

I’m going to introduce Robin Quinn, who has really set this whole thing up, and I thank you very much, Robin, for doing that. She produced this entire meeting. She’s an award-winning book editor, ghostwriter, and book coach. Originally in television news production, Robin made the switch to books in the early ’90s. Right now she’s editing a self-help book based on the power of small changes and developing a book as a ghostwriter for an energy healer. She specializes in health, self-help, and spirituality and also works with uplifting fiction and memoir projects. Let’s give a warm welcome to Robin Quinn.

RQ: It’s great to be here. It’s my pleasure tonight to introduce our speaker, Judy Carter. She is the goddess of comedy, but she says we can just call her goddess. As an author, Judy doesn’t like to brag, but she did write the Bible—no joke, she’s the author of the *Comedy Bible*, which was featured by *Good Morning America* and CNN and was recommended by Oprah Winfrey as a must-read for those who want to be funnier. Judy’s new book, *The Message of You*, has become the go-to book for anyone wanting to learn the power of their stories and how to use them to promote their business and launch a speaking career. Judy will be signing her book after her talk. Her message of using humor and stories as a business tool has been featured in no less than the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, and *Success* magazine. So, without further delay, showing us how to break into the lucrative speaking business, please welcome Judy Carter.

JC: Thank you! How many of you are authors and have written a book? That’s why I’m here. I’m so excited to be with my people. Not that you’re all Jewish. I mean people who write. Here’s the thing—I talk to a lot of people who want to be speakers, and you’ve already done the heavy lifting, many of you—many of you have written a book. The next step is to add speaking to that. So, today, what I’d like to share with you is how I’ve been making this awesome living doing what every woman loves doing, which is speaking and getting paid for it and using it as a platform to sell my book. And if I’m successful today, hopefully I’ll be hearing that some of you have stolen my job!

Oh good, you’re laughing! People in LA never laugh—they can’t, too much Botox! It’s true, I don’t like performing in LA.

How many of you have ever done a speech? And how many of you have been paid to speak? Okay, so there’s a big difference between getting paid to speak and speaking. I started my career—for 17 years, I was a stand-up comic, and I remember when I got my first corporate gig—you’re going to pay me how much? Really? \$5,000? And this was like twenty years ago. I just do one hour? And you don’t even want me to be particularly funny? You just want me to talk about how to use humor? And they said yeah! And you want to fly me first class? Really? And that’s when I learned the power of what it means to have a message. Speakers are hired—especially in LA—every day in this city. There’s thousands of meetings and people who pay—companies, associations—who pay speakers for those meetings. On the low end, a speaker might be paid \$5,000. Speakers make \$10,000 a speech, usually. Authors who are well known are more like \$46,000 a speech. And then, of course, there’s the big people. More famous celebrities. They will make \$100,000–150,000 a speech. Hillary and President Clinton make more like \$200,000 a

speech. I was actually honored to share the stage with President Clinton and speak with him. It's just amazing how much they pay for someone who has a compelling message. And one thing that qualifies someone to speak is that they have a book. So, if you already have a book, that is really awesome.

I realized the power of speaking when I was on a boat. I was hired by an insurance company to do a one-hour speech on a ship. The people there were earning something called CEU (continuing education unit) credits. Is anyone familiar with those? In certain professions—if you're a dentist or an insurance agent—you have to earn these kinds of credits. This is a way to get people to come to meetings. At the meetings, they have speakers. They have inside speakers, and they have something like what I am and what you would be, which is an outside speaker. The outside speakers in this case were me and Aron Ralston. Aron is what we call a survivor speaker. Some of you have seen his movie—*Between a Rock and a Hard Place*? He's the kid who had to cut off his arm. So those are people who are speakers for a short quantity of time after their movie comes out. I'm working all the time because I'm not dependent on a particular thing that happened, and it's not because I'm very famous. I'm just very predictable about what I'm going to give the audience.

Anyway, it was \$25,000 for that speech, and they flew me there first class. I got to have all the benefits of being on that ship. The comics on that ship were being paid \$900 for the week. They had just been on Letterman, they were famous, and me—I am not famous. What was the difference between me and these professional entertainers? I had something—I had a message. I had content. I had something that could justify that the employees were getting professional credits. Mind you, my content was how to be funnier and how to use humor in work. That was my message at that time. Was I better than the comics on the ship? No. Was I funnier? No. the difference was that I had a message.

I have to tell you that my entire life and my entire career changed when I stopped promoting myself, when I stopped promoting my book, when I stopped promoting my blog and everything I do. I started promoting my message. That's when everything changed. Now, my life is so awesome because I get to fly all around the world. Let me just show you this video—this is kind of funny. When you have a message, and the message is universal—this is where I was two weeks ago. And this is a book signing. This is in the Middle East. This is Oman—I'd never even heard of it. These are all Muslim women; I'm Jewish—doesn't matter. You know what a message does? When you speak from your heart, people embrace you. People love you. Not only do they love you, but they want to buy your crap.

My last book was published by St. Martin's Press. The reason I got a large advance was because of how many people I'm in front of when I speak.

What I want to do today is to give you the fundamentals of how to put a speech together and how to find your message. I have to tell you, when I first was hired to write this book—St. Martin's Press hired me to write a book about how to speak, how to memorize your act, how to give a speech, how to stand, how to look at people.

And then something happened that changed what the book was about. I was invited to speak at a VA Hospital in Long Beach, and I was going to give my normal speech—you know, "Lighten up!" And so, when I get there, I realize how inappropriate my message would be, because I was speaking to the spinal

injury unit. It was like, “You’ll never walk again. Woohoo!” and that was just so inappropriate. And the place was so depressing, and people are just sitting in these chairs along the wall, looking despondently at the floor. That was the staff; it’s so difficult to work there. And then they wheel in the patients. Some of them are in beds, and they can’t sit up. Most of them are on ventilators. And this man walks over to me and says, “Mrs. Carter, I’m so glad you’re here because that’s my son Nick over there. Nick was injured by a bomb in Afghanistan, and they say he’ll never walk. He’s twenty-one years old. They say unless he does his therapy he’s going to die. And he’s refused to do his therapy. We hope you have an inspiring message.”

