

Own Your Sphere!

By Stephanie Bickel

Before I begin describing this visualization technique for improving presence, I would like to describe the purposes and uses of your sphere. Speakers use this technique to project themselves and their ideas, create positive first impressions, and command respect. With great study it can be used to assist in developing both professional and social relationships. It's a technique that all leaders use whether consciously or not – to effectively communicate, charm, persuade, and establish a position of power and status.

Imagine yourself encased in a sphere just like Glinda's large pink bubble in the Wizard of Oz. Imagine the edge of your bubble as far as you can reach around you: vertically, horizontally, and laterally. We call this your “sphere”. You can physically trace this edge by planting your feet and reaching both arms in the various planes to find your limit. We ask some clients to physically outline their sphere as a warm-up to every session. It is a terrific stretch as well as a presence building technique.

From now on, do not think of your body as your actual shape. Think of your shape as the sphere you just traced, with the widest point occurring at your hips and increased space above your head and behind your body. It is a paradigm shift to believe that a large sphere is desirable, yet the more you visualize your size as this spherical shape, the greater and more impressive you will be to others.

Never let your body size affect your image. Physically compensating for a large mid-section, wide hips, short stature, or other perceived physical impairment can destroy image and create unnecessary tension that can lead to poor posture, shallow breathing, lack of vocal energy, and a diminished presence. Using this simple visualization technique can improve posture, breath capacity, and attitude. You will appear taller, thinner, and more confident. This is imperative if you want to present yourself as a self-assured, competent, and effective individual.

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Your sphere size changes throughout the day. It is directly related to stress management. How you deal with fear or stress determines the qualities of your sphere. Eventually, you want to be able to control the size and qualities of their sphere. Depending upon the size of the audience and the audience's predisposition to you and the subject matter, the ability to change the energy in and around yourself is an invaluable skill to possess.

Practice mentally increasing the size of your sphere through daily visualization this week, and observe how others react. Notice how this visualization affects your breathing, posture, voice quality, and effect on others.

Exercise: Trace Your Sphere

Plant your feet about 3-4 feet apart from each other with your knees slightly bent. Pretend you are sandwiched between walls. First, with your right hand reach as high as you can. With the tips of your fingers trace a circle around you in this vertical plane. Reach with those fingers as far as you can to the side. Now, use your left hand and change direction. This gives you a nice stretch in the rib cage.

With your legs planted as before, bend at your center (near the hip-crease) and reach out in front of you with both hands. Trace a circle around your body in this horizontal plane. It's difficult to get behind yourself, but definitely try! This represents the width of your sphere.

Finally, place the right leg in front of the left leg (as if walking a tightrope). With the right arm, reