**Tips on Distilling Your Message**

*“If you can't explain something to a six-year-old, you really don't understand it yourself. “* --Attributed to Richard Feynman

* Know who your audience is. For each audience, you may need to use a different kind of language and approach.
* Avoid jargon and technical terms. If you must use a technical term, explain it (explicitly or by context) before you use it.
* Know what your main point is.
* Answer the “so what” question. Why is this important? What does this mean for the listener? What impact does it/could it have for the public or everyday life?
* Tell a story – what’s surprising, exciting, difficult, upsetting, or mysterious about your subject. Include the features a story usually has: characters, plot, suspense.
* Don’t be afraid to show emotion or to get personal. Emotion is memorable.
* Look for examples, metaphors or analogies that would be familiar to your listeners, and use those to make the transition to less familiar material. Compare what you do to something they know about, either something similar or contrasting.
* At first, aim to be clear and engaging on one or two points. Then, once your listener is interested, you can add layers of complexity and detail. You are aiming to make the listener *want* to know more.
* You can state something simply but say, “It’s really more complicated than this. If you want to know more, I can tell you.’’ This approach worked well for Richard Feynman, the physicist, who was great at explaining science clearly.
* Look at your subject through your listeners’ eyes. What would interest them or relate to something they have experienced?
* Beware “the curse of knowledge.” This is the idea that once you know something, it becomes hard to imagine what the world looks like to someone who doesn’t know it.

*“Have a point -- it makes it so much more interesting for the listener.”*

--Steve Martin’s character in the movie

“Planes, Trains and Automobiles”