



SUSPENSE!

Toastmaster of the Evening Suzanne noted that the theme of the evening had been chosen because it was the day of the American election; however, she felt that 'anxiety' might have been more fitting. She cited a poll of American psychologists: 70% of their patients had reported anxiety about the future of the nation. The rules of Toastmasters, she continued, prohibit political controversy, and "Suzanne loves to follow club rules!" Rules create order and prevent chaos. However, this is what is at stake in this elections, she explained, in a democracy "designed to speak truth to power." Suzanne concluded - "But the suspense continues.... As we do the toast!"

THE TOAST - BENOIT

"Have you ever found yourself on the edge of your seat, heart racing?" – That's suspense, he said, exciting but also tiring. Our brains release dopamine, keeping us focused and sharpening our senses, but what happens when there is too much suspense? – anxiety. "The suspense is killing us," we say. But the good news is, we can handle this: "Turn off the TV!" he suggested. "The world will keep spinning."

THE WORD OF THE DAY – DAVIDE

Appropriately, the word of the day was JITTERY, a word that appealed so much it was used by many speakers including Davide, Suzanne, Yannis, Davide, Florence, Vicki, Silvia, Alex, Amelie, and Siobhan.

JOKE – VINCENT

Vincent delivered a series of election jokes including -

What do you call a candidate who tells the truth? – Unemployed!

What's the favorite vacation place for a politician? – The Poles!

Trump and Harris are in a plane crash. Who survives? - America!

BASE CAMP UPDATE

Lars, VP Education, talked about the new version of Pathways. It is much more user friendly: for example, it is now possible to complete and send evaluation feedback directly on Base Camp without having to download the forms, he says. However, Lars warned, there are some bugs in the program. He asked everyone to check their details on Base Camp to see that their speeches have been credited, and vice versa, that undone projects have not been marked as completed! If members have problems, they should contact him for help.

MENTORING

Mentoring can make all the difference in Toastmaster growth. "New mentors are as vital to the life of the Club as are new members, maybe even more so, because without immediate mentor connection starting from the moment of induction, new members are cast adrift," Martin reminds us.

Thanks to Alison, VP Mentoring, for organizing this for us!

Table Topics - Yannis

Josep – Leaking Someone’s Secret

In 2016 Josep had twenty-four hours to get out of Iran, as his CIA cover had been blown. He was driven to the border in the trunk of a car and then had to hike across the mountains into Turkey. At last he reached Paris, the only place where he would be safe.

Siobhan – Getting away with Murder

Hard to say this, because it has always been secret, Siobhan began. But after Josep left, she discovered the identity of the traitor, the CIA chief. As she was secretly in love with Josep - another secret only just revealed - she resorted to murder to avenge the crime...

Davide – You meet your date at the restaurant, but the profile was a lie!

Meeting dates like this is commonplace nowadays, and Davide said he had found himself meeting people like this in the past. However, he thought it would be hard to lie on several photos... Even if the date did not look as good as someone expects, presumably you’d have been attracted by the conversation you’d had, too. Certainly it would be important not to show disappointment! – and then good news – you could divide the bill!

Lars – The Film Before the Book?

Lars was very firm in declaring that the full scope of a book can never be fitted into a film, which can only last three hours at the most. In any case, the best way to appreciate the story is through the imagination, as the person creates the fictional world in their head, and this is always better. So no, never film before book!

Dalila – A comet is about to destroy the earth: how do you spend your last day?

What would she do with those last hours, Delilah pondered - spend time with her family or try out something new, unhindered by social norms? It would be important not to be stressed, she thought, but instead to embrace fate. Having considered these issues, Delilah decided that she would want to have time with her family. She would cook a good meal and then spend everything “on one great wine” to “drink and share with loved ones.”

SPEECHES AND EVALUATIONS

- FLORENCE – ICEBREAKER: PRACTICING PATIENCE, evaluated by AMELIE
- JOANNE – JOURNEY FROM BURNOUT TO SELF-LOVE, evaluated by JOSEP
- VICKI – WHO’S NEXT? evaluated by ALEX
- SILVIA – BARK! Evaluated by SIOBHAN

PRACTICING PATIENCE

Florence introduced herself through the type of movies she loves (those that leave her “so enthralled and so confused”) and those she hates (suspenseful movies bore her). She told us that this year, through deciding to change jobs following burnout, she has been forced to learn patience.

Amelie noted that the icebreaker can be “a bit of a traumatizing speech” but congratulated Florence on controlling her nervousness – she used pauses, avoided excessive movement, and had good gestures (e.g., hands on heart to convey something dear to her), although some laughter betrayed her at times. Amelie recommended more eye contact to convey confidence. Florence’s use of storytelling (talking about her favorite movie) was commended, as well as the way she used films to give us insight into her personality. The shift in subject from films to career was a little confusing, Amelie warned, advising for next time, “Take us by the hand with structure: we need to feel where you want to take us.”

FROM BURNOUT TO SELF-LOVE

Joanne resumed her personal story, taking up where she had left us at the end of her last Icebreaker speech. She explained how, on arriving in Paris from Shanghai, she had experienced burnout before achieving “unconditional self-love.” She told us how she had trained herself to relax (dark room, music and candles, no tech), to stop self-criticism (“Criticism changes nothing,”) and to “Live just for today. This hour.”

