



The Speech Clinic®



Speaking Tips # 28 060908

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"We, who cannot speak"

In Sweden we have the chorus "We, who cannot sing". This is a singing group where anyone is welcome. However, it has become so good over the years, that it doesn't live down to its name any longer. How come? Well, simply because the members have felt connected in inferior singing and therefore have enthusiastically practiced to such an extent, that they have become professionals.

Imagine if something similar existed for us who cannot speak! Imagine that you could go to a club where you knew that everybody was in the same boat and everybody had the same interest, namely to overcome horrors, deliver speeches and presentations and practice leadership. A place where you could fail and still get applause, valuable advice and inspiring motivation! Imagine that such clubs already did exist and that you didn't know about them! Imagine that you had missed out on this possibility over the years.

Unless you are already a member, you have certainly missed out on something truly self developing. Already in small Goteborg there are five speech clubs, four of which are English speaking and one is Swedish speaking. These clubs have different names but they all belong to an international organization named Toastmasters International. There are about 10 000 such non-profit clubs in over 80 countries. In addition to Goteborg, in Scandinavia there are clubs in Stockholm, Linkoping, Boras, Malmo, Oslo and Copenhagen. You can find them at www.toastmasters.se and if you wish to see the whole world check www.toastmasters.org .

The clubs are open for membership to all, and I really mean ALL! The word Toastmasters is unfortunately frequently misunderstood to be a kind of pro-organization for mastering party toasts. But the name is actually just a relic from earlier times and has become a trade mark. The main objective of these non-profit clubs is to improve self confidence through practical training in presentation techniques, listening skills and leadership. Those who have benefited the most from membership are the "we, who cannot speak" people. Those who are on the verge of a collapse when having to speak in public. Members deliver speeches and work with mutual evaluations and gradually turn into secure and captivating stage performers. Those members, in turn, support, motivate, inspire and turn new nerve wrecks into strong stage performers. But also professional speakers in the ten-thousand-dollar-per-performance-class, who once started as nerve wrecks in a Toastmaster club, return time after time to their small club environment in order to polish, adjust and improve through honest and constructive evaluations, which are seldom given out in the field.

Dear readers, I know what I am talking about after being a Toastmaster for eight years. Regardless of whether you feel fear or you feel secure, the training in a speech club is vital. Remember that nobody is ever perfect. There are no limits to how much communication can be improved. One thing is certain, without regular training it deteriorates.

Speech Tracker AB, Kronhjortsgatan 8, S-412 68, Göteborg, Sweden, Tel. +46 (0)31 7034520, Mob. +46 (0)708 242888,
info@speechtracker.net, www.speechtracker.net

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