

from **Speakers' Spotlight Blog** • July 2013

Spotlight on ... Brian Thwaites

What inspired you to want to be a speaker?

I got such a kick out of teaching college students how to think, learn and communicate that I wanted to take my show on the road and share the information with a broader audience.

Any advice for aspiring speakers?

You need to use both sides of your brain to be a good speaker ... because it's both a craft and an art.

What do you like to leave audiences with?

My hope is always that they've found at least one idea so interesting that they'll want to share it with someone else (a co-worker, a family member, a stranger) as soon as I'm finished speaking.

How do you prepare before a talk? Any special rituals?

The night before I speak, I read over my notes and do one last run-through of my presentation, always with the aim of surpassing my client's expectations. I arrive early on the day of the event and mingle with as many people as I can — so, by the time I'm introduced, I'll feel like I know my audience a lot better than when I first arrived.

A good luck talisman?

My wife usually texts me a good luck smooch just before I hit the stage.

Do you have an especially memorable event you can tell us about?

I delivered an 'older and wiser' presentation at a Women's Canadian Club event in London a few months ago. The organizing committee was so gracious, and they treated me royally. The 500+ in the audience were one of the most engaged groups I've ever spoken to. They gave me a standing ovation!

Any funny or embarrassing situations you found yourself in as a speaker?

I use a lot of props in my presentations. I've been yanked out of airport lines and pulled aside so security staff can rummage through my suitcase. Everyone has a good laugh when they discover the skulls and brains in my bag are only made of plastic.

Is there a charitable cause that you feel passionate about? Why?

Having worked with learning disabled young people, my heart is very much in literacy projects. I've been involved with Indigo's Love of Reading Foundation for several years and am a proud member of its Adopt A School program. Every time I speak at an event, I donate a library book to a needy school on behalf of my clients.

If you had to choose a new career, what would it be?

Grammar Cop. (Once an English teacher, always an English teacher.)

Desert island album?

None. I'd listen to the waves.

Best subject in school?

English

Last book you read?

Sweet Tooth by Ian McEwan

Last film you saw?

Life of Pi

Celebrity crush?

Well, I don't know if it's a crush exactly, but I'm quite enthralled with Sir Ken Robinson. I ran into him at the airport after we both had spoken at separate events in Saskatoon last year, and it was a thrill to meet and chat with him.

What is it like traveling so much? How do you relax? How do you stay healthy?

I love flying, and I especially enjoy going places I've never been to before. I usually turn off the seat-back screen and read or listen to music to relax. And I carry a ridiculous amount of healthy snacks in my carry-on bag to help steer myself clear of junk food.

How about at home?

I'm lucky to share my home office with a wonderful dog named Murphy, who keeps me calm and grounded. He likes to take me on three or four walks a day, so I get plenty of exercise, too!