

SPEECH BREAKDOWN

3RD PLACE: KEVIN STAMPER

Speech Transcript:

If **you** can hear **my** voice, **would you count to three with me? One, two, three. Isn't that amazing?** I mean, **your** counting abilities are **spectacular**.

But it's amazing to hear so many voices together in one room, **isn't it?**

Madam Contest Master, my **Fellow Toastmasters**, and **Communicators**...

Growing up I had a lot of babysitters, which either means that a lot of people liked to hang out with **me** or that **my parents really didn't**.

But **my** favorite babysitter was named Kelly. And **after years** of **me** teaching Kelly how **to be compassionate**, and **how to be patient**, and **how to serve others**, she decided to venture into a new career path that was less challenging, and **she became a nun**.

And **the day came** where Mother Teresa was coming to Kelly's convent to name the incoming nuns. **[VV]**

And so all the new nuns came out and stood in single file line, one after the other, desperately waiting to hear what Mother Teresa would say to them.

And Mother Teresa went straight down the line naming each and every nun, until she got to Kelly. **[VV]** And she asked Kelly, "what would you like your name to be?"

And Kelly said, "I don't know, you're Mother Teresa, why don't you choose for me?" And Mother Teresa said, "Well, what was your mother's name?" And Kelly replied, "Nancy."

Now apparently Mother Teresa was a little bit **hard of hearing** at this point of her life, and she replied, "**Oh Sister Mercy, that's a beautiful name**" and continued down the line. **[VV]**

And so Kelly ran to her Mother Nun and said, “I need to talk to you because I think I just got named incorrectly. See, my mother’s name is Nancy, but Mother Teresa named me Sister Mercy.”

And Mother Superior said to her, “Well did you tell her this?” And she said, “Mother Superior, are you asking **if I tried to correct Mother Teresa?**” [VV]

And the Mother Nun said, “**Sister Mercy**, it’s not her responsibility to hear you, it’s your responsibility to **Speak Up.**” [VV]

See, **Fellow Toastmasters** I believe every single one of **us** has a responsibility not just to learn to speak, but to learn to **Speak Up**. In **our homes**, in **our jobs**, in **our communities**. [VV]

The fact that **we** can speak at all is this physiological phenomenon. When **your** brain tells **your** body that it’s ready to speak, these two tiny tissues, about the **size of your thumbnails**, come together, and **they’re gooie**, and they’re **gelatinous**, but as air passes through them, they begin to **vibrate**.

And they create a **buzz**. And that buzz is carried up through **your** throat and it **bounces off the hard and the soft surfaces** of **your** mouth and face. And what comes out, what is created, is **your unique voice**. [VV]

It’s a voice that cannot be **automated**, it cannot be **duplicated**, there is no algorithm in the world that can **recreate your** unique voice. [VV]

But the question is, **will you use it?** [VV]

7 years ago, **my** wife and **I** had a child, and she taught **me compassion, and patience, and how to serve**. [CB][VV]

But there was one lesson that **I** had yet to teach her. See, **my** daughter Jane, she was **happy**, and she was **healthy**, and she could **hear**, but **she was silent**. And the silence became deafening. [VV]

So, **around her third birthday**, we took her, we took her to a therapist. Now **I** know all of **you** with teenagers right now are thinking, “**Why would you do that?** Just **let her stay silent.**” [VV]

And the therapist asked **me**, “Is there anything you do that gets her to make noise?” And **I** said, “Well, I guess there is one thing.”

So, I went to Jane and I picked her up and I looked her in the eyes, and I said, “One, two, THREE” and I threw her in the air and I caught her. [VV]

And she began to laugh. She began to giggle. The therapist said, “Do that again.” And so I took her again and I said, “One two, THREE.” And she began to babble. And she began to murmur. [VV]

And the therapist said, “Do that as often as you possibly can.” So, every day I would come home from work and go right to Jane, I’d go, “One, two, THREE. One, two, THREE. One. two, THREE.” [VV]

Until my back hurt. My shoulders were sore. Over and over again, “One, two, check for the ceiling fan, THREE.” [VV]

And one night it was just Jane and I in the house. And I put her in her high chair to eat dinner, as I washed the dishes next to her. And the house was silent, which was normal for us. [CB][VV]

And suddenly I heard this sound that I’d never heard before. And this little tiny voice said, “Uh, ooh, EEE.” [R3][PD][VV]

