

# On This Valentine's Day, Commit to Conquering Shyness With Toastmasters

**RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, Calif., February 7, 2012** - It's the moment when you are finally face-to-face with that special someone. Your heart races, your face flushes and your tongue is glued to your throat. Don't let your shyness get the best of you this Valentine's Day.

"We all experience shyness differently and in varying degrees," says Michael Notaro, International President of [Toastmasters International](#). "When your shyness is extreme, find ways to gradually build your social skills and then practice them regularly to build your confidence."

Toastmasters' self-paced program and accessible network of clubs have helped countless shy people practice social interaction in a safe and supportive environment. Like Toastmasters' once-shy International President Notaro, many of these members end up becoming more confident and competent speakers as a result of participating in the program — many even assume prominent leadership positions in their communities or places of employment.

## **Just in time for Valentine's Day, here are some tips on overcoming shyness:**

"Connect with others who have similar experiences or can relate in some way," says Brittany Wood, an 18-year-old college student from California's San Francisco Bay area, who founded the blog [The Shyness Project](#) to document her battle with debilitating shyness. Wood sought to "expand my comfort zone and challenge myself to do the things I know I have the ability to do." So she joined Toastmasters to confront her fear of public speaking.

"After giving a few speeches, watching them [on video], and getting feedback, I learned that I am a much better speaker than I thought," says Wood, who now feels more confident when speaking up in her classes. "I have important things to say and am confident that I can express myself clearly. Toastmasters definitely decreased my fear of speaking up in class discussions. I am no longer seen as the quiet, shy kid in the back."

Twelve years ago, Emi Bauer of Gilbert, Arizona, could barely leave the house due to shyness and severe agoraphobia (social anxiety). Toastmasters' self-paced program taught her how to practice these skills to engage in one-on-one conversations with people. Bauer says that in order to offer valuable feedback to others — and benefit from the conversation — you must "truly listen to the other person and hear, understand, and evaluate what they are saying."

"I am now able to organize my thoughts quickly and verbalize them coherently," she says. Practicing speeches has also given Bauer the confidence to be an "initiator in conversations rather than the wall flower who simply waits to be approached." She says, "I now have an 'Oooh, what can I do next?' approach to life, rather than a tentative, timid approach."

This Valentine's Day, strike up a conversation with that special someone. Don't forget to smile and make eye contact. You just may make a new friend.

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## **About Toastmasters International**

Toastmasters International is a nonprofit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of clubs. Founded in October 1924, the organization currently has more than 270,000 members in 13,000 clubs in 116 countries. Each week, Toastmasters helps more than a quarter million people of every ethnicity, education level and profession build their competence in communication so they can gain the confidence to lead others. For information about local Toastmasters clubs, please visit [www.toastmasters.org](http://www.toastmasters.org).

Available Topic Expert: For information on the listed expert, click appropriate link:

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