

abstract:

The Magic of Life – Impaired Driving Prevention

How could one proficiently convince someone to make certain, small, lifestyle changes and it likely stick with them? No one wants to hear the endless conversation out of desperation for someone else's change of pace. In the following essay, I will describe the subtle, yet ample ways of persuasion used by Dr. Michael Gershe in his TEDTalk "The Magic of Life-Impaired Driving Prevention," that leave his audience cheerful and informed after his speech. Walking the reader through effective forms of humor, conviction, and empathy that the speaker uses to prioritize the pressing topic of making the choice of not to drive after drinking. When reality hits, it's challenging to accept the unexpected, yet manageable even from substantial damage. Dr. Michael Gershe uses effective forms of persuasion in order to prevent the motions of driving while intoxicated. The utilization of humor, and well-versed story telling provides consistent engagement from the audience to the speaker, which causes them to listen closely to his points made in the moment and after. The following essay covers the bases of persuasion covered by Gershe in a detailed format along with pictorial illustrations one may imagine in a similar party setting. The speaker does not say that it is wrong to have fun yet makes the emphasis to stay responsible when you go out for drinks with friends.

The Magic of Life- Impaired Driving Prevention



Average house party where alcohol consumption is taking place, crowd is having a very good time under the influence.

Never want the party to end? Is this decision based on impulse or desperation? Too stubborn or distressed to call a loved one for help, so you take matters into your own hands? The Magic of Life-Impaired Driving Prevention, a Ted talk by Michael Gershe, speaks of the effects and impact drunk driving has made on his life and others. Gershe claims that the accident he happened to be involved in as a baby had never got in his way, and since, he has only been working towards achieving more for his lost loved ones who face the same circumstance. While also retorting upon the term “victim,” he recalls stories and even adds a splash of humor, to further bridge the gap between speaker and audience while drawing in their attention for his topic. Another emphasis he makes in this video is to be prepared and to keep a plan in place as the average adult who goes out to have fun, in a responsible, mindful sense. In this essay, I will investigate how Gershe successfully addresses the discouragement of driving while intoxicated by his storytelling, while also connecting with the audience in their grief of feeling in similar circumstances.



Picture depicting a crashed car from the effects of driving inebriated. Sufficient damage is done to the car from the state of the driver involved in the collision.

Michael Gershe opens his speech in humor, to engage the members of the audience, to which he even remarks on as a “burst of energy” in order to “feel alive” as it sustains him throughout his life. The story takes place when he was a baby, on a drive with his family in the early 1970’s, when their car passes through an intersection, as another vehicle runs through the intersection without much regard to them and hits their car with a very great impact. Along with the total loss of the car, which Gershe claims was very hard to accomplish in that time, Gershe as well as his mother suffered substantial injuries, which later his mother had succumbed to. Gershe’s trauma amassed great concern as he suffered with breaking every bone in his body, saying that “The fact that I am 47 years old, standing in front of you today is nothing short of a miracle.” His optimism, linked with his heart-wrenching story engages the audience in a zealous sense as though not to support careless activities that can be posed as harmful to others, such as drunk or distracted driving. While such a negative occurrence has taken place, with terrible effects along with the traumatic event, it’s important to note the speaker’s tone. Gershe begins positive, with light joking, which the audience enjoys. He keeps them engaged as he recounts his stories, memorial of individuals who have lost their life to drunk drivers, which is important due to the fact that he does not get angry or victimize himself. All in all, this makes Gershe more appealing to the audience, as it is empowering to hear of anyone overcoming hard times that are of no fault of their own. This is a very relatable aspect, thus giving the audience a bit more motivation upon themselves, further boosting the speaker’s likeability and ability to persuade them into making more responsible decisions.

