



# Andrew M. Ayers

AndrewMAyers.com

877-262-9377

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## FINDING YOUR VOICE

### Public Speaking Skills That Last a Lifetime

Speaking in front of others and advocating for ideas that are important to me has been a big part of my life.

In recognition of July as Freedom from Fear of Speaking Month, this is a good time to reflect on the value of learning public speaking. I picked up skills on my high school debate team that have benefited me throughout my life. Now that my daughter has joined her high school debate team, I hope she will enjoy her experience just as much as I did.

When I joined the debate team as a junior, I had some fear of speaking in front of others. In the early rounds, I debated just one other competitor in front of a judge. That's a fairly easy on-ramp, with just the three of you in the room. But as I improved and qualified for elimination rounds and then for the finals, sitting on stage, looking out at a large audience, was nerve-racking.

My best memories are of the camaraderie with my team between rounds. Whom did you debate? What were you arguing? Those relationships lit a spark in me. By my senior year, I was building collegial friendships with my competitors and sharing our plans for after graduation.

I competed in what was then called the Lincoln-Douglas Debate format, which is called Classic Debate today. The emphasis was on political philosophy, logic, and ethical values. As readers of this newsletter know, I love books. I have shelves of works on political philosophy — John Rawls on

justice, and John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau on social contract theory. Getting ready for a debate in my day involved going to the library and citing these classics. Our high school debate team was very competitive and went on to win state and national championships.

My daughter is a freshman at a much larger high school. She participates in Policy Debate, taking positions on policy issues and drawing on statistics for support. Important values still underlie the arguments, but students do most of their research online, and it's often kind of shallow. Also, the students today talk much faster and make more practical points than we did in the past.

Many aspects of my daughter's debate experience are just larger in scale. On our small debate team, we would create index cards, make extra copies, and trade them around amongst each other to split the research load. Her team may assign 15–20 kids to research an issue that one student would have handled in the past.

I've judged Lincoln-Douglas rounds at tournaments where my daughter has competed in Policy Debate. Some of the schools are so huge that you can't find your way to the room, and some kids are overly stressed about competing. They run around



the school trying to get to the right room on time, and arrive overheated and sweating. As a judge, I try to help them calm down, saying, "Take a deep breath. Have a sip of water," before we get started.

I've been impressed with the work my daughter has invested. She has been very dedicated. I hope she never gets to the point where she is overly stressed and doesn't enjoy debate. I hope she will continue to have fun.

Debate has given me some lifelong benefits. I gained the oral advocacy skills that helped me succeed in moot court during law school. I still enjoy forming collegial relationships with my courtroom opponents, some of whom have become my clients.

As I encourage my daughter to find her own way in public speaking, I hope she, too, will gain skills that will last a lifetime.

*- Andrew M. Ayers*

# When Serendipity Leads to Innovation

## The Unexpected Discoveries of Everyday Items

Looking around your house, you'll spot countless inventions you couldn't imagine living without, from your television to the refrigerator. We like to imagine the inventors behind these ideas were intentional with their actions, but that's not always the case. Sometimes, the latest and greatest discoveries occur by happenstance.

The proof? Three everyday items that are nothing more than happy accidents!

### Play-Doh

Before gas and electric heating became commonplace in homes nationwide, many people used coal to stay warm. Unfortunately, this left the walls covered in soot. Kutol Products produced a soft, pliable compound that acted as a wallpaper cleaner to counter this.

As other alternatives gained popularity, Kutol Products saw their sales fall. A Kutol employee's sister-in-law thought the product would be great for modeling. After testing it with kids, she found they loved molding it into various shapes. Thus, Play-Doh was born, saving a floundering company on the verge of bankruptcy.

### The Microwave

In 1945, Percy Spencer, a self-taught engineer, was leading a radar project when he discovered a chocolate bar in his pocket had melted while testing a piece of equipment called a magnetron. Wanting to see if he could reproduce the same results, Spencer placed some popcorn kernels near the equipment. Within seconds, the popcorn popped. He tested it once more with an egg before confirming his findings. Understanding

that the magnetron cooked food quickly, he crafted a metal box around the device, creating the first microwave oven.

### Potato Chips

Many Americans eat potato chips daily, but most don't realize they're simply an accidental product of spite. In the 1850s, George Crum was a chef at Moon's Lake House in Saratoga Springs, New York. On one fateful day, shipping and railroad baron Cornelius Vanderbilt stopped in for a bite. He quickly complained that his french fries were too thick and soggy. Crum disagreed with Vanderbilt, but he remade the french fries — slicing the potatoes very thin and frying them until they were crispy and golden brown. Vanderbilt loved the new creation. Potato chips became Moon's Lake House's specialty until Crum opened his own restaurant. The rest is history!

## CHEW ON THIS Was Singapore's Gum Ban the Right Move?

Have you ever walked through a parking lot and stepped on gum, causing your foot to stick to the pavement with every step? Or have you felt somebody's disgusting, chewed gum on the underside of a table at a restaurant? Experiencing one of these situations is enough to make you wish gum were outlawed. While chewing gum will likely always be legal in the States, there is one country where you'd have difficulty finding a single citizen chewing gum. In 1992, Singapore officially banned the sale, importation, and manufacturing of chewing gum.

To understand the reasoning behind the chewing gum ban, you need to go back to the mid-1960s. Singapore had just gained its independence and was trying to find a way to establish itself on the world stage. Lee Kuan Yew, the country's first prime minister, designed a plan to make Singapore a "first-world oasis in a third-world region." The country quickly became known for its cleanliness, but chewing gum remained a problem.

