



## Practice Servant Leadership: Let Your Audience Know They're Not Alone

with Lisa Lampanelli, Comedian

On the stage, on the page, or even sitting around the table at a meeting, you want to be heard. You want to get your message across. And there's no school for connecting with audiences more powerful or unforgiving than stand-up comedy. Lisa Lampanelli's career has taught her a few basic principles—not tips or tricks, but guiding principles that you can use to connect with any audience, to any purpose. These include practicing servant leadership, choosing stories that fit your audience and light you up, being yourself, and speaking from the heart.

### How to Pick the Right Story *for Your Audience*

- Get to know the **group dynamic** beforehand. Do some research.
- Aim for **impact**. Ask: *Will my story resonate with the audience spiritually? emotionally? rationally?*
- Be mindful of your core audience's **limits**. Ask: *What are their limits in relation to my own?*

### How to Pick the Right Story *from Your Point of View*

- Try to isolate a **piece of wisdom** that you know for sure:
  - Draw from *experiences* or *messages* that have driven you throughout your life.
  - Write down what still brings you *joy*. Think back to your childhood for clues.
  - Reflect on your *sense of purpose* today.
- Choose the story that *lights you up*.

### How to Find Your Voice *in Terms of Style*

- Formal rules of presentation are useful for giving structure to your remarks, but they can't take the place of your own unique voice.
- Practice **attunement**. Listen to yourself and observe how others react to you. Ask: *How do I naturally speak? When do people seem really engaged?* Lean into that delivery when crafting your remarks.

### How to Find Your Voice *in Terms of Material*

- Draw on your **passions**: Make a list of 50 things you *love* and 50 things you *hate*. Strong emotions can become fuel for a great story.
- When you speak from the heart, you invite people in. You let your audience know that you're in the same pursuit together.

Servant leadership is compassion by another name. Your purpose and focus in speaking to any audience should be to benefit them, first. Think about it: even if you're just trying to sell someone a car, your success will depend on their sense

that the car will meet their budgetary, aesthetic, and transportation needs. Start by knowing your audience well, and where your interests and theirs overlap.

“Voice”, that most elusive of qualities, means finding a way to be your authentic, most compelling self in public. Imagine pitching your idea to someone you’ve known and loved your whole life: how would you talk to them?

Finally, your passion and personal connection to your subject is what invites others into your story. Avoid “best practices” when figuring out what to say and how to say it. Focus instead on what lights you up inside—that’s your best bet for getting your listeners to lean in, too.

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## Prepare

*Before you watch the video*

In your work life, what’s one situation in which you need to connect with an audience (of one or more)? How do you typically try to connect?

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## Practice

*After you watch the video*

How would you describe your sense of purpose? What drove you when you were 10-12? What drives you now?

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When you're at your best, what are you like? What's your "voice"?

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What low-stakes situations could help you to practice the kinds of audience connection Lampanelli's talking about?

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