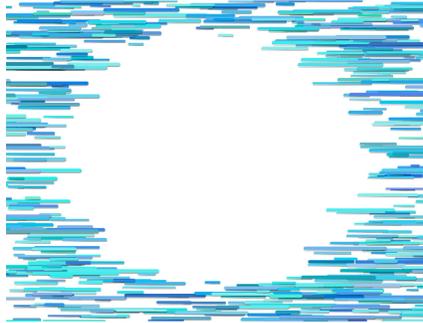


Set the Optimal Tone for a Powerful Presentation

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Good news! The elements of Tone needed to successfully present your ideas in high-stakes situations can be learned and improved through practice and feedback over time. It is important to signal optimal levels of authentic warmth and power if you're going to be successful influencing new attitudes, knowledge and action by your audience.

The ones that make the most impact on your effectiveness include:

- **Compelling Voice** (vocal tone, volume, pace and pitch) - Ensure that your voice sounds both warm and confident and makes listening easy. Deep breathing from your diaphragm will help you project with a strong and credible voice. Allow your natural energy to provide animation and variety as you speak. If you tend to be soft-spoken, ask a person in the back to give you a signal to let you know whether your volume is okay. Relax your pace to avoid racing and vary the length of your sentences. Match your tone of voice to the tone of your message. If you say that you're excited about something, be sure to sound excited.
 - To help you improve the sound of your voice, record yourself often while speaking and replay to assess your effectiveness. Then adjust and re-record.
- **Powerful Pauses** -To increase the clarity and power of your words, add brief pauses, which serve as the verbal commas and periods in spoken language. Another important benefit to frequent pauses is that they will automatically reduce your use of filler words like "um" and "ah". Actively insert and listen for your brief silent breaks after each phrase you speak. By inserting more pauses into your communication, you will become more concise and sound more confident and credible.
 - Feedback is critical to improving your use of pausing. Offer to pay family members a dollar every time they hear you use one of your favorite filler words. Put "Pause" sticky notes on your phone, on your notebook and in your workspace to remind yourself to pause

within every sentence. Be intentional about inserting silent commas and periods in your speech. Record yourself speaking and replay, listening for frequent pauses. Re-record and listen again.

- **Eyes that Connect** - look at your listeners - **one person at a time**. Give each person 1-2 phrases before moving to someone else. Be sure to connect in a random pattern with individuals throughout the audience to help everyone feel included in the communication. Notice what signals they are sending and adjust accordingly. If you see confused faces, stop and check in.
 - To help you improve this element of tone, practice it in every social situation. Draw two eyes on your note pad to remind yourself of the importance of this behavior. Make a point during small meetings to connect with each person in the room during your communication. In seated meetings, be sure to look at the people on your side of the table. They are often excluded.
- **Engaged Body Language** (facial expression, posture, gestures, and movement) - Ensure that your body language communicates both confidence and receptivity and is consistent with the message you are communicating. If you're expressing enthusiasm in your message, your body language needs to be consistent with that point of view. If you are making a standing presentation, stand strong, yet relaxed, with knees slightly bent, weight forward on the balls of your feet. Keep your arms relaxed at your sides when you're not gesturing. If you're in a seated position for your presentation, lean in slightly with an open body, choose good posture and rest your arms on the table where you can gesture naturally. In both cases, use a variety of gestures to help convey your ideas and emotion. Watch any tendency to clasp your hands together, coddle your slide advancer and/or keep elbows bent at your side. These nervous habits restrict your ability to gesture naturally.
 - In a standing presentation, you will want to take advantage of strategic movement to help keep your presentation energized and visually interesting. Move with purpose as follows: First, look at someone who is seated in the direction you want to move toward. Then, while maintaining your gaze with that person, walk at a normal pace to a new spot. Avoid shuffling back and forth or making small, nervous movements. Move with purpose, then anchor, and remain in that new spot for at least several minutes before moving again.

- Choose a **Collaborative** tone. How are you going to engage others in your communication? That might include asking questions of them, requesting relevant examples or stories, or having them comment on the challenges and opportunities they see in what you are proposing. It may simply involve reflecting their realities and showing them that you understand their worlds. Invite their questions and comments and convey receptivity to what they say.
- Be **Composed**. Stepping back when someone asks a question, crossing your arms, or reacting with a stern expression or vocal tone will discredit you and make others feel uncomfortable. Keep your body language open, step slightly toward the audience and remain calm. Be sure to include everyone in your response. Look first at the questioner, and then move on to provide eye communication to others in the room as you respond - one person at a time. Be aware of your hot buttons and remember the importance of communicating calm under pressure. When in doubt, pause and breathe. Then, choose a thoughtful response. Spend time in your preparation anticipating possible questions and challenges and identify your preferred responses.
 - If the tension rises in the room, and there isn't time to fully respond to a challenging question or comment, acknowledge the situation. Mention that this is clearly an important topic that needs further discussion, and suggest that the item be addressed in a separate meeting. Always thank listeners for providing input, both in support, and contrary to your point of view. Do conclude your presentation with a restatement of your point of view and why you feel that way, along with your request for action and benefits to listeners for taking said action.
- Convey **Confidence**. Choose to be unrushed and unflappable. Send signals that you are both warm and powerful. Take an informed stand on the topic, yet remain flexible. Decide that you are among equals, regardless of who's in the room. Know your presentation content and spend adequate time rehearsing your presentation to help you feel more at ease.

Deliberate practice of a presentation makes all the difference. To know what's working and what to change, invite a colleague to sit in on your rehearsal. Ask that person to take brief videos on your cell phone as you practice. Watch those videos and ask your colleague to describe what you are doing well from this list, and which of the elements listed they recommend you work on for this presentation. Choose to improve in just 1 area at a time.