Josep opened, “Straight to the point – fantastic!” He commended the way Joanne held the audience, the clear structure to her speech, her use of quotations (the things she told herself), and her humor (that even if she thought no one else loved her, her mother did!). Above all, Josep praised Joanne for speaking without notes, adding that this was very rare, even for confirmed TMPers. Joanne is, he concluded, a great member of our club, and she is helping to make it even stronger!

WHO'S NEXT?

Vicki confessed that the word of the evening, *jittery*, described how she was feeling, and then explained her fears that Trump might be elected, despite his 34 counts of lawbreaking, despite his being the first President to refuse to disclose tax details, despite his persistent lying....

Alex opened by saying that, despite Vicki's protests that this wasn't a funny subject, she had indeed provoked some dark and grim humor and had drawn laughter from absurdity. He praised Vicki's vocal dexterity, calling it an "exemplar" of volume (from the loud and incredulous "Trump *won!*" to the quiet reflection of "I couldn't believe it,") as well as her use of pace changes. Her confidence, he told her, was displayed in her gestures and eye contact. Finally, Alex praised Vicki's handouts, which he said set certain expectations for the audience without giving too much away. However, as Alex reminded her, if Vicki's intention is humorous, she could have emphasized more of the absurd, and as she was supposed to be creating humor through anecdotes, she needed more than one. He left her with a challenge: more anecdotes next time!

BARK!

Silvia's humorous story was built around a very simple confusion: she thought she heard a young man say he wanted to *bark* when in fact he was saying he wanted to *park*.

Siobhan found much to praise, from Silvia's opening scene-setting sentence to her final message, that we should always talk to strangers because it created positive experiences. She noted that Silvia is never jittery but always in cool command of the audience, with good eye contact and natural gestures. She noted that questions were used throughout to keep us hooked, to vary the pace and tone, and to slow the pace so we could share Silvia's confusion. The mock serious tones and references to Toastmasters judging criteria (body language to judge sniffing dog movements and the vocal variety to judge barking) infused humor into the speech, as did the pun ("barking mad"). Siobhan advised Silvia to enunciate the word *bark* at the beginning (she had heard *buck*), and to add more drama to the story – emphasizing the different voices of the men and particularly to exaggerate the barking, on which the humor of the story depends.

THE EVENING'S GUESTS

Alexander...

...is interested in improving his communication skills - he has stage fright in when asked to speak in meetings [probably the number one reason for starting Toastmasters!]. He said it had been an interesting evening with a high level. He is looking forward to coming back!

Diako...

...visited us in his role as Area Director, and said he was here to learn our secrets - how we make our meetings great!
He is currently a member of two clubs, one French and one English.

Jialuo...

...had heard of Toastmasters through some Australian friends and came with her coach, Dalila. She said she had felt the club was inclusive and had found it “inspiring” to see people being “openminded to sharing their skills.”

Dalila...

...is a career coach who wants to improve public speaking as she often has to talk to groups. A French speaker, she needs English for this, and Toastmasters would give her the chance to practice. She was impressed with the meeting, which she found was very structured, and claimed that the feeling had been “warm” and “welcoming”.

Miikka...

Is from inland, now living in Paris. He wants to develop his speaking skills in order to present at work. He thanked us for the warm welcome, adding, “How talented you all are!”

Wenjun...

...only arrived in Paris two days before and found us by Googling! She said the evening was “Delicious – the food as well!” The evening flowed smoothly “like the Seine,” and she told us that she had enjoyed the coziness of the restaurant.

Fei...

...who was a Toastmaster 20 years ago in Shanghai and now “rediscovering this passion” with “an open heart,” concluded, “I didn’t realize how much technique there was behind speeches!”

Hyunjoo...

...heard of Toastmasters over ten years ago and has been in Paris for over a year, She is now coming out of her comfort zone, she told us, wanting “to see and learn” and hoping to develop her career. She described the meeting as “cheerful and joyful.”

GENERAL EVALUATION

ALEX

Despite there being only 14 members at the meeting, it turned out to be a good evening, Alex said, “Really fun and intimate.”

To Suzanne’s opening questioning of whether politics is a suitable Toastmasters subject, Alex pointed out that it had motivated “interesting and insightful speeches,” and concluded that it was fine as long as we remain welcoming to everyone.

Alex had enjoyed Josep’s fictional anecdote, which was an interesting way to respond to Table Topics.

He reminded us of recent recommendations for speakers to turn away from the audience during thinking time. He advised against this, as it does not prepare us for real life conversations, which is the purpose of these ad hoc talks.

Alex commended the mixed seating of guests and members, but asked us also to remember the loneliness of the timer, who often eats alone.

The evaluations were commendable, he said, then laughingly excluded his own!

Maya was applauded when Alex said had been grammarian and stumble catcher, both for the first time, and that these assignments require a different kind of attention.

Finally, Alex thanked Lars for updating us on Base Camp.

RIBBONS



Icebreaker – Florence



Speech – Joan

**Table Topic and Evaluation –
Josep and Siobhan**



Next meeting – November 19 - See you there!