No pressure, right? And I’m going, “What am I going to do? What do I have to say that connects to these young men?” And I had absolutely nothing. I don’t know if you’ve ever had this in your life—you’re all writers, so I’m sure you’ve faced that page when you have absolutely nothing. They introduced me, and I swear to you, I didn’t know what I was going to say. I got up, and they handed me the mic, and the story just came out of me. Sometimes when you have absolutely nothing, when you are pushed into the corner, that’s when something comes up. It’s going to seem really obvious to you that I should have known about this story, but I’m not used to—or, I wasn’t at the time—used to sharing about myself.

My older sister, Marsha, was a quadriplegic. I know about quadriplegia. My older sister, who I loved, had severe cerebral palsy. So I just started to talk about my sister, and I shared with this audience that when she died, I was thinking, “Who’s going to come to my sister’s funeral? She couldn’t walk, she couldn’t talk, she was incontinent, and she was tube fed. Who’s going to come to this funeral?” It was a funeral of love. Two hundred people were there, and I was shocked. And in front of two hundred people, I got up and said that Marsha made me feel needed. Marsha gave me a purpose in life. And I walked over to this young man, Nick, and I said, “You have a message, Nick, to give to other people. Maybe you don’t know what it is yet, but you need to live long enough to find out.”

And I didn’t even know what I was saying at the time, but then I went back and saw Nick, and he was doing his therapy, and I said, “What changed?” And he said, “Well, you made me feel like I had a message to give.” And I asked, “What was that message?” And he said, “Never give up. I want to be a speaker, and I want to speak to other vets and tell them never to give up. There was a doctor in Afghanistan who told me that I would never walk again and that I would never move my hands, and look at me! Look at me, Judy! I can almost give that doctor the finger!”

Well, I was just blown away, and I ran home, and I called my publishers two months before my book was supposed to come out, and I told them that I had to rewrite that book. It’s not about what you say; it’s not about what your content is when you speak. It’s about your message. It’s about how you connect to your audience. And I know how to do this. I know how to teach people how to speak. I know how to teach people how to connect with the audience. I know how to do this. I told them that I had to change the title of the book. They had the stupidest title. It was so long: *How to Speak and Influence People and Something Else . . . boring!* I said, “It’s *The Message of You.*” That’s what counts. That’s what people will read on your blogs. That’s what will make people read your book. It is your message.

And what is this message of yours? This message of yours—it's right here in the title of this book. And I realized this afterwards, but it's in the word itself. You can't spell message without a mess. Yes? You see it? It's not the fancy things that you've done—it's not that you got a BA and a book deal and you're making a billion dollars that connects you to people. It's not that you're a CEO or a CFO or a CPA that makes you a BFD. That isn't it. You know what it is? It's that long-forgotten mess of yours. It was the memory of my sister, which was a painful memory. My sister—I never could do enough to make up for the fact that I could walk and talk and she couldn't. It is the mess that connects us in our speech.

And that's what I wanted to do today—to take you on this journey in your life and to show you that what you have to talk about is all based on this. And the truth is, you cannot see it until the last three letters of the word *message*—until you have some age. You can't see it without age.

What's beautiful about the speaking business is that it's not for younger people. As a matter of fact, when young people speak, it's like, "Oh, go screw yourself! What do you know? You're twenty years old!" In the National Speakers Association the average age is sixty years old. That's the beauty of it. That's why I'm so glad I found this profession because, as we know, my other profession, stand-up comedy—I remember I was thirty, and someone said, "Oh, you're thirty. You're pretty washed up. You haven't really been famous yet." I was thirty, for god's sake! But in the speaking industry, because it relies on experts, you need to qualify as an expert. And what gets you in the door to get a speaking gig is the book you wrote. It is your credentials. It's all the stuff you heard from Robin who introduced me—she's been on this show, she's been on that show. That gets you in the door. But when you're in front of people, it's your heart. It's your personal story that really connects you to the audience.

So, what I wanted to do today is give a little overview of the speaking industry. Then I wanted to ask what you want to hear me talk about. That would be beneficial. I'll give you the overview—how it works, how you get gigs—and then what else would you like to know? I'd like to take you through a little bit of how you get gigs in the speaking business, how you decide what topics are currently hot in the speaking business, what sort of audiences you're going to be performing to, and how to find your message. Did I miss anything?

Q: Being funny?

A: Okay, being funny. I'll cover that. Just remind me. I'll show you how to get a laugh when you come onstage.

Q: Would you say that having a major publisher and the career you've had, and the publisher itself, do you find it getting you jobs?

A: Yeah, we'll talk about that in a second.

Q: Can you talk about getting over stage fright?

A: All right, yeah, we can go over that.

Q: How much difference is there between self-promoting yourself and being promoted?

A: Okay, promotion. How do you promote yourself? Do you promote yourself? Do other people promote you? Okay, so let's just start, and if I miss something, please just write it down and remember it.

Okay, so let's just get a little overview of the speaking industry. There are all sorts of speakers. There are people who are high-content speakers. In other words, you speak on something very specific. I call these people the techies. As a matter of fact, I coach people—I just worked with someone who's a project manager. So here's a guy who's a project manager, and he has a lot of content on projects. So I said, "Well, let's make you a funny project manager, and let's also end your speech with a heart story, so you really reveal yourself. And you give content." He immediately, after his first three speeches, booked for \$8,000. Why? Because he doesn't exist. There's nobody out there who actually has a ton of content, moves an audience, and is entertaining. So it was a no-brainer. So if you have a lot of content, if you're an expert at something, that's one way in. If that's you, you start by talking in front of people you already know.

