

A
Dietitian's
Guide to
Professional
Speaking

Expert Advice for Pitching,
Presenting & Getting Paid

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1 PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING

You've been speaking for free for most of your life – in conversations, at school, at work and at home. You've given countless presentations on a volunteer basis, and you're ready to consider professional speaking. Although professional speakers may not behave professionally, my definition of professional speaking is delivering presentations in exchange for money.

Making the switch from speaking for free to charging for your talks can be a challenge simply because it's new. While volunteering to speak develops your confidence and skills, it doesn't teach you to describe your value in financial terms. Earning money as a speaker can be exciting and fun, and it can also be a source of discomfort. Don't worry if you don't have these skills. You learned to calculate tube feedings; you can learn to talk about money.

The exceptions are if a) you don't need to make money from your speaking, b) your speaking is funded by a larger organization, or c) you have an agent or business manager who takes money matters off your hands (hopefully only the matters and not the actual money).

If you've always been employed or paid by a larger entity, you may never have been in the position of asking a customer for money in exchange for work. Many dietitians in our hearts are good-doers and public servants, even if our paycheck comes from a corporation.

This is particularly true in many patient care settings. If a patient can't or doesn't pay, someone else makes those arrangements. While it may seem convenient at the time, the corresponding lack of skill in handling financial matters can be a hindrance to your speaking career. You're at a disadvantage if you don't know how to price your product, negotiate, and collect.

If you work in a business or management area of dietetics or you've had a career in business, real estate, or retail, then you enter the speaking world with an advantage. To a businessperson, charging a fee for service is simply a normal aspect of having a career. For many dietitians, charging a fee for services rendered is something new.

If you've noticed feeling stress as you read about this topic, remind yourself that reading about it doesn't mean you have to do it. You don't even have to be a speaker for that matter. You're

gathering information about getting paid to speak the same way you research buying a new refrigerator. Anything new is bound to be stressful. Try not to shame yourself for having feelings about charging. Instead see if you can simply observe them with curiosity, noticing them with a “that’s interesting” attitude.

I understand your struggle, believe me, I do. But please, please believe me when I tell you with all my heart:

THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH GETTING PAID.

Read that line until it sinks in. There is nothing wrong with getting paid, and in fact it’s a necessity if you need money to pay your rent, to feed your family, or just to enjoy life.

At the same time, you always have a choice to charge or volunteer. Don’t judge yourself either way. You’re not money-hungry if you ask to be paid, and you’re not a chump if you speak for free.

Speaking as a volunteer can have many rewards apart from money. Set your own criteria for when to speak as a volunteer - for an organization you believe in, as a favor to a friend, to gain experience, or for any other personal or professional reason.

Occasionally you may encounter someone who wants something for nothing and will shame you to get it. They will act shocked that you ask for money for your work and tell you that they can find someone else who will do it for free. LET THEM. Donating your time because you believe in an organization is different from being harassed into working for free. Part of recognizing the difference is in how much you value yourself.

Valuing yourself is a skill you can learn. You may not have had any role models for it, or you may simply feel that helping people is just what you should do - that asking for money for helping people makes you a bad person. Valuing yourself as a speaker means:

- ☑ You're not a bad person for setting limits or for just saying no. Be prepared to say no nicely to something that's not a good fit for you. Speaking for free when you don't want to can backfire if it leads to a lack of preparation or a bad attitude.
- ☑ Volunteering is not your job, even if it feels like work. Jobs are paid. If you don't get money, you're a volunteer.
- ☑ It can be challenging to start charging someone once they've had your service for free. But just because you spoke somewhere

for free once doesn't mean you have to do it again.

I had an enormous internal struggle with asking for money. It hadn't occurred to me how personal this would get until I had to do it. If you're experiencing something similar, it's crucially important that you sort it out, either on your own or with support.

Consider pausing right here to jot down a few notes. What do the words "charging" and "fees" make you feel? What about "values" and "worth"? Does asking to be paid sound greedy? Does talking out loud about money feel gauche? Does this whole conversation just make you feel poor?

Don't judge yourself for any of your thoughts. Stress about money is nearly universal. It's a combination of factors from your past – values impressed on you in childhood, times in your life when you didn't have enough, never having been taught or modeled appropriate money management – that combine with your current financial status and your worries about the future.

I experienced significant confusion about asking for money and valuing myself enough to make a living from my work. I moved through it with the help of an excellent therapist, business-related

books, and guidance from mentors of all different kinds. I know firsthand that feelings can keep you from advancing.

Do you have a safe person with whom you can share your thoughts and feelings about all this? A counselor or business coach who can address money topics? A dietitian you admire or a mentor you can ask for advice?

If you have a friend or family member in the business world, they may be able to help. They may also fail to understand the internal barriers you feel. “It’s not about feelings, it’s just business!” can be helpful and calming or unsupportive and shaming, depending on your interpretation. Set up an appointment with a speaking coach or a small business consultant if it feels safer to talk with a stranger. Just don’t let your feelings stop you from following your dream.

Are you ready to reach for your dream of professional speaking? Ready to get paid more for the speaking you already do?
[Click here to order the book or e-book!](#)

Not sure yet? Check out:

A Dietitian's Guide to Professional Speaking

By the Numbers!

15 no-cost ways to market yourself

12 no-cost bonuses to offer in your pitch

11 necessary details for marketing an event

9 musts for plane or train travel

7 ways to make money speaking for free

6 ingredients of a perfect platform

4 ways to avert PowerPoint poisoning

4 ways to read evaluations

3 simple steps to handle a heckler

3 under-pricing traps and how to avoid them

Strategies to dress for success

Why rejection isn't personal

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