

Brian Tomasik

Presented 13 February 2004

Public Speaking Speech 1 – The Introduction Speech

### *Task*

Choose a person about whom to speak. What is important about this person in general? Why should the audience know about this person? What makes this person important to you? The speech should be three to eight minutes.

### *Full-Sentence Outline of the Speech*

- I. People can often influence us even if we have never met them.
- II. Explain the immediate influences of Mister Rogers:
  - a. My father would vocally imitate characters.
  - b. We made two imitations of the program with our own video camera.
- III. He has impacted my personality in many ways:
  - a. He demonstrated the importance of hard work and its potential for being enjoyable.
  - b. He emphasized patience.
  - c. He taught me to deal with anger.
  - d. He impressed upon me a sense of wonder about life.
- IV. His ideas may seem naïvely idealistic, but they can work to whatever extent we make them work. They enable us to make the recognizably imperfect world in which we find ourselves just a little bit better.

### *The Speech*

There are many people whom we never meet in person, whom we encounter only through the pages of books or the light and sound emitted by a television set. And yet, these people can have profound

impacts on our lives. One of them for me is Fred Rogers, host of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

I have been influenced by Mister Rogers for as long as I can remember. *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* is the first television program I can remember seeing. I would always enjoy the entire show, although I distinctly remember being especially excited whenever the trolley was brought out and entered the Neighborhood of Make-Believe. The impact of the show continued even after the TV had been turned off, for my father would vocally imitate the puppets in the Neighborhood of Make-Believe, especially Lady Elaine. We even used our video camera in filming two homemade imitations of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

However, the biggest influence of Mister Rogers was on my attitudes toward life. Both explicitly through his discussions and songs and implicitly through his demeanor, Mister Rogers shaped much of my personality.

He demonstrated the importance of hard work, both through own personal assiduity and through his songs. One of them, titled "You've Got to Do It," explains that while it is fine to wish for or pretend something, you actually have to work to make it happen. Perhaps even more importantly, Mister Rogers showed that hard work can be—and, in fact, ought to be—enjoyable. He nearly always carried a sincere smile, whether he was cleaning up a mess or walking a friend's dog.

Mister Rogers also emphasized the value of patience. He sang a song—“Let’s Think of Something to Do while We’re Waiting”—whenever he had to wait a minute for something to happen. The slow, steady pace of the show, moreover, provided a comforting break from the rushed pace of everyday life. On several occasions, Mister Rogers would stop for a minute or two, simply to offer viewers an opportunity for quiet contemplation.

I first learned how to manage anger from Mister Rogers. One of his songs, “What Do You Do with the Mad that You Feel,” emphasized that while it is normal to feel anger, it is important to deal with it in a safe way, such as by punching a bag or running a race with friends. Whenever I am filled with rage, I often remember this song and realize that there are ways of relieving negative emotion that are not destructive.

Perhaps most importantly, Mister Rogers helped me to appreciate the wonder of life. He was always curious about and fascinated by new things. In almost every program, he would visit a new place—such as a graham cracker factory—or a new person—such as a man who arranged extensive domino paths. Mister Rogers also showed short films on how people make flashlights or paper or balloons. One of his best songs, entitled, “Did You Know that It’s All Right to Wonder,” declared that “there are all kinds of wonderful, all kinds of marvelous, marvelously wonderful things.” Mister Rogers influenced me to be fascinated, awed, and inspired by all aspects of life, from the smallest detail in grammar to

the most prodigious questions about the origins of the universe. Life holds as much wonder as we care to find in it; Mister Rogers encouraged his viewers to look for more.

Many of the principles that Mister Rogers espoused may seem unrealistically idealistic and naïve, as if they could only work in a perfect world. However, I have found that these values *can* make a difference to whatever extent we allow them to make a difference. Work can be as enjoyable as we make it; waiting is as tolerable as we decide to think of it; life holds as much meaning and wonder we wish to find in it. The practice of these ideas is not confined to an ideal world. Much to the contrary, these principles represent valuable ways to make the recognizably imperfect world in which we find ourselves just a little bit better.