I always say to people who haven't spoken before and who want to break into speaking—start where you know and be really good. That's a really great way to break in. For instance, I know someone who was a greeter at Banana Republic. I told her to talk about customer service—you're there with the customer. Start observing what you learned from being the greeter at Banana Republic. I asked her to do ten minutes. She did ten minutes, she killed, and she was invited to speak internationally. She has absolutely no other credentials than that she is a greeter at Banana Republic, but she chose customer service as her topic—a very hot topic. So, that's what she did.

So, then there are motivational speakers, such as myself. These are people who are brought in to boost up the sales team. You're there to just create some enthusiasm. To charge up the meeting. Not to be boring. That's a vague, general topic—motivational speakers.

Health care speakers—huge! Huge buyer of speakers! I have performed at health care conferences, and there's usually like 2,500 people in the audience. They're in Vegas; they're a wild group of people. They hire a lot of speakers for their conventions.

What I've been doing a lot of is women's events, usually in the smaller cities, like Lodi, Pensacola, places in Iowa. Those of you who watch television know there are not too many funny older women on Conan O'Brien or Late Night. Because of that—here's the good news—there I am, in Sioux City, and I'm speaking with 3,000 women who come out for an event called Saturday for Me or Women's Wellness, and I'll be the featured speaker, but then they'll also have a chef to give nutrition advice. They'll have exercise gurus. They'll have how to wear a bra. They'll have all sorts of lesser-paid . . .

Now, let me talk about that. You have your keynote speaker, and then you also have break-out speakers. These are the speakers who probably get paid \$1,500 for a session. Smaller groups. You've all been to meetings. This is where everyone breaks up, and you pick which smaller session you want to go to, and then they have an expert for that.

Then, of course, there are business speakers, which is sales, marketing. See, I'm a crossover speaker, because I do all of those. I change what I do. I'll talk about how to handle difficult people; I'll talk about

how to use stories in customer service; I'll talk about how to diffuse difficult situations with humor. That's what I do.

So, that's the overview of speaking—what jobs are available and what kind of meetings. Okay, so how do you get bookings? Guess what: it's so changed. As well as in the publishing business, it's really, really changed. It used to be that everything went through a speaker bureau, which was another name for speaker agent. A speaker bureau usually has clients, which are called meeting planners. So, for the larger meetings, they'll have the meeting planner who decides the theme of the meeting. This is where we get into the topic of message and mess.

The meeting planner will decide on the theme. The theme is always based on the challenges that the company is going through. For instance, "change is good!" Why do they want someone to speak on "change is good?" Because they just decided to lower everyone's bonuses, and they're going to hire a motivational speaker to come in and talk about how great change is, which is hard to do. As a matter of fact, this was for FedEx, and it was really terrible because I saw the speaker before me just go down bad—like, everyone was sitting there, and one guy was giving her the finger from the back, and she's going, "Change is great!" They weren't buying it. I knew I had to do something—that's when I had to use humor. That's when I was like, "I'm here to talk about change, and I'm perfectly qualified to talk about change because I used to be a man," and then I say, "Oh, just kidding, I didn't used to be a man—I still am," and then I say, "Now that I have your attention . . . I'm kidding!"

So, the meeting planner will decide on a topic. "Tomorrow is the future"—and they'll hire futurists. That's how they pick their speakers, by the message. No one ever hires the speaker and says, "We need someone who's written a published book" or "We need someone who has really good stories." No. They'll say, "We need someone who talks about conflict resolution, or women's issues, or entrepreneurship." I'm speaking on Friday to about 2,000 women on being an entrepreneur. So my website lists what I talk about, and people come by and see it and book me.

So, how the speaking industry works is very different from Hollywood. In Hollywood, the agent's client is the talent. And the talent is signed to the agent. Only one agent. Very different. In the speaking business, the client is the company. So, the speaker bureau is working with the client and suggests many speakers. I work with over fifty different speaker bureaus. I'd say 40 percent of my gigs come from speaker bureaus; 60 percent come from me. I find 60 percent of my gigs, and 10 percent of those come from me talking to someone on a plane. Why? Because I'm in business class. So, there I am in business class, and the person next to me asks this all-important question, which is what all of you have to know the answer to, even before you write your speech: "What is it you do?"

Okay, so let's talk about how you answer that question. I was on a plane, and a woman asked me this question. She worked for the military, and I do about two jobs a month speaking for the military. The government hires a lot of speakers. And since I also speak on stress reduction . . .

I was going to give you a sheet, but in the book, I list bookable topics for speakers. It's just huge. Companies hire people to speak on everything from overcoming obstacles, peak performance, disability issues, parenting—diversity is huge, age is huge—women's issues, entrepreneurial skills, real estate,

relationships, and it goes on and on and on. There's a huge list—work-life balance, stress. It's all about the mess. What mess do they have?

So let's talk about how you answer that question. What do you do? What do you speak on? Who wants to be a speaker and try this? What do you speak on?

Audience Member: Two topics—one, you hit on the project manager thing. Risk management. The other is bias of expert witnesses.

Audience Member: Reinventing yourself.

Audience Member: Sexuality. Masculinity and femininity.

Audience Member: I can speak about my wife, who was given essentially a death sentence for cancer. She produced two books, raised children, and described those years as essentially the happiest years of her life.

JC: Okay, so let me give you a bit about how to tweak what you just heard. And let me give you an idea—let's try a rewrite on it. This is what I'd like you to do. First of all, when someone asks you that question, you never answer it. You say, "Well, tell me a little bit about you. What's going on with you? What challenges are you up against?" Okay? That is how I sell myself, and that is how I sell myself from the moment I speak to them, because—here's the mistake that 99.9 percent of speakers make. They get on stage, and they talk about the audience's least favorite topic. That's the speaker. You just met me. You don't care about me. What do you care about? You.

