

Toastmasters Offers Valentine's Day Tips for Speaking From the Heart

Improve your relationships with better communication

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RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif.

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., Feb. 12, 2011 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- The best Valentine's Day gift isn't a box of chocolates, a dozen roses or a candlelit dinner - it's the gift of loving communication. Talking and listening effectively to our loved ones creates emotional rewards much sweeter than any heart-shaped candy.

[Toastmasters International](#), a thriving organization with more than 260,000 members in 113 countries, not only benefits one's career but can help people improve their personal relationships, as well. Dorothy Cottingham can certainly speak to that. She and her husband, Carl, met through Toastmasters and have been members for 30 years, honing their communication and leadership skills week after week in club meetings. That comes in handy when you're negotiating the give-and-take of marriage, she says.

"Carl and I try to incorporate aspects of Toastmasters that tend to be forgotten in a real close personal relationship," says Cottingham, a former member of the Toastmasters Board of Directors.

When giving speeches, making eye contact with audience members is an important quality. When the audience is your wife and you're telling her how much you love her, eye contact is imperative! Listening skills are also crucial in Toastmasters. To offer valuable feedback to other speakers - and benefit when you're the one getting tips - you must make a focused effort to hear what other people say. Toastmaster Elliott Katz found these practices deeply relevant in his role as a parent of two daughters.

"I listened intently to them," he says. "I also asked them questions. It showed I was listening and that I cared. When they saw I was listening, they were more willing to listen to my advice."

The ability to listen and evaluate are also key qualities for a husband and wife. "One thing Carl and I have learned, partly from being married so long and partly from being in Toastmasters, is not to take our arguments real personally," says Cottingham. "When the storm clouds are gone, we can kind of debrief and talk to each other about how we could have handled this situation better than we did."

So come Valentine's Day, ditch the flowers and candy, and instead give some sweet talk to the loved ones in your life.

About Toastmasters

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. The organization currently has more than 260,000 members in over 12,500 clubs in 113 countries. Since its founding in October 1924, the organization has helped more than 4 million men and women give presentations with poise and confidence. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit www.toastmasters.org.

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