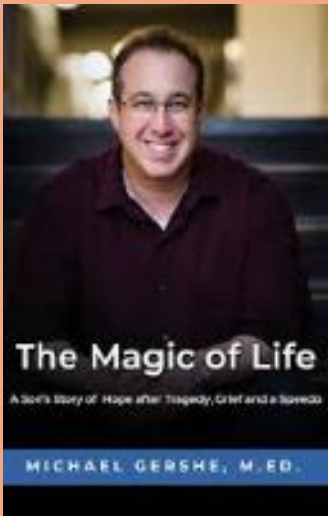


Image: Speaker is Dr. Michael Gershe who was the feature of the Ted Talk, 'Magic of Life Impaired Driving Prevention'

Additionally, Gershe makes jokes to reel in the audience, while even commenting on, “How good it feels to laugh,” paraphrased from Ted talk. It’s important to note his body language, note that he conveys his points as if he’s teaching a class or giving a lecture. With his precise-like hand gestures, it is signaling the audience to pay attention, as they can also find relatability or understanding, considering that this pattern of communication is commonly used. “It is well established that when people use humor in serious situations it can perform a valuable communication function. In interpersonal situations it has been shown to generate positive emotions, reduce interpersonal stress and anxiety during interactions, and enhance perceptions of closeness,” a quote from the article, Yes, I Will Say Something: How Humor Influences Intention to Intervene and How Social Marketing Can Help, featured in the Journal of Advertising, states that humor can push forms of marketing or propaganda. Essentially, the skilled approach that Gershe takes, utilizing his humor and body language is an effective method of having the audience recognize the importance of this topic, not just to Gershe, but in the world itself. Gershe implies of how often driving while impaired, especially under the influences is common, but with the continuous bits of humor, he makes the audience feel positive rather than irrational, when the emphasis is made on not making this choice for the sake of others around you. Therefore, the speaker applying this form of communication, is a form of intervention, even though the individuals in the audience may not know Gershe personally.



Photograph of a large audience seated in a dimly lit auditorium, attentively watching an event or presentation. The crowd includes diverse individuals wearing conference badges, with purple and blue lighting creating a focused atmosphere.

Interestingly enough, humor utilized in creating a persuasive argument is considered as pathos, being that it is serving an emotional appeal, keep in mind that it is a liberation of life to be humored. It's so subtle, that it works nearly every time. Observing this TedTalk has made me realize this skilled approach. Psychology today states that, "Laughter, or humor more generally is highly context-dependent." Gershe picks his timing as effectively as possible, like for example, the opening of his talk, instead of just going straight into the story of his horrible and traumatic experience, he tells an off hand joke about a wrong number caller. It's a remarkable opener considering that this is an instance that happens so frequently, the dependency is the subject of the call for the form of humor. This catches the audience off guard, quickly engages them in your speech, then brings them to the level of understanding the speaker expects, respectively on their part. While he could preach endlessly about the bad things that happen when someone drives intoxicated, it would only reach a seldom amount of the audience, perhaps it wouldn't land as well, thus being overlooked. Nevertheless, humor as pathos, is proven yet again, as the best form of persuasion, as it brings the audience to want to understand the speaker. "The victim of a mishap is unlikely to be amused, yet a window into their inner strength opens up when he or she is." Psychology Today, offers many a stance on this form of persuasion, to better read your speaker, and provide methods of convincing your group of significance. Brown University's Barbara Tannenbaum, who teaches a popular course about persuasive communication, claims that, "the speaker needs to establish their credibility as speakers," as ethos, then ensure the audience may understand a good argument, followed by a joke, as a one's of pathos. (Psychology Today.) Furthermore, the article continues the point of contention as the audience must be "smart enough to get it" being the point of the argument, more or less the joke. The way to test or even open the waters however, would be through the humor. One of Gershe's featured humor bits was, the wrong number that congratulated him as a father, of which he claimed was likely not

possible. This caused the audience to fully appreciate his transparency, while also giving them a bit of a laugh.

All in all, the art of persuasion is conducive in many ways that can be seen as unrecognized or subtle. This is important for the speaker as the main goal is to captivate the audience. Gershe's speech was so moving, carefully thought out, as well as richly worded that the cameras were pointed at the audience to show their interest in his argument. As I had investigated how Gershe successfully addressed the discouragement of driving while intoxicated with his storytelling, he also connected with the audience in their feeling of grief in similar, unfortunately common, circumstances, note also the fillers and methods that were in use. These being light humor, credibility as he is not only a professor, but a survivor of major trauma, and his seriousness in his speech.



Illustration of a person standing at a podium with two microphones addressing a large audience. Background features multiple silhouettes in varying shades of blue, emphasizing a public speaking or presentation setting.

Works cited:

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