

Finding Your Voice: A Journey of Discovery and Expression

How do you find your voice?

I remember my dog, Bonnie, finding her bark. She was a beagle puppy playing around in my son's room. She stopped suddenly and let out a short but enthusiastic "Aroo." It shocked her and us. From then on, it was always fun to hear her uniquely beagle "Arroooooo."

That's what it's like when we find our voice. We discover and express our unique perspective, style, and identity. It's about embracing who you are, what you believe, and how you communicate those beliefs to the world.

How do you discover your voice? Here's my journey.

Their principles—their stories. Leadership gurus like Dale Carnegie and John Maxwell heavily influenced my voice. I taught their principles and shared their stories. I mimicked their thoughts and behaviors. I even mirrored the body language and gestures of some great speakers. But it was their voice, not mine. Be diligent in who or what influences you. Put garbage in, you get garbage out; put treasures in, you get treasures out.

Their principles—My stories. During my Maxwell Leadership certification, I was encouraged to develop 30 stories to use when teaching or speaking about Maxwell's principles. For example, Maxwell states in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership's* Law of Connection, "Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand." I developed a story about connecting with a Coca-Cola senior leader that I've shared many times.

My principles – My stories. I began writing a book in 2011, blogging in 2017, and podcasting in 2021. Expressing and

summarizing my thoughts into simple takeaways or principles helped shape my voice. I adopted the phrase, “how do I know what I think unless I read what I write?” Hence, I’ve invested decades in journaling and writing to develop my thoughts and shape my voice. And my voice comes from my heart. Sometimes, it’s joyful; other times, it’s broken or sorrowful. Let’s say I have a scar I can talk about. Les Brown said, “People will respect you for your success but love you for your failures.”

People will respect you for your success but love you for your failures.

Les Brown

My principles – Their stories. It never ceases to amaze me when I facilitate a workshop or deliver a talk to hear someone repeat a principle or respond to a message I’ve shared. Something resonated with them: a thought or word, a principle or application, a story or experience. People take a principle, apply it to their lives, and make a change. Nothing is more gratifying to me than helping others by sharing some of the small wisdom nuggets I’ve learned during my lifetime.

Like Bonnie found her unique voice with that first “Aroo,” finding your voice is about discovering and expressing what makes you unique. It’s about combining your principles with your stories and experiences and, sometimes, borrowing wisdom from others to shape and refine your perspective. Remember, people may respect your successes, but they’ll love you for your authenticity and how you connect with them through your vulnerabilities. Keep sharing your voice—it’s the most powerful tool you have.

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