While some argued that chewing gum stuck to the pavement outside a business might mean a new burst of creativity was taking hold, Lee Kuan Yew felt differently. He stated, "Putting chewing gum on our subway train doors so they don't open, I don't call that creativity. I call that mischief-making." He had a good point. The Housing and Development Board reportedly

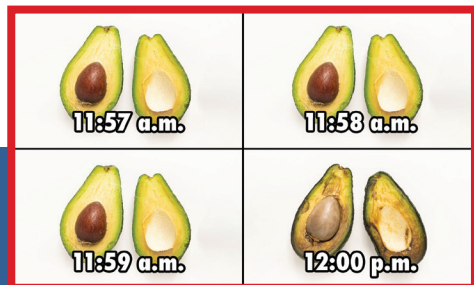
spent \$150,000 in Singapore dollars each year solely to clean up gum litter. Furthermore, there were countless reports of vandals sticking chewing gum on the door sensors of trains, disrupting their services.

While citizens were divided over the chewing gum ban, it proved effective. In February 1993, there were only two chewing gum litter cases per day, as opposed to the 525 daily cases before the ban. While the ban remains in effect today, Singapore's government partially lifted it in 2004 to allow dentists and pharmacists to prescribe and sell therapeutic gum such as nicotine gum. Even so, you shouldn't expect to see many people walking around Singapore chewing gum and blowing bubbles!





# TAKE A *BREAK*



## Rivalry, Resolved

### Help Your Kids Grow From Foes to Friends

Growing up with a sibling can be a magical experience. You have someone to share your experiences with who will always be there if you need someone to lean on or talk to. However, sibling relationships have their fair share of disagreements, fights, and arguments, which can develop into sibling rivalry. There's a reason why sibling rivalries are infamous. Most people grow out of it by the time they reach adulthood, but knowing this doesn't necessarily make things much easier for parents. Trying to navigate the complexities of a sibling rivalry can be overwhelming, especially if you're juggling other responsibilities.

The truth is that you cannot dismantle a sibling rivalry quickly once it has formed. Getting your kids to see each other from a different perspective will take time and effort. You'll need to make some adjustments. If you notice your kids are beginning to argue, you can't rush in and join the fight. Stay calm and collected when intervening to ensure the situation does not escalate.

One of the biggest mistakes parents can make is comparing their children to each other. Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Comparison is the thief of joy." This becomes even truer when children are involved. Your kids are their own individuals, and they will likely have different goals, passions, and interests from one another. Celebrate their individuality and help them explore their interests. You should also encourage your other children to celebrate their siblings whenever they accomplish something because it creates a much more cooperative environment.

Another important action you should take when involving yourself in a sibling dispute is to listen. You might not witness the events that led to the fight or disagreement, and your main goal is not to figure out which child is to blame or in the wrong. Instead, sit down with them and have them talk through their feelings. Listen intently to everything they say and be completely impartial whenever you need to say something. If you need to respond with punishment, do so privately. You don't need to make it a spectacle.

Siblings should be friends, not rivals, and you can help them build their relationship through your actions.

## Chocolate-Covered Banana Brownies

Inspired by [OMGChocolateDesserts.com](http://OMGChocolateDesserts.com)

### Ingredients

#### Banana Brownies

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted
- 1/3 cup light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 large egg
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla

- 1/2 cup mashed banana
- 1 cup flour

#### Chocolate Topping

- 12 oz semi-sweet baking chocolate, chopped
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 3/4 cup creamy peanut butter
- 3-4 large bananas

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F. Grease an 8x8-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. In a bowl, whisk together melted butter, brown sugar, sugar, and salt. Add egg and vanilla and whisk. Add mashed banana and whisk, then whisk in flour.
3. Pour the batter into the prepared pan and bake for 25 minutes, or until the center has set.
4. Place chopped chocolate in a heatproof bowl.
5. Bring heavy cream to a boil, pour over chocolate, let it sit for 1-2 minutes, then stir until chocolate is completely melted. Stir in peanut butter until smooth.
6. Slice bananas and arrange over cooled brownies.
7. Pour chocolate mixture over bananas and place in the fridge for 15 minutes before serving.

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## KANYE WEST'S CONTROVERSIAL SAMPLING

### German Artist Sues Over Unauthorized Track Use

Kanye West is no stranger to controversy. Many probably remember the iconic moment at the 2009 MTV Video Music Awards, when the rapper interrupted Taylor Swift's acceptance speech for Best Female Video to claim that Beyoncé deserved the award. West's behavior has only become more erratic and controversial in recent years. This past February, West was dropped by his talent agency after making countless anti-Semitic remarks on social media. His Yeezy website was also shut down after he sold a swastika T-shirt that violated Shopify's terms. Now, the rapper behind "Stronger" and "All of the Lights" faces a new lawsuit.

This past March, German artist Alice Merton and two German corporations filed a lawsuit against West for "unauthorized commercial exploitation" of the musical composition "Blindside." In 2022, Merton released her track, "Blindside," which West sampled



without authorization for his track "Gun to My Head." The public first became aware of the sampling in December 2023 when he debuted the song at an event in Miami.

As it became more well-known that West sampled "Blindside," he and his record label finally approached Merton

to request approval to use the track, but Merton quickly denied the request. When asked for a reason, Merton's legal team stated, "Alice Merton was unwilling to compromise her personal beliefs and wanted not to be associated with [West] in any manner. Of significant concern to plaintiff Merton were defendant [West's] antisemitic, racist remarks, which were made publicly and continue to be made publicly." Merton is a German resident and a descendant of Holocaust survivors.

If you thought West's putatively illegal sampling was bad enough, some of his fans took it to another level. After the song was left off the "Vultures" album, West's fans started sending death threats to Merton. West has done nothing to stop his faithful legions from harassing Merton. The plaintiffs are seeking a jury trial to determine relief and damages.