So let's just take an example, the lady in the military. "Really? Where do you work? Let me ask you a couple questions about yourself, because I customize what I do. So tell me all about your challenges." And she says, "Oh my gosh, we're so overworked. We've just had a downsizing. People are working longer hours." So they tell me what's going on. And I rephrase what I do in terms of them. That makes them so interested.

Bless your wife, that's really awesome, but I don't know her. I've got my own problems. Let's use "you." So what do I talk about? You know how people are so stressed, they're overwhelmed, they're tired, they're not getting enough sleep, they walk around just trying to balance family and work and not doing good at either of them because they are so stressed? Well, I come in, and I show people how to use humor techniques to lighten up and handle their stress. And when I say that, people say, "Oh my god, we could use that!" Why? Because it's about them. As a matter of fact, when a customer asks if I can send them my PR materials, I ask them the same question—what's going on? "Well, we need someone to talk about this . . ." And as I hear that, I redo my press kit, putting in the exact words of their mess. And I talk about how I can bring them to success. So these words: mess to success. It's about connection from the moment you're selling yourself. How do you describe your book?

You know how many people wander around not knowing the meaning of their life? What is their legacy? The story of your life is going to be spoken about where? At your funeral. And you're not going to be around to correct them. I'm on a mission to help people know the message of them while they're alive

and to use it to influence other people. To use it to have an effect on this world. And to use it to inspire other people.

So you know how! Do you want to try to rephrase? What are we talking about? How do you rephrase?

Audience Member: How you turn lemons into lemonade.

JC: Right, but what's going on with people—what is their mess? What is going on with your audience? Do you know how people after a certain age are scared to death of being sick? Matter of fact, they don't trust what their doctors give to them, or their doctors are so negative that they spiral down into a depression. Well, I have been personal witness to my wife, who was given a death sentence and has lived past it, and I'm committed to showing people that they don't have to bow down to bad news. They can rise up; they can stand and own their own health!

Audience Member: Wow! I'm in!

JC: This is all about the most important speech you give and answering this question: What do you speak about? We speak about people's messes. Speaking is not giving a monologue. Speaking is back and forth. When I speak, this is what I do. I have a speech in Missouri—you know, not exactly my peeps. So what am I going to do? Well I called the guy and asked, "Can you give me three people who are going to be there who hate speakers? People who are really cranky. And I just want to ask them about when it's a bad day." And I talk to them, and I get their story, and I just listen. And when I come onstage, the first twenty minutes of my act is that I know the kind of stress you're under. And I start telling whose story? Their story. Because if I go on and say, "I'm going to talk about me! Look at me!" I don't bring my story in until twenty minutes into my speech.

Anybody else want to rephrase what they talk about? Rephrase? Give me the mess. "You know how people . . ."

Audience Member: Where do you have challenges in your work?

JC: Let's start like you know my problems. Use that as your intro. "You know how people . . ."

Audience Member: You know how people have challenges in their work?

JC: What kind of challenges?

Audience Member: They don't understand where the problems exist. Where they come from.

JC: Okay, this is where we make comedy. People are going, "I don't understand." Act them out.

Audience Member: Okay. People are saying, "I don't understand what's going on here. I don't understand what the source is of my problems."

JC: And that's your CEO, okay? And so then I . . .

Audience Member: So I talk about how to find the sources. How do you get people to come together and unify and resolve those problems so you can move forward?

JC: Great. I love the term *unity*. I bring people together. My speech is going to give people the technology to overcome differences, come together, so we can join together and not work fighting each other but work together. Anyone else want to try this?

Audience Member: So, I . . . you know how bar culture is just so fucked up around women and men and what does it mean to be a woman in the workplace? What does it mean to be a mature, masculine man? We've got women acting like men; we've got men acting like women. Nobody knows what's going on anymore. I see the look in your face. You see the confusion?

Other Audience Member: No, I can just see HR saying, "Did he say fuck? Oh my god!"

Audience Member: So, I talk about what it means for a woman to relax into her femininity and bring her feminine gifts to the marketplace.

JC: Who's your audience?

Other Audience Member: Men, obviously.

Audience Member: Well, it can be men, for sure. My audience is women in the workforce who are swept up in the masculine rewards system.

JC: Yeah, that's not a corporate speech. That's not going to fly as a corporate speech. Corporate clients are very strict. I use the word *heck*. I use the word *damn*. I use the word *god*. I've got letters—you've got to be really careful with that. I'm not sure about that talk, but it was fun to listen to!

I'm so sorry; I've got to move on because I just looked at the clock! I'm not moving fast enough. So, that is mess.

The next thing is—how do you qualify to talk about this? Every single person here has three stories, okay? There are three stories that you actually need. One is the story of you—it's your big *s* Story. It's the story of something that was a mess that happened in your childhood. What I've learned makes the message of you is how did you get to your success? What is your success, and how did you get there? From eight to sixteen, I had a speech impediment. I had a speech impediment so bad that I couldn't say the word *impediment*. Which is mean. Why do they call it something that people who have it can't say? You know, like "lisp"—does it need a *sp* in it? Really? Stuttering, you have to have all the *ts* in there? Linguistically mean!

So, this is what I found out, which is wonderful—it's just been such a great journey after I wrote this book, with people contacting me about what they discovered from my life and from going through the exercises in my book—is that your mess, you should kiss it. I'm not funny because funny things happened to me. You know, I'm Jewish—we're miserable people, okay? I grew up with a family that was—like I already told you—we had disability in my family, and my father was an alcoholic. We had

screaming, yelling. We had a Wailing Wall in our living room. And yet, that's how I developed my sense of humor, because I had to. My sense of humor was my antidepressant of choice. And I have found that every single famous successful person started with a mess that motivated them with a passion. That's where your passion is. When you discover that on a personal level, you qualify.

