Running head: G.I.F.T.S.

Stop Talking to Power Points!

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**Relevant Courses***:*

Public Speaking, , Group Communication

**Concepts and Skills Illustrated:**

Eye contact, speech practice/preparation, building familiarity with visual aids, impromptu style speaking, Power Point presentations, credibility

**Student Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to articulate and understand the importance of building familiarity with visual aid content (via Power Point Slides) in order to increase confidence, credibility, and eye contact. Students will practice maintaining eye contact by learning to avoid speaking *to* Power Point slides via impromptu speaking.

**Purpose/Rationale:**

As a Public Speaking instructor, one of the recurrent challenges I have seen students face is understanding how to effectively integrate visual aids, namely power points and other digital media, into their speech presentations. More often then not, it is quite clear that students underestimate the amount of practice it takes to build adequate familiarity with visual aid contents. Without the proper practice, power point slides may serve as a distraction to the presenter. Students are regularly tempted to rely on the slides as organizational tools (visual outlines of their speeches) rather than visual enhancements or supplementary devices to speech content. As a result, I have witnessed several students give speeches *to* their power point presentation rather than maintaining eye contact with their intended audience. This activity requires students to work with unfamiliar power point slide images as a practice in turning away from the slides, and toward their audience. This activity encourages the need for adequate visual aid preparation, practice with speech materials, and eye contact with audience members.

**Explanation of Activity:**

To begin, each student is given a 30 second preview of a power point slide that contains two arbitrary. These images are selected at random by the instructor from an online database (Google Images) and have no apparent connection to one another or course concepts. For example, one of the slides I use contains a picture of bunny in a holiday hat alongside a picture of Chuck Norris in a karate uniform. During the slide preview, students are encouraged to take as many notes as possible about the contents of the slide. After 30 seconds, students are then asked to come to the front of the room and present a 60-second impromptu speech linking the images together in a creative narrative presentation format.

Here is the catch! The instructor explains to the students that they are not allowed to look at (i.e., turn back toward) the slide during their one-minute speeches, but instead, must maintain eye contact with their audience for the duration of the activity. Because the images on the slides are unfamiliar to the students and contain no apparent connection, the students are often tempted to turn back toward the slide and refer to its content as they attempt to story their images. However, if this occurs, the student must begin anew. The activity continues until all students have completed a one-minute impromptu.

**Debrief***:*

 To debrief, students are asked *if* and *why* they were tempted to look back toward their slides. Together, the class then discusses the strategies they employed to avoid speaking *to* the slides, and the potential outcome and influence (they believe) this delivery skill may have on their future audiences. The discussion provides an opportunity to address topics such as maintaining eye contact, speaker credibility, adequate preparation with visual aids, and familiarity with Power Point slide contents. The debrief may be done in pairs, groups, or as a class, depending on class size.

**Examples of slide images:**

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