

The Keys To Jim Key's Winning Speech

Speech Transcript:

The movie theatre was quiet. The aroma of overpriced popcorn permeated the air. You settled in for the perfect family outing, and then it happened. The film that you were watching took a sudden emotional turn.

You try to resist it, but you can't help it, and before you know it, your eyes begin to sweat.

You may not care that people see you crying in public, but the last time this happened to me, I was thankful the theatre was dark.

Until my lovely young daughter, who doesn't know it's okay to whisper, pierced the darkness with "are you crying?"

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and gentlemen, and anyone who's ever gotten misty at the movies...never ignore inquisitive children.

The longer you do, the louder they get. In a matter of seconds, my daughter shouted, "why are you crying, daddy!?"

When this happened, the movie that my family and I were watching was *The Rookie*. On the surface it's a movie about the oldest rookie in professional baseball, but on a much deeper level, it's about reclaiming life's missed opportunities.

When the movie ended and I realized what a great teaching opportunity I had, I turned to my 2 sons and I said "Guys, what did you learn from this?"

Imagine how proud I was when my 16-year old said, "I learned that my dad cries at the movies." [CB]

My 12-year old took the question, **and his well-being, a bit more seriously**. He said, “I learned that **it’s never too late to follow your dreams.**” **It’s never too late to follow your dreams.**
[CB]

Why does it sometimes take a child to remind us of that?

It’s because children are uninhibited dreamers. In fact, **last year** I was speaking to an Elementary School Assembly and I asked the question, “If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?”

One little guy said, **“to be the guy that rides on the back of the garbage truck!” Who knew?**

His passion was proof that he knew something that many adults have forgotten. **Dreaming is fun. It’s natural. And it’s necessary.**

Every notable accomplishment in human history began as a dream. **Do you remember how you dreamed as a child?** Back when **we** had this wonderful sense of innocence. **We** could gaze into the future and imagine all sorts of possibilities.

Then **we** turn our focus to adulthood and many of **us** find that by the time **we** actually get here, **we** hit a wall. And **we** stop dreaming because **we** can’t see past next week.

Why? What happened? Somewhere along the way **we** learned a painful truth. **We** learned that failing to achieve **our** dreams hurts. **We** encounter critics who ridicule and crush **our** dreams, and it hurts.

And **we** hear an inner voice that says, “Please, no more. I can’t take being hurt again.” **We** convince **ourselves** that it’s better to just give up those things and do what **we’re** supposed to do, instead of longing for what **we** were meant to do.

Ladies and gentlemen, we were meant to dream.

We were meant to dream. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., one of the greatest dreamers of **our** age, said “The time is always right to do what is right.” And that means that if it was right for **us** to dream as children then it’s just as right for **us** to dream as adults.

The question is, **do we have the courage to dream?**

I am privileged to know a remarkable teenage girl who does. Her name is Nicole, and **you** should know that Nicole **is hearing impaired, she is vision impaired and 3 years ago she survived a stroke.**

That's not fair. If anyone has the right to give up on dreams and just accept reality, she does. But instead, I watched Nicole redefine reality, not according to her physical limitations, but according to the size of her dream.

As part of that, **2 years ago** I watched her stand on a **huge stage in front of almost 3000 people and perform the sweetest song I've never heard.** She sang it through sign language. And I didn't just see it, deep inside I felt it.

Instead of hiding behind justifiable excuses, there she stood, teaching me **it's never too late to follow your dreams. [CB]**

Ladies and gentlemen, what do you dream?

Or is the better question, **what did you dream and why did you stop?**

If **you've** ever let a dream slip away, I'm here to tell **you** it's not too late.

If **you** can summon the courage to overcome **your circumstances and your experiences, and your critics, your** dream can live.

Whether **you** dream of making beautiful music or **not get caught crying at the movies. (although no real laughter, it had the feel of humor) [CB]**

If **you** dream of changing the world or **riding on the back of a garbage truck.**

If **you** forget every word I've said today, it would thrill me, if **you** remember this...**dream.**

SPEECH STATS:

Word Count: 822

*For the sign language ending, only the last word “dream” was included in the word count since it was the only one that was audible.

Speech Length: 7:21

Title: Never Too Late

3 words—short and sweet. Rule of Three applied as well.

