just another way to access the shift in paradigm that I believe we are all here to undertake. It requires that we really ground into the Observer, have a good look at our fears, take care of the wounded child (which tends to dominate the world stage), and explore our capabilities, our

edges, our paradoxes and the precipices which our extroverted modern day insists that we traverse. Then we leap off the cliff into the unknown, and take the risk of being seen, which, particularly for the sensitive and introverted, can be an excruciating yet extraordinarily fulfilling endeavor.

The Earth and its gravity is here to support you dear Lovely Sensitive People –

Namaste!

With Love from Justine

♥ If you are curious about the current definition of Highly Sensitive people, and want to find out more, [Click Here](#). Take the [test](#) to find out if you are a Highly Sensitive Person.

♥ Use the links at the bottom of this page if you would like to work with me.