

# Speaker Kung-Fu

A few years ago I was out in front of my apartment building in Brooklyn looking for my watch in my garbage can. It was missing and I believed it had slipped off my wrist while I was scraping the dishes.

A guy came walking up the street with two friends in tow and said something nasty to me. I pulled my head out of the garbage can and suggested he go away.

He said, "Make me!" I pretended to ignore him and put my head back in the garbage can.

The next thing I knew I was up against the wall of the apartment building with a switch blade at my throat.

The guy was breathing into my face, telling me he was going to stick me. His friends were standing outside the yard, egging him on.

Something told me this guy was showing off for his friends. My primitive lizard-brain kicked in.

"Listen," I said, barely able to take a breath or make a sound. "You're tougher than I am. You know it. They know it. I know it. You win. You don't have to stick me to prove it."

I could see the muscles around his eyes relax. He folded his knife, called me a sissy over his shoulder, and left with his friends. I went inside, shaking, without my watch.

Your communication skills may not save your life, but they may very well save your career.

Why? Because you can get mugged in the meeting rooms of corporate America. Not literally, but psychologically, discreetly, professionally. You can get mugged.

Mugged by your audience, by their questions, their tone, their subtle indications that they aren't buying it. Mugged by their glazed looks, their stifled yawns, their whispering back and forth among themselves.

There are other assailants, too. Inner assailants. You can get mugged by your own anxiety. By your own uncertainty. Mugged by your own lack of preparation. Mugged by your over-confidence. And mugged by your lack of a basic education on the principles and practices of effective speaking.

Let me know if I can help you.



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