So it's not just saying, "Well, I've spoken with President Clinton. I've spoken here, I've spoken there." You have to say your success as a journey. When you just say, "I've done this and that," that's called bragging. But when you say, like Walt Disney, "I have gone from having a father who was violent and beat me, and that's why I created the happiest place on earth, where parents can spend quality time with their children." Steve Jobs, you know: "I grew up, I was adopted, I was disconnected from my family, and I felt disconnected from other people, so I was moved to create objects and gadgets that connect us all." It's our mess that drives us to write books. Dr. Phil wrote the best-selling book out on weight loss. Anyone but me notice that he's chubby? His next book out is going to be hair care tips for men, I bet. It's true—it is that mess! So when you talk, that's the story that you need.

And then there's another absolute crucial story that you need when you speak. That story is your hero's journey. This is a story of perhaps, sir, someone you've helped discover her sexuality and what happened. This is where you took someone from mess to success. This is where you helped. Speaking is teaching. Speaking is where I'm going to take my audience on a journey. Maybe you're an organizer. You're all living in chaos, and I'm going to show you how to organize. You need to have that story.

For instance, a woman came to me. She was a CPA and—oh my god—she wanted to speak to sell her book and sell her services. And she wasn't selling anything because, listening to her, you wanted to poke your eyes out with a pencil. She was so boring! And so, what I did was I asked her, "When in your life were your finances a mess?" And she told a story of her father dying, and her mother was left not knowing how to manage money, not knowing anything, and got depressed, and everything fell into chaos, and food stamps, and there wasn't enough food. And I went, "You made a commitment at a young age to be in control of money, didn't you?" And she said yes. So now we have an emotional reality to someone who's a CPA.

And I said, "Tell me about who you're committed to helping? Who are your favorite clients?" And she said, "My favorite clients are women whose husbands have died, and I can help those women through retirement." Now I understand her passion. And I said, "Well, tell me the story of someone you helped." And she told me this wonderful story of this woman she helped who didn't know the passwords to her husband's accounts, and she helped her to have a successful retirement. And so she started telling these heartfelt stories, revealing herself. Later, I called her and said, "Becky, how's your speaking going?" She said, "I'm not doing it anymore," and I said, "What?" She said, "I can't, because every time I speak, about 50 percent of the audience wants to hire me! And I had to take on five new staff, and I can't do it anymore!" Because that's what happens, people. When you reveal that mess that you've gone through, other people who have similar messes will go, "She will understand me," because that's how we connect. That's how we connect, through our mess. And if she's gotten to success, she can help take me to success.

And the other kind of story that you need are the small stories. The story of yesterday. In every single day, there's a message, if you watch. I have started this writing exercise that's just awesome. If you write in a journal, it's usually like, "This happened, then this happened, then that happened, and then this happened." Write the hero's journey of yesterday. So, start off with what you wanted and what happened. What got in the way of what you wanted, and where did you end up? I have to tell you, my signature story in my speech is the story that just happened at the airport. It might be the story that you just overlook. But we don't need these big, death-and-dying stories as our story. The story of what happened yesterday has a message in it.

There was a point in my life where I just couldn't do stand-up comedy any more. I just couldn't stand it anymore, going to work and getting heckled, you know? I couldn't do it, and I didn't know what to do with my life, because I never had a real job. I just thought, "I want to go to work," but I didn't have any real skills. So that was a problem. I rented an office in Westwood. It was this shared office, and I figured, "Well, I have no job—I'll just go there every day and pretend!" And people go, "What do you do?" And I went, "Nothing," and they assumed I was in management. I really just wanted a different life, and I didn't know what life to have.

So, this woman said, "Well, do you type? I'll pay you \$10 an hour." And I said, "I'll do anything!" I needed work, and I figured I'd just go to work and see what happened. I'm kind of goofy that way. So they hired me to type, and she wrote books. And she said, "You should write a book!" So I wrote a book. She helped me. I submitted it to fifty-nine agents and got fifty-nine rejection letters saying that no one wanted to learn to be a stand-up comic. It was called *Stand-Up Comedy: The Book*. I was getting desperate, and I got a call that said, "Hey, get to Denver! They're auditioning people for a sitcom, and you'd be perfect. It's called *Go Bananas*. Get to Denver; get on a plane. If you can get there before 10, you're going to get on."

I get to the airport and I hear "Flight 52 to Denver is canceled. Please stand in line at customer service. You will never get where you're going, Judy. Your life sucks." And you know that moment when you're so stressed and nothing's going the way you want it to go, and you see that line at customer service, and you see that line of angry people all going, "I'm going to give this guy a piece of my mind"? You know what? No one wants a piece of your mind. People like a piece of pie. Or another piece of your body. And it was this moment that truly changed my life. Because I was so stressed, but looking at this line, I realized that I didn't want to be another angry person in the world. I saw someone who had it worse than me, the gate attendant, because I would eventually get out, and he's going to stay there.

I decided to do something different because, to me, that's what comedy is. Comedy is doing something different. We comics are like—rather than, "Hello, how are you?" "Fine" Comics are like, "Hello, how are you?" "Fat! Oh my god, look at this!" So I decided to do something different. So, the gate attendant says, "I'm sorry, Ms. Carter. You look like you're having a bad day. Your flight's canceled, the one after that's sold out. I'm so sorry." And I said "Woohoo! I just wanted to show you appreciation. Everyone in this line has yelled at you, and you've handled them with respect and professionalism, so I'm going to put my bad travel day in your competent hands." And he said, "Ms. Carter, I'm going to put you in first class." So I'm in first class, but it's 10 p.m., and I'm not going to make this. So I'm drinking. Sitting next to

me is Annette Wells. We started to talk. She was an agent. She didn't get my book. She said she'd read it. She read it. And she liked it. Random House liked it, and they published it. Another woman liked it—her name is Oprah Winfrey. Maybe you've heard of her? Goddess. She created a show around my book. She held up my book, and she introduced me, and my life has never been the same.

