

CONFIDENCE LESSONS FROM A MUSICAL



I don't sing because I'm happy; I'm happy because I sing (William James)

I'm a fan of musicals. That's a colossal understatement. I'm crazy about musicals. I can't understand what's not to like about singing and dancing your way through love, betrayal, perils, triumphs, dastardly deeds and happy endings. And beyond the song and dance spectacle there is a world of wisdom in the lyrics from musicals. "Don't Rain on My Parade," from *Funny Girl* for example is one of the greatest anthems ever written about seizing life by two hands and going for broke for your dreams; and of course "America" from *West Side Story* is a timeless expose on race relations and immigration. But I digress...

The song I want to talk about right now is "I Whistle a Happy Tune" from *The King and I* written by Rogers & Hammerstein. I first saw it on Broadway as a star struck adolescent with Gertrude Lawrence as the English Governess (and singer of the song) and Yule Brenner as the King. I was so enraptured watching them

waltzing around the Court of Siam I don't think I exhaled for the duration.

The song is sung by the Governess Anna Leonowens to her son Louis after the curtain rises on Act One of the musical, to persuade him not to be afraid as they arrive in Siam to serve the King. In so doing she persuades herself as well.

If ever there was a perfect NLP role modeling of 'getting into state' this song is it. In the words of Amy Cuddy, our body changes our mind, our mind changes our behavior and our behavior changes our outcomes. In other words fake it until you are it.

Here is the song in its entirety so that you can print it, stand up and read it out loud. And then do it again. If you remember the tune - even better - sing it:

Whenever I feel afraid,

I hold my head erect

And whistle a happy tune,

So no-one will suspect

I'm afraid.

While shivering in my shoes,

I strike a careless pose

And whistle a happy tune,

So no-one ever knows

I'm afraid.

The result of this deception

Is very strange to tell,

For when I fool the people I fear,

I fool myself as well!

I whistle a happy tune,

And every single time

The happiness in that tune

Convinces me that I'm not afraid.

Make believe you're brave

And the trick will take you far;

You may be as brave

As you make believe you are!

You may be as brave

As you make believe you are!

In every Presence, Impact & Influence and Leadership Program I facilitate, and with every client I coach in communication or confidence, we always explore this powerful somatic reframing or what we call in theatre, Acting As If. It boils down to one word: Intention.

When you set a clear intention through your body, your voice, energy and belief follow through most elegantly. Participants are always amazed as they witness their peers transform before their eyes from tentative to virtuoso communicators when they play the "Act As If" game. They can motivate, reassure, exude authority (not arrogance) or perform whatever energy-state their scenario requires of them.

There are no one-size-fits-all rules here. Your unique presence finds the shape, the power and personal signature it needs. With clarity comes confidence.

Your body is the director of your show, the CEO of You Inc. and it shapes your attitude, beliefs, energy and mind. All it's waiting for is its mission - from you. So set your intention and "Act As If." Start with I Whistle a Happy Tune and see how quickly you can upgrade your mojo.

Oh, and go see a musical!

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