OTHER NOTES:

Misc. Observations:

- **Facial Expressions/Reactions:** Excellent example of how to use nonverbal communication. Jim's reactions to his son and daughter were priceless and both added to audience laughter.
- **Vocal variety:** Well rounded. His character impressions of his daughter and the garbage truck kid were some of, if not the most memorable parts of his speech. He went with loud, high pitched yelling, but they were perfect exaggerations of children. There were times that felt like he was bordering on the side of too theatrical, or too animated, but it worked. Mainly because you can't argue with the payoff (audience response).
- **Short sentences:** He used quite a few punchy sentences that were just a few words. A nice contrast to keep things interesting.
- **Powerful sentences:**
 - "We convince ourselves that it's better to just give up those things and do what we're supposed to do, instead of longing for what we were meant to do."
 - "I watched Nicole redefine reality, not according to her physical limitations, but according to the size of her dream."
- **Gurus and side characters:**
 - **GURUS:** The movie *The Rookie*, 12-year-old son, Garbage Truck kid, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nicole.
 - **Side Characters:** Inquisitive daughter and 16-year-old son. The side characters help to give depth to a story and the speech overall.
 - A Guru is someone or something in the speech that teaches the *speaker* (and ultimately the audience) something meaningful. As a speaker, you don't want to be the wise Guru. You want to be the dolt who learns from the guru(s), and those are the ones that end up teaching the audience as well.

Feedback / Criticisms:

- The idea behind using the young girl's sign-language message was a wonderful *idea*. But I think his speech build-up before that was what carried the speech across the finish line. Like I said, the idea of it was creative and I would have said "go for it!" if asked, but after seeing the result, I don't think it was very powerful. Using the girl's speech and her adversity WAS a success, just not using the sign language as the finale. And particularly interesting is that he basically threw the rest of his speech under the bus and told us to remember only the sign language portion at the end. I remembered everything except that.

COLOR KEY:

- **Humor - x 10**

I included only parts that received genuine laughter from the audience. The extent of laughter varies, though. Interesting to note is that 90% of the humor came before 2:42 of the speech. 2:42 was last humorous line until 6:41 of the speech, and that last line didn't really get laughter, but it was a small *attempt* at humor. So, there was almost exactly 4 minutes that went by in the speech without a single funny line.

- **Foundational Phrase [FP] - x 3**

The Foundational Phrase for this speech: **It's Never Too Late To Follow Your Dreams.**

The total includes only the times he said it in full during the speech.

Jim didn't say it until the 2:11 mark of the speech, and the first time it was said was during in-story dialogue (his 12-year-old son). He only said the full foundational speech 3 times. And apart from his foundational phrases, he used a variation of the word "dream" 22 times throughout the speech. He also said, "not too late" once, his speech was titled "Never Too Late," and the very final sentence of the speech, which was in sign language, was also his foundational phrase. I think he should have said it aloud as he signed it.

- **"You"; "Your"; "We"; "Us"; "Our" - x 52**

I included these words that were directly aimed at the audience, dialogue excluded.

- **"Ladies and Gentlemen" [MF] - x 3**

3 including the official Toastmasters greeting. Now, this may sound inconsequential, but I assure you it's not. The 2014 and 2016 World Champions, Dananjaya Heteriachichi and Darren Tay used the same technique. In fact, they used it even more than Jim did in this speech.

- **Physical Descriptions [PD] - x 6**

Physical descriptions of people and locations. The ones I included were any words that described the setting for where the speaker was *at* in his stories, or where he wanted to take the audience. Physical in this case is what was heard, what was smelled, and what was seen. I also included dialogue between him and his daughter since it was part of setting the scene (in quiet theatre where she was shouting). *I intentionally left out what was *felt* emotionally or metaphorically.

- **Call-backs [CB] - x 6**

Humorous and other. Most of the humorous moments were call-backs to SOMETHING or SOMEONE from the speech journey. Foundational phrases that come after the first

one are essentially [callbacks](#) as well.

- **Rule of Three [R3] - x 5**

In this case, the [rule of three](#) was all inclusive. To set up the opening of the speech, he set the scene using the Rule of Three. The title used it as well.

- **Questions [Q] - x 7**

Questions directly aimed at the audience (rhetorical or not). I did not include questions from in-character dialogue.

- **Time Transitions [TT] - x 3**

I included transitions/transition words that indicated that there was a time change from the speaker's point of view. The first one came in the opening story at the movie theatre. We aren't really given a specific time in years, so we aren't sure when that event happened. But since he gave us the name of the movie (*The Rookie*), we're able to figure it out since the movie came out in 2002—just a year before he won. You might think that piece of trivia is irrelevant, but this is my speech breakdown!

***** Initials were put at end of sentence if multiple elements were in the same sentence.**