Sometimes we are so stressed and angry because we're not getting what we think we want, and yet the universe gave me something I couldn't even imagine happening. And what I have learned is that the messages for your speech are in yesterday, the day before, every day. This is what I've learned. What I've learned is that, based on our character and who we are, every single person has a message. And an ordinary day is an extraordinary message. And the message that you have to share with others maybe isn't about the big things that happen in your life—sometimes it's the smaller things.

How do you handle stage fright? I'll tell you exactly how. You start believing in what you have to share, and you start understanding you're going to be dead soon. You're going to be dead, because that's truth. Time is finite. You have to hurry up and give your message, because the way we truly, truly affect people in the world is how we transform others. That is the value of our life. The impact that we have on others. Why do you think I'm here today? It's a nice night. I could be in Vegas or Atlantic City, but I'm in Culver City in a multipurpose room with a mirror at my side. I'm kidding. My point is that your fear is ego based.

When you go, "Oh, I hope they like me! I hope they laugh! I hope they enjoy me!" you're going to be really scared. I'll tell you why. You're going to be scared because you need something from the audience. You need love. You need attention. You need them to give you something. But the energy is going the wrong way, and no one will pay you for that.

When you come in here and say, "I have something to give you. I have something to share with you. I want to change your life," your fear goes away, because there is no fear in giving. Does that make sense? You have to change your head around. What do I have to give? Why am I passionate about it? I'm passionate about it because I know what my mess was. I took my success and I see how I got there. I reignited my life, and I understand it, and I want to change your life.

So that's how you get over stage fright. But I still get so friggin' nervous. It's so uncomfortable to get on stage in front of people. They say that the number one fear is the fear of speaking in front of people. The number two fear is the fear of dying. Which means that at a funeral, most people would prefer to be the guy in the box instead of the guy giving the sermon. That's how intense it is. So, that's how we get over fear. What other questions did I not answer? Go ahead.

Q: You might have answered this, and I just didn't grasp it. I had a very inspirational thing happen to me. I am an actor and a playwright, and I have been doing a show about this inspirational moment for like two years now, but I think there's another message in there and—

A: Let me jump in here for a moment. There are only three things that people care about that will get you hired. There are three things that people want to hear: how to get more wealth, how to get better health, and how to have more love or better relationships in their lives. Those are the only three things

you'll get paid to speak about. How to write a play is not one of them. Wealth, health, relationships. So, lemme tell you, we have to corporatize what we do. If you are able to write a script, what about rescripting your life? Redesigning your life. We're living so long now that we're outliving our careers. We have to have a second career now. How do we rewrite the script of our life? That is a terrific topic. So what have I done here? I've taken your skills, your talent, and done what I call corporatizing the talk. Making it a talk that not just five people will listen to in a theater. Although, having said that, I have been paid to be an artist in residence and speak at drama departments. I think that's rare. Universities and high schools do have a budget, but it's hard. So, that kind of global idea of redesigning your life and making a living from your second career, not starting at the bottom, how to rescript and how to see yourself as a character—your skill is that you imagine it, you write it, and you actually re-create something. Rescripting your life would be what comes to my head, but I'm sure there are many others.

Q: How did you get your book to Oprah?

A: Oh, Oprah. Like I said, Random House—this was just the universe all clicking together. What I did was I provided my publisher with my hero's journey, as I call it. My mess to success: that I've taken housewives, and I've turned them into professional comics. Some of my students when I was teaching comedy—Seth Rogen, Sherri Shepherd, who's now on *The View*. So, I have taken a lot of people and helped them discover their comedy identity and turn their problems into punchlines, which was my other book, *The Comedy Bible: Turn Your Problems into Punchlines*. So, Oprah then created a show. She was intrigued by how I transformed people, so she created a show where she had housewives—my former students—all come out and do a set. They did it at Universal Amphitheatre. She came out to LA to do the show—this was a big, friggin' show. And then I came out and was the expert, and she held up my book. I put it on my Facebook page, but I have such big hair, it's embarrassing.

Q: Through her handlers?

A: No, it was through my agent, but this was 1989. So that's a different time. Oprah doesn't have her show anymore. Everyone's written books. This was before the self-publishing industry. But I did get myself, for this book, on a lot of major television shows, just by myself, calling up the show and pitching. I created what's called a sizzle reel. This is all in the book, how to do a sizzle reel. In the sizzle reel, I told several stories about how I took someone who was a housewife and had her find her message, and now she's become the author of a book, now she's speaking. I took stories about the effect I had, and I narrowed that—a lot of these talk shows, stay-at-home mothers were their audience, so I took the story of someone who was a stay-at-home mother, and I showed her the importance of her message. It resonated with a lot of talk shows, and I did it as though I was on a talk show. So I did it in three minutes, a three-minute thing showing how I tell a story. I just did it with my camera in my living room, no special effects, no nothing. I talked as though I was talking to a camera, and the truth is, when I was on the show, I did exactly what I did in my living room. I sent them the tape, and they put me right on.

I have to tell you—there's not a lot of people who get this. If you get this, and like I said, you're giving, not saying, "Look at me! Please buy my book! Let me tell you my story!" Yawn. But talk about transformation. That's what television is all about, in reality.

Q: My situation is a little different. I'm a nonfiction writer, and I write on a particular architect. An African-American pioneer. Through no fault of mine, I get paid to speak because of this particular architect to someone that wants to see his work. So my message becomes "use your imagination for creative problem solving." He practiced from 1915–1973. He became an architect of the stars. So what I tell is his mess, not my mess. But when I'm speaking—

A: So what is the question? How to corporatize that topic?

