

Motivational Speech

by

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INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

A smartly dressed LECTURER (50) paces up and down a wooden stage with a microphone in his hand. A light from above follows him. Behind him is a huge sign saying 'Be Inspired.' The AUDIENCE in front of him is obscured.

LECTURER  
(positively)  
Hello audience. Who here has been diagnosed with a mental illness?

A few AUDIENCE members woop.

LECTURER  
Awesome. And who here knows someone with a mental illness?

More PEOPLE woop.

LECTURER  
Great. I want you to be honest with me. Do I look normal?

PEOPLE woop again.

LECTURER  
That's what I thought. How would you feel if I were to say thirty years ago I was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia?

A MAN in the crowd says 'oh no no no no.'

LECTURER  
It's true. Let me tell you a story. I was in university and things were going well. However, one day I noticed someone left a pen on a desk I was sitting behind. For reasons I can't understand, I took that as a huge insult and punched the person who I thought left the pen. Turns out, not only was he the wrong person, he was a university lecturer. He looked me straight in the eyes and said to me 'you're going to fail.' That only fueled my paranoia. The next day, I noticed the same lecturer eating a sandwich. When he saw me, he got nervous and started running away. Again, that only made me more suspicious so I ran after him and shouted 'Why are you doing this to me??' over and over again.

(MORE)

LECTURER (cont'd)

I went too far. The next day I was told to leave the course. Which only fueled my paranoia.

The AUDIENCE is silent.

LECTURER

What was the significance of the sandwich? Am I a metaphorical sandwich? Maybe the lecturer was implying I'm simple like the food? And was the lecturer saying 'bite me' in an extremely underhanded manner? Yes, that's what it was. He's going to pay. I told everyone the teacher was simple to get back at him and I described him as being like a sandwich. I went too far. I was told to leave the course, which of course fueled my paranoia.

The AUDIENCE nervously say 'Oookay...'

LECTURER

I tried to find a job cooking burgers in a fast food place, but then I noticed someone's shoes were untied. I took that as a huge insult, so I trashed the whole establishment. Again, I went too far. The police were called and I was sent to a mental home. I was put on some antipsychotic medication and finally, I found something that didn't fuel my paranoia.

A MAN cheers.

LECTURER

Thank you. Day became weeks, weeks became month and months became years. Finally my brain was fully healed. After being discharged from the hospital, I apologised to my old university lecturer as he ran away from me again; I sent the restaurant an untied shoe as a token of friendship and as a way of showing I had no problem with the things anymore; and I spent much of my time giving motivational speeches such as this. I'm now married with two children and I run a taxi company that I humorously called 'Madman Taxis.'

The AUDIENCE chuckle as the LECTURER gazes at the CROWD. Or tries to.

LECTURER  
So, any questions?

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
Is this real?

LECTURER  
Is what real?

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
Any of it?

LECTURER  
Any of what I said?

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
Yeah...

LECTURER  
Yes, all of it.

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
No way...

LECTURER  
Any other questions?

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
You're really fully reformed?

LECTURER  
Sure am.

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
So how would you react if I called you a moron?

LECTURER  
I'd say 'peace and love' and move on.

The AUDIENCE clap.

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
And what if I were to insult you even more? Would you take that as an insult?

LECTURER  
Nope.

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
But that would be delusional...

LECTURER

Oh yeah. Food for thought.

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE

So you admit you're deluded not taking my insult as an insult?

LECTURER

Nope. Ok, my time is up. I hope you enjoy the rest of the night. I believe a rehabilitated ex homeless man will be talking after me. Oh and just one more thing before I go... Read my thoughts again, and I'll kill you. Bye!

The LECTURER leaves the stage as the lighting follows him. The show's even more smartly dressed HOST, also carrying a mic, walks to centre of the same area as the light now tracks him.

HOST

What an inspiring speech. As hinted at, a once homeless but now super successful person will be telling you HIS story. It really is a fascinating listen.

The AUDIENCE cheer as the HOST leaves the stage. A long-haired and bearded 40 year old EX BUM wearing casual clothes now walks to the centre with his mic and the lighting on him.

EX BUM

Hello, audience. So, I was living on the streets a good thirty years ago. I begged every day just so I could carry on living. I was cold, lonely, fed up and addicted to drugs. Then one day, I saw a man shout at someone's shoes. It was at that point I realised that person could be me in the future. Every day from that point on, I saved up more and more money and look where I am now!

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE

What do you mean?

EX BUM

Whilst I once to live in a simple sleeping bag, now I live in a tent that's worth at least £200. What do you say to that??

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
You've reformed even less than the  
crazy person!

EX BUM  
Not only that, I also saved up more  
money to buy more drugs!

The AUDIENCE are outraged. The EX BUM rips off a mask to  
reveal that he is in fact, JAMES.

JAMES  
Ha! I tricked you all! There is no  
homeless person, recovered schizo OR  
host, it's been I, James Ziegler all  
along!

The AUDIENCE groan.

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
Goddammit you suck...

JAMES  
How did I change clothes so quickly  
you ask?

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
No...

JAMES  
I ripped them off. At first I was  
wearing a good three layers of  
clothes! I have masks in my pocket!

WOMAN IN THE AUDIENCE  
You're just awful!

JAMES  
Bye!

JAMES walks off the stage as the AUDIENCE jeer.