And I panned the room not sure where it was coming from, and I heard “Uh, ooh, EEE.” [PD][VV]

And my eyes locked with Jane’s. And I could see her head cocked, and her dimples showing, she was learning that she had a voice. [VV] And I ran to her and I picked her up and I said, “Say it with me Jane, One, uh, Two, ooh, THREE.” [VV]

And since that night I have not been able to shut her up. But I haven’t wanted to because that night I heard a voice that I’d been dying to hear. And I believe that there is a world around you that is desperately waiting to hear your unique voice. [VV]

See, I’m not here tonight because I believe I have something important to say, I’m here because I believe you have something important to say. [VV]

That there are friendships waiting to be formed. There is forgiveness waiting to be given. There are families waiting to be strengthened because you have something to say. And you’ve been given a voice, but it’s your responsibility to Speak Up. [VV]

So, let’s do it together. One, Two, Three. [CB][VV] Madam Contest Master.

SPEECH STATS:

Word Count: 1001

Speech Length: 7:21

Title: Speak Up

Click [here](#) to watch the speech

COLOR KEY

- **Humor [H] - x 16**

This includes only parts that received genuine laughter from the audience. Laughter varies in intensity.

This speech averaged **2.17 LPMs** (Laughs Per Minute) and **62.6 WPL** (Words Per Laugh).

On the line “*Oh Sister Mercy, that’s a beautiful name.*” it got minimal laughter, less than I think it deserved. If you look at his facial expression just after that line ([see here](#)), it looks like he was expecting more laughs. Check it out for yourself (poor guy). My take is that he telegraphed that something amusing was coming by how led up to it—he was chuckling and talking at the same time—and that took away the “haha” surprise. It was charming, but possibly detrimental to the laugh meter.

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

Foundational Phrase for this speech: “**Speak Up**”

It was used three times during the speech, and it was also the title of the speech. If we include the title, it would be a total of four times. Well, technically five since the Contest Chair said it twice when introducing the speaker. This helps instill the message into the audience’s memory so they remember it long after the speech is over.

- **“You”; “Your”; “We”; “Us”; “Our” - x 25**

I included these words that were directly aimed at the audience, dialogue excluded (character and internal).

- **“Ladies and Gentlemen” or “My Friends” [MF] - x 3**

He used “*Fellow Toastmasters*” and “*Communicators*” to address the audience.

- **Physical Descriptions or VAKS [PD] - x 12**

Descriptive physical characteristics of people and locations. The ones I included were any overt words that described the setting for where the speaker was at during the story, where the speaker wanted to take the audience, or descriptions of people in the scene.

Physical in this case is what was heard, smelled, and what was seen. It also means that “*We were at my house*” is not enough—this requires specifics that are intended to paint a picture in the minds of the audience. I intentionally left out what was felt emotionally or metaphorically.

His description for how the voice is generated is an example of how to take a complex process and make it easier for the audience to imagine.

- **Callbacks [CB] - x 6**

Humorous and other. These are things that purposefully refer to something/someone from earlier in the speech. Foundational phrases after the first one are essentially [callbacks](#) as well—I included them in the total. If we exclude the Foundational Phrases, there were three callbacks.

Here’s an example from the speech: “...*she taught me compassion, and patience, and how to serve.*” Originally brought up about him and his babysitter, but he calls back to it when talking about his daughter, Jane.

The “*One, Two, Three’s*” when throwing his daughter into the air were not counted as callbacks since they happened in the same story and because they were part of the story as it was being told.

- **Rule of Three [R3] - x 14**

The [rule of three](#) is all inclusive. Whether used for misdirection to make a joke, or for general use.

He counted to three several times throughout this speech and these were included in this total. He could have counted to two, or four, or even five, right?

- **Questions [Q] - x 4**

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

The original intent of the Questions category was to include only thoughtful questions—things that made the audience reflect on their lives. However, even benign questions aimed at the audience can help build a connection to the speaker, just as addressing the audience as “My Friends” or “Ladies and Gentlemen” does.

There was really only one question in this speech that was intended to get the audience to reflect: “...*will you use it?*”

- **Time Transitions [TT] - x 6**

Transition words that indicated that there was a time change from the speaker's point of view. The idea is to show progression from one point in the speaker's life to another. So, if there are multiple time transitions within the same story, they may or may not be counted. These can help prepare the audience for a change in the story in order to prevent confusion. Something like "*So every day I started...*" doesn't give the feel that the time period has dramatically changed or moved the speaker forward in time.

- **"I" or "Me" or "My" or "Myself" - x 49**

In-story character dialogue excluded. It's not that a speaker shouldn't use these words (near impossible) but this serves as a meaningful statistic to compare with the amount of times the speaker says "you" or audience focused words.

This stat also seems to be an indicator of the type of content in the speech. In general, telling more personal stories means there will be more "I/me" focused words since the speaker is telling us what happened to him/her. Talking *to* the audience will be more "you/your" focused. This could mean abstract ideas, "imagine this..." hypotheticals, concepts like how Kevin described how the voice works, etc. Those will naturally use more "you/your" words.

- **Stories [ST] - x 2**

This includes all stories told throughout the entire speech. Some stories may not be entirely true, but the idea is that the speaker is telling the audience a story that happened, either in their life or somebody else's. This does not include metaphorical stories, intentionally exaggerated tales or things like "Imagine you are..."

In this speech there were two foundational stories. The story about the babysitter Kelly and Mother Theresa, and the story about his daughter Jane.

- **Vocal Variety [VV]**

Vocal Variety is a combination of vocal elements. Short of measuring the speaker's voice in decibels, this section will make note of the most apparent changes in the speaker's voice throughout the speech. Varying the voice means that the speaker may get louder, softer, use a higher pitch, lower pitch, use inflection, talk faster, speak with rhythm, slow down to a crawl and even pause.

**Note that the total amount of changes which make up Vocal Variety are not counted like the rest of the Color Key sections. Instead, this section is intended only to highlight the most salient changes in the voice and to give you successful examples of Vocal Variety.

I condensed them into categories below and provided some examples for each:

Raise Voice [Louder, Higher Pitch, Inflection]

- "*Oh, Sister Mercy, that's a beautiful name!*"

- “Are you asking if I tried to CORRECT MOTHER TERESA?”
- “...there is no algorithm in the world that can recreate your unique voice.”
- “One, two, THREE”
- “There are families waiting to be strengthened because you have something to say.”

Lower Voice [Quieter, Lower Pitch, Softer, Whisper]

- “...it’s your responsibility to speak up.”
- “But the question is, will you use it?”
- “...but she was silent. And the silence became deafening.”
- “And the house was silent, which was normal for us.”

Speed Up [Speak Fast, Quick Burst, Rhythmic]

- “I would come home from work and go right to Jane, I’d go, “One, two, THREE. One, two, THREE. One. two, THREE.”
- “See, I’m not here tonight because I believe I have something important to say, I’m here because I believe you have something important to say.”

Slow Down [Talk Slow, Slower Rhythm, Pause]

- “And Mother Teresa went straight down the line naming each and every nun...”
- “...I believe every single one of us has a responsibility to not just to learn to speak, but to learn to Speak Up. In our homes, in our jobs, in our communities.”
- “And what comes out, what is created, is your unique voice.”
- “And suddenly I heard this sound that I’d never heard before. And this little tiny voice said, “Uh, ooh, EEE.”

He varied his voice in different ways and I’d be hard-pressed to find any spot that bored my ears. He was easy to listen to.

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

Observations:

- **Technical Showmanship:** He used the politician’s handshake when shaking the [hand](#) of the contest chair. It’s intended to show warmth and sincerity to the one you’re shaking hands with, but I’d say it’s more of a play to the audience than anything else. The audience sees the handshake on the big screen and thinks “Awe, what a nice fellow! I like him.” Or *something* like that. Don’t just take my word for it, though, the [2003](#), [2005](#), [2013](#), [2014](#), [2016](#) and [2017](#) champions did this as well.

- **Manner of Speaking:** When I first heard the speech, I thought to myself, “He reminds me of a church pastor/evangelical speaker.” Turns out I was right. His LinkedIn lists him as “Lead Pastor” at a church in Florida.
- **Props:** He did not use a prop. Although there is nothing in the [judging criteria](#) that **specifically** calls for the use of props, many previous winners used a prop.

His “*One, Two, THREE*” line, coupled with him pretending to toss his daughter into the air, works in a similar way since he made a distinct visual motion each time he said it. It hit both the Visual and Auditory (high pitched “THREE”) senses as well. Lance Miller, 2005, winner did something similar—check out his breakdown [here](#).

- **Hand Gestures:** The official start of his speech began with a hand gesture instead of a word. His gestures were natural and appropriate. During the nun story, the gestures he used to describe how they stood in a single-file line were perfectly executed.
- **Powerful Sentences:**
 - “...it’s not her responsibility to hear you, it’s your responsibility to Speak Up.”
- **Gurus and Side Characters:**
 - **Gurus:** Mother Superior (also known as Mother Nun) and Jane were the gurus in this speech. Mother Teresa misnaming her could have been considered the Guru, or rather the *Guru moment*, if Mother Superior hadn’t directly taught Kelly the lesson shortly after. In Jane’s story, her finally being able to speak was the Guru moment.
 - **Side Characters:** Kelly the babysitter, Mother Teresa, Wife, and the Therapist. Side characters are part of the stories but don’t directly contribute to a learning moment. This isn’t a problem, just an observation. Side characters help give depth to a story.
 - 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 that’s who end up teaching the audience as well. **Tip:** Self-deprecation can be an important element in allowing the guru to shine.
- **Grammar:** He used the word “And” to begin a lot of sentences. Not that there’s a problem starting sentences with conjunctions, but the real issue is doing things that create noticeable patterns to the listener that distract from the speech’s core message. You want the audience focused on your message, not an overused word. I’d say it was used excessively in this manner. I listed a few other words that weren’t overly used on their own, but when factoring in the overuse of “and,” I felt they were worth mentioning.
 - 34 sentences started with the word “And” (4 were “And so”)
 - 5 sentences started with the word “So”
 - 5 sentences started with the word “But”
 - 4 sentences started with the word “See”
- **Perfection:** Kevin stumbled on one of his words (4:37 in video) on sentence: “*So, around her third birthday, we took her, we took her to a therapist.*” He got 3rd place in a field of about 30,000 speakers worldwide. The margin for error is slim although I have seen a winner make more

noticeable mistakes (if you can even call it a *mistake*).

- **Tying Up Loose Ends:** To give closure to the speech, he began and ended the speech in the same way. In the beginning he counted with the audience one to three; to close he counted with them through two and allowed (tricked?) the audience to say three without him.

Feedback / Criticism:

- **Preaching:** There was a sentence that was on the edge of what is considered “preaching.” This would be an opportune time to make a joke about him being a preacher, but he’s a pastor and I’ll just upset people who know the difference—you get the idea, though.

This line coupled with the tone used when he said it: *“See, Fellow Toastmasters I believe **every single one of us has a responsibility to not just to learn to speak, but to learn to Speak Up.**”*

The part that is bolded sounds an awful lot like he’s telling the audience what they NEED to do. The word “responsibility” could be substituted for “obligation,” and nobody likes obligations or being told what to do. This is why stories and *Gurus* are so important since it’s them who are the teachers. In his defense, at least he used the words “**I believe**” and “**us**” which he probably chose to mitigate the preachiness of that sentence.

- **Character Dialogue:** He called one of the characters two different names: Mother Superior and Mother Nun. Examples: *“And Mother Superior said to her...”* and *“And the Mother Nun said...”* Not the end of the world but creating unnecessary questions in the minds of the audience is ill-advised.

Also, in this same interaction between Kelly and the Mother Nun, the switching between characters was slightly odd to me. It was a mixture of playing the characters in the scene (looking at *and* speaking to the other character), but then he’d pan to the audience in the middle of dialogue.

It was as if the audience had suddenly become the other character. It wouldn’t have been as noticeable if he hadn’t made the effort to create the scene to begin with. First, he ran to Mother Superior to begin the dialogue and then he even shifted his body around to indicate a change between characters.

Compare that to Lance Miller’s receptionist dialogue [here](#), which I thought was perfectly executed. It’s okay to talk to the audience mid-story, but the way to do it is to step out of character in those instances.

Using the same example, look how Lance Miller gave the non-verbal facial expression after the receptionist told him *“Why yes, you have a lovely smile.”* He was no longer *in the story* at that point so interacting with the audience made sense. He did a facial expression in that particular example, but he could have just as easily said something to the audience as well, like *“Can you believe that!?”*

The key is to be consistent. Talking to tall person? Look up. Short person? Look down. The position of the characters is important. The direction of where you look/talk is, too. Our improv instructor used to LOVE when someone had an invisible object in their hand and a second later it'd disappear. Talk about killing the illusion of the scene...

