

This document is being published as a courtesy to members of Toastmasters International, throughout the world. It is a full script of the speech with which I won the 2003 World Championship of Public Speaking, including my staging notes.

The purpose of the staging notes is to help the readers to fully understand the manner in which I used the stage, since that is an element of speech delivery that can be (but rarely is) used to full effect, in order to heighten the impact of a particular speech.

For those who are interested, I am available to partner with you to help make your next meeting, conference, or convention a success by delivering a high-impact, highly effective keynote address. You can contact me at speaking@jimkey.com.

Before you read the speech, please note the following copyright information:

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Please contact Key & Associates at 469-366-4395 or KeyNotes@jimkey.com to submit a request.

I hope that you enjoy the speech as much as I enjoy presenting it.

Make it an AWESOME today, for a BETTER tomorrow!!!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Key". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jim Key

2003 World Champion of Public Speaking

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"Never Too Late"

by Jim Key

Stage props: Two chairs in middle of stage;

Staging

Begin standing in front of the chairs
Sit in stage left chair.

Arms open wide

Comedic cadence & emphasis

Motion to right chair
LOUD, in child voice
[Extreme facial expressions]

Stand [stay immediately in front of chairs]

A lot of facial expressiveness
Wide gesture
Sit back down
LOUD, in child voice

Stand up, move slight stage right.

Turn and stand next to chairs...

Come center stage
Very sarcastically

Cross stage to slight stage left

Large gestures

Narration

The theater is quiet. The aroma of overpriced popcorn permeates the air. You settle in for the perfect family outing, and then it happens: the film you are watching takes a sudden emotional turn. You try to resist, but you can't help it! Before you know it, your eyes begin to...sweat.

You may not care that people see you crying, but the last time it happened to me, I was thankful the theater was dark!!

But my young daughter, who doesn't know it's okay to whisper, pierced the darkness with: "ARE YOU CRYING?"

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, and anyone who has ever gotten misty at a movie: Never ignore inquisitive children. The longer you do, the louder they get! In a matter of seconds, my daughter shouted, "WHY ARE YOU CRYING, DADDY!?"

The movie my family and I were watching at that time was "The Rookie". On the surface, it's about the oldest rookie in baseball, but on a much deeper level, it's a story of reclaiming life's missed opportunities. When the movie ended and I realized what a great teaching opportunity I had, I turned to my two sons, and said "Guys, what did you learn from this?"

Imagine how proud I was when my 16-year old said..." I learned that my dad cries at the movies".

My 12-year old took the question, and his well-being, a bit more seriously. He said, "I learned that it's never too late to follow your dreams". ...it's never too late to follow your dreams.

Why does it sometimes take a child to remind us of that? It's because children are uninhibited

Walk slight stage right

Very, Very, **VERY** Animated!

Walk slight stage left, gesture back to stage right

Large gesture

Move far stage left

Walk briskly to extreme stage right
Run into imaginary wall (stop hard on word "wall")

Returning to center stage

Slight stage right

"Roughly" at center stage
Gesture stage left

Large gesture stage right

Center stage, large gestures

Large gesture stage left, slight step left
Large gesture stage right, slight step right

Center stage

Walk two steps stage left

Large gestures

dreamers. Last year, I spoke to an elementary school assembly, and asked "If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?". One little boy blurted out, "Oooohhh! I'd be the guy that rides on the back of the garbage truck"!!

His passion was proof that he knew something most adults have forgotten: dreaming is fun, it's natural, and it's necessary! Every notable accomplishment in human history... began as a dream.

Do you remember how you dreamed as a child? Back then, we had a wonderful innocence, and could gaze into the future, and imagine all sorts of possibilities. Then we turn our focus to adulthood. Many of us find that by the time we get here, we hit a wall and stop dreaming, because we can't see past next week. Why? What happened!?

Somewhere along the way we learned a painful truth. We learned that failing to achieve our dream hurts.

We encounter critics, who ridicule and crush our dream, and it hurts. We hear an inner voice that cries out, "No more... I can't take being hurt again", and we convince ourselves it's better to give up our dreams, and simply do what we're supposed to do, instead of longing for what we were meant to do.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we were meant to dream! Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the greatest dreamers of our age, said, "The time is always right to do what is right". That means if it's right for us to dream as children, then it's just as right for us to dream as adults.

The question is: do we have the courage to dream?

I know a remarkable teen-aged girl who does. Her name is Nicole, and you should know that she is hearing impaired, vision impaired...and three years ago she survived a stroke. If anyone has the right to give up on dreams and accept "reality", she does.

Walk back to chairs & stand up on the chairs

Large gestures

Large gestures (still standing in chairs)
Sign language, along with spoken words

Step down from chairs. Walk to slight stage left

Back to center stage

“Roughly” at center stage

Sign language only (no spoken words)

Motion to Contestmaster →

Instead, I’ve watched Nicole redefine reality not according to her physical limitations, but according to the size of her dreams. As part of that, two years ago, I saw her stand on a huge stage before almost three thousand people, and perform the sweetest song I’ve never heard. She sang it with sign language that I didn’t just see, but deep inside, I felt it! Instead of hiding behind justifiable excuses, there she was, teaching me: “It’s never too late to follow your dream.”

Ladies & gentlemen, what do you dream? ...or is the better question: What **did** you dream, and why did you stop? If you have ever let a dream slip away, I’m here to tell you, it’s not too late. If you can summon the courage to overcome your circumstances and your experiences and your critics, your dream can live!

Whether your dream is to make beautiful music, or to not get caught crying at the movies ...if you dream of changing the world, or just riding on the back of a garbage truckif you forget everything else I’ve said, it would **thrill** me if you remember this!

[It’s never, too late to follow your dreams!]

[Silent]

Speech fact notes: For those who have asked: **Yes**, all of the stories in this speech are true. They **ACTUALLY** happened. Specifically, “Nicole” (her actual name) is a very real, and very special person. I’ve known her and her Dad, Mom, & brother (Steve, Renee, & Chad) for many years. The event at which I saw her perform that song onstage as I described was the 2001 National Fine Arts Festival, held in early August 2001, Kansas City, Missouri (USA). To Nicole’s family, who helped her become the remarkable young lady she is, and to Nicole, who has deeply inspired me, I owe a huge debt of gratitude.

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