Q: Yeah, I get corporate gigs, but it sounds like I should not be promoting who the person is? I should be promoting—

A: Your speech is sixty minutes. It has several stories. Basically, there's six steps to writing a speech. This is all in my book. The first step is you pretend the audience is asking you questions. I always come out, and I pretend they're negative, like, "Why are you here?" So you maybe have six, seven, eight stories in your talk.

Q: That's not my question. I'm struggling to articulate to tell you. Do I promote the person that the books are about, or do I promote the message that I think his life tells?

A: Well, what's his name?

Q: Paul Williams.

A: How many of you know who Paul Williams is? Okay. There's your answer. "Hey, I'm talking about Paul Williams!" "Who?" I can talk about John Lennon. Because maybe 5 percent of the audience raised their hand, I wouldn't promote it that way, since nobody knows who he is. But that being said, diversity is a huge issue. If you talk about how somebody has overcome race issues, you're a diversity speaker. There's plenty of big budgets. They have to do it. As a matter of fact, here's one way to think about what you want to speak about: there's all these events. Admin professionals' day, you know? I did a special thing devoted to admins and how to handle the stress of being an admin. There's all sorts of ways, but mostly it's about understanding this industry, because I've got to tell you, sometimes I think it's such a scam. You're paying me how much? Really? I think it's awesome, and it's really awesome that I have the opportunity of being able to do this and make a difference in people's lives. And you sell so many books.

I forgot to mention this, and I just want to make the point, and then your question. The reason I got this book deal is because I speak. So let's just say I'm speaking to 1,500 people, maybe 2,000 people, a month. That's a lot of people. In my book proposal, I put in all my speaking engagements. How many people I'm speaking for. And that's why they gave me a large advance for this book. Because they know I'm going to be selling books. And I create a story about my book. It's not, "Buy my book. Here it is, and here's what's in it." I have the story of how my book was created. I have the story about how all my books were created. So you have a story about your product that has emotional resonance to it.

Q: Hi. I love you. I love coming to see you. Thank you so much. I watched you at IWAS a couple years ago. Anyway, so I have finished my book, and it's called I Can't Leave My Blog, which is my experience dealing with agoraphobia. So, in my speaking, what I'm putting together is—I can't believe I'm blogging now.

A: What's the question? What do you need to know?

Q: My title, How to Connect to Your Joybox or Romancing the 100-Pound Gorilla in the Room. I want it to be something where people know that they can come and find out how someone else did it. How others have come out and gone up. Somewhere. To the sky. I'm blanking.

A: Okay, we'll come back if you get the question. Let me know!

Q: Is there a single topic you would say is best for speakers, for the purpose of creating speaking revenue? I'm not looking to take the message and make it the message. I have a very specific message.

A: What is it?

Q: Thinking about divorces under the whole new system. Obviously, it comes from a quarter-million dollar divorce I went through. It was going on for decades. There's got to be a whole different way to do this. (End of question is inaudible.)

A: Yeah, that's interesting. Yeah, absolutely. I think you'd have to research to see who's speaking on it. If nobody's speaking on your topic, it's not a good topic. By this point, if ten people are speaking about it, good! Speak about it! Because then it's profitable.

Where do divorced people all get together? Certainly they're not going to come as couples. So that's problematic right there. I would switch it around—I would give information about leaving situations, but it has to be about how you know when to stay, how do you heal a relationship. That's more positive. No one will pay you to tell them a way to get divorced. I don't know what group would hire you for that.

But having said that . . . the question "how do you know when relationships are over?" is big too. It's sometimes very healthy, and sometimes people have a hard time ending them. But go ahead.

Okay, let's get to it! The four things that ruin your speaking career. The number one thing is that you wing it. So many speakers are so scared about writing the speech that they wing it. They don't really plan it out. Larry Winget, he makes \$36,000 a speech, and he's used the same speech for twenty years. Every single word is exactly the same, but it's excruciatingly planned out. Not excruciating to listen to, but it's planned out. So not planning the first mistake.

The next mistake is that you make the speech all about you. I'm here to tell you my story. Unless you are a survivor speaker, and you've been on *20/20* or you've been interviewed by Brian Williams or something, nobody wants to hear your story if you're not a celebrity. If you're a celebrity that people care about, tell your story! They want to hear it, if you tell it in a really great way. So that's the second mistake you can make.

The third mistake is that you don't share of your heart. It goes both ways—you do all content and no heart, or you do all heart and no content.

And the fourth mistake is that you talk about something you're not qualified to talk about. One guy came to me and said, "I want to talk about loss, because I lost my parents, and I was married three

times, and I got divorced, and then I made a million dollars, and then I lost it.” I said, “Okay, that’s really great, because you survived a lot, and now you’re really rich and you’re married.” He said, “No, no, no, I’m homeless and I live in a car.” And so, it’s like: you can’t talk about that, you are a loser. Nobody is going to go, “Hey, I want to talk about losing!” If you’re a loser, you can’t talk about it. You can only talk about success if you have walked your talk.

How do you make people laugh? When I came on stage, I immediately got a laugh. I said, “Thank you, Robin, that was the best introduction I’ve ever written. Give her a hand.” I’ve done something where I’m asking the audience to applaud. What am I doing? “Let’s have a hand for Robin!” So they applaud. What I’m doing is I’m kind of saying I’m your dominatrix now. Whip! I’m taking control. Especially if you’re a woman, this is very important to do, to ask the audience to do something. And don’t ask them to stand. Applauding is something they’ll do. And then you do something like, “And how about a hand for all the fabulous artwork in the room!” Just something goofy. That usually gets a laugh, if you ask you ask them to do something. “And how about a hand for the guy who fixed the air conditioner!” if it was really hot in there. Or “Let’s hear it for that long line in the ladies bathroom!” Something the audience has gone through together. That usually gets a laugh.

