

# Humor Giveth and It Taketh Away

An exercise in humor  
and self confidence

by  
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I was presenting a workshop to a group of Municipal Clerks when a woman in the back of the room began to repeatedly grab the front of her blouse. The audience, however, was so intensely attentive that they did not seem to notice her. Assuming their rapt attention related to the brilliance and relevance of my presentation, I amplified my remarks with large dramatic gestures. It worked, they were totally focused on me. I had what every speaker craves: complete command of the audience. If a pin were to have been dropped, it would have been heard.

Meanwhile, the woman in the back became more and more agitated. She started pulling the front of her blouse in and out. At last I was so distracted by her that I lost my place and looked down at my notes. Only then, I noticed that the entire front of my blouse was unbuttoned—not just that top button that pops now and then, but THE ENTIRE FRONT! I was mortified! The transfixed attention of the audience had nothing to do with the brilliance and relevance of my presentation! (Although it may have had something to do with the brilliance and relevance of my gestures!)

Luckily the Humor Muse stepped in to aid me. I explained to the group, "I'm trying so hard to stay on top of this material that, well, I just got carried away!"

They laughed, I buttoned up, the agitated woman calmed down, and we went on with the program. I'd been saved by the power of humor! It made me appear self-confident and in control even when I was not. Just how self confident it had made me look I was not to learn until two years later.

I was about to give a speech to a group in an entirely different industry when a woman approached me saying: "I heard you when I was a municipal clerk a few years ago and I wondered if you still do that trick

where you open your blouse in the middle of your speech?Ó

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