- **The Nun Story:** The following aren't criticisms per se, but this topic deserves some exploration.

The story involving Mother Teresa, although presumably true, I feel that it takes away from the organic charm or the feeling of authenticity that comes with a personal story. A few years ago, I heard a competitive speech that included a story which took place at a civil rights march with MLK Jr. and I remember having the same thoughts. It was as if I couldn't relate to the story because of the "celebrity" status of the person used. The same would go for most historical or contemporary celebrity figures.

You might be thinking, "The story involved someone from the speaker's life, his babysitter Kelly, and it was *her* personal story, so that like totally makes it his own personal story. What do you have to say about that, huh?" Okay, you make a good point, and with it, another question that I think deserves some thought...

Are stories involving only third-parties, whether acquaintances of the speaker or not, as effective as stories that involve the actual speaker? Take two stories that are the same, one story is told first-person, the other third-person, which has more impact? My vote is on the first-person story. I think third-party stories can work depending on the story, but I don't think they're as impactful as personal stories.

- **Structure and Congruency:** I didn't intend on going this far down the rabbit hole, but I might as well cover it while I'm here.

In this speech Kevin counted to three several times, for *two* different reasons. One variation he counted with the audience at the beginning and end of his speech—a total of two times. The other variation was when he would toss his daughter Jane into the air, "one, two, THREE." He did that seven times in the story and three additional times in which his daughter essentially said it (remember "Uh, ooh, EEE"?).

There are questions in my mind about whether it helped make the Foundational Phrase, *Speak Up*, and with it the core message of the speech, more memorable. When I think of the "one, two, three" line, Jane's story and the action of him tossing his daughter into the air is what comes to mind. Counting with the audience at the beginning and the end, does not.

I hate to beat Lance Miller's speech like a dead horse, but his speech had multiple layers throughout that pieced together like a puzzle.

The Ultimate Question / Do you validate? / Receptionist story / Cha-Chink

Those four layers from his speech all logically flow together and I'm able to remember them with ease. And what I mean is, if I remember just one of them, I'm easily able to recall the others, their sequence in the speech, and how they relate to the overall message.

For Kevin's speech these are the primary layers:

Counting with the Audience / Nun story / Speak Up / Jane's story / "One, Two, THREE"

"One, two, three" only connects me to his daughter's story, but the story doesn't automatically make me think about "Speak Up" in the scope of using my voice to be more assertive or sharing something important with it, which means it doesn't conjure up the nun's story, either. In the nun story that's where we first heard about the core message of the speech:

*...And the Mother Nun said, "Sister Mercy, it's not her responsibility to hear you, it's your responsibility to **Speak Up**." See, Fellow Toastmasters **I believe every single one of us has a responsibility to not just to learn to speak, but to learn to Speak Up. In our homes, in our jobs, in our communities...***

I can use mental gymnastics to explain how all his primary layers fit together, it's just that they were a bit clunky and difficult to snap into place.

- **Foundational Phrase Notes:** Some speeches like Lance's (*I know, I know*), one could argue that there are more than one Foundational Phrase. In this speech, "Speak Up" is the only one that makes sense.

It's perfectly fine to have a single Foundational Phrase, recommended in *most cases*, but if there's another phrase that causes confusion, that's when it can become problematic.

When I first went through the speech, I took note of the "*one, two, three*" usage as a possible Foundational Phrase. After analyzing it, though, it doesn't seem to fit based on the ultimate core message of his speech. But the fact that it is such a prominent part of the speech is the issue.

"One, two, three" is memorable, and it's memorable because of how he says it, how he uses the physical motion when he does it, that he says it more times in the speech than any other potential phrase, that it links to his daughter's core story, and even if we include variation of it that he used to open and close his speech (counting with audience), all of that still doesn't link me to the core message about speaking up in the sense of being more assertive in voicing things that are important.

It makes me think of his daughter learning to speak and the voice in general rather than using the voice in a purposeful way, which is my interpretation of the core message.

If a speech has a separate repetitive phrase that differs from the Foundational Phrase, it should align with the both the core message of the speech and therefore the true Foundational Phrase.

It might seem like I'm nitpicking, but it's my genuine interpretation of the speech after having analyzed it.