Let me talk just briefly about humor. I get hired a lot by people who need me to punch up their act or speech. And I don’t do that anymore, at all, because making something funny is easy. It’s so easy. Having it make sense and be compelling is so hard. Here’s the thing—I never work on comedy until the speech is totally written—it scans, it’s logical, it makes sense, it’s compelling, it’s honest, it’s authentic. If it passes all that, now let’s make it funny. Funny is the coating. It’s the icing, after you’ve made the cake. And funny is how you tell your story. There’s no funny story. That story about Nick, you all laughed hysterically at the end. “I almost gave the guy the finger!” You all were hysterical. If I said, “Hey, I can tell a funny story about guys who’ve been paralyzed in Afghanistan,” you’d go, “That’s sick.” But there were laughs. There are no funny stories. It’s how you tell the story. And I will never tell a funny story. There’s no such thing as a funny story. You know why? A funny story is manipulative. It’s like I’m only telling you this to get your reaction at the end.

Having said that, here’s a comedy formula. A quick way to get a laugh is a list of three. Let’s write a joke. Ready? So if I’m talking about divorce and relationships—I’m going to improvise, sir, on your topic. It’s like, wow! Divorce is hard, it really is. And for some people it’s a surprise. Well, I’m going to tell you right now, there are three subtle clues that your relationship is over. You’re not really hugging any more. You’re not eating dinner together. And no sex is obvious. So, I’m saying subtle clues. Go bigger.

Audience Member: You’re not living in the same city.

JC: Right. You’re not living in the same city, and they’ve issued a restraining order against you! And he’s moved in with your brother. It’s over! That’s like—wow, I gotta tell you, you have to lighten up. It’s a terrible world we’re living in. We’ve got terrorism. We’ve got wars. Kim Kardashian is a mother.

So any time you have a list of three, you always put in a laugh on the third one. It’s like, “Oh my god, are you serious?” So listen to the set-up. Subtle clues. So small, small, BIG! Big, big, small—Kim Kardashian. Do you guys get that? There’s several formulas. Those are all in my book as well.

There's a really good formula. You have to go home. We need a group hug. Let's all sing "Kumbaya."

Audience Member: One last one!

JC: One last what?

Audience Member: Tell us how to be funny!

JC: Is that what you want?

Audience Member: No, you should tell us, how do you research a topic.

JC: Okay, if you're going to speak, know your industry. Know something about it. There are several ways that I suggest to become a good speaker. Number one is Toastmasters. Fabulous organization. I am so impressed with this organization. There I was in Oman, that was where Toastmasters was, and in Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, countries I never even knew existed. There we were. You think about women in these areas being oppressed, and they're all speaking out their message! They're all getting on stage, in their Toastmasters, and they're committed to it. They have international contests. This year, it's going to be in Malaysia. I've been invited. I've spoken at their international conventions, and I am an ambassador for Toastmasters because I really think it's the way to world peace—if we're all getting together from different countries, sharing our messages. If you look at public speaking and Google, the countries where people are Googling how to become a public speaker are in the Middle East. It's a cheap way to learn English. It's like \$29 a year or something. Crazy cheap. There are clubs—the Los Angeles club, I've never been to it, but I hear it's terrific. They have a humor contest once a year, and they have the international contest where everyone competes. I've coached several people—I'm proud to say that the people I've coached are going on to Malaysia to compete, and I'm very excited about that.

Audience Member: There's Toastmasters for writers.

JC: Toastmasters for writers! So look it up. Number two is TED Talks. TEDx. How many of you watch TEDx talks? Please, watch mine. Which reminds me—please e-mail me or tweet me, because I am generous with my knowledge—judy@judycarter.com. I don't spam at all. I only give content because I'm there to help you get your message out. And I give a lot of tips and a lot of information. My TEDx talk is on my blog. I did a TEDx talk for entrepreneurs. TEDx is a fifteen- or twenty-minute talk, and it's a great thing to strive for. You get your TEDx, and it brands you as an expert. And here's the buzz in the industry—speaker bureaus are saying that all their clients want a TED speaker. And TEDx is just fine. There's ways to get into TEDx, and that's really great.

Audience Member: To let everyone know, I just read a phenomenal book called Talk Like TED.

JC: Anyway, TED is message-driven. So it's like, what is your message? It's a phenomenal way to sell your book and get your message out there. Again, don't promote your book. Don't promote your story. Promote your message. And again, your message is about how we have a mess. There is a mess in the world. In what part of the world are you dealing? What is the mess, and how do you propose taking

people to success? Now if you say there's a mess, and you say that everyone's upset about cardboard—no, they're not.

You have to hit home with the mess. And in order to hit home with the mess, here's your homework assignment. Because we're in Los Angeles, we're all profoundly narcissistic. All we care about is ourselves. So here's something, a way to wake yourself up. This is something you can do. In order to connect with an audience, you have to really be in touch with other people's messes. So one way to do it is to go to 31 Flavors and just say these words: "Wow, it must be hard to always use one hand, isn't it?" At the valet: "Is it hard not to be in sunlight? Are you having vitamin D deficiency?" Get used to understanding what other people are going through. That's the only way to really, truly be successful; I feel that's my ticket to success. Empathy. And it's nothing I was born with, believe me. It was nothing I was born with. It was something I actually had to learn, but when you learn that, and you learn to connect with people's messes, that truly will lead you to your success.

Q: So here's the question: how important is your title for your topic?

A: Extremely important. I can't go into that now, because that's an elaborate process. As a matter of fact, in the book it covers all that. Ten different ways to write your title. I'm going to be signing books. My goddaughter is here—Eva, where are you? Look at her, from North Carolina! Say hi. Yay! We also have a special deal, which is a speaking career in a box. If you prefer video instruction, it's four DVDs and a workbook. I'm kind of giving it away, because it's usually \$249, but today, there's a special deal. Just come up, and here all this is.

It's been a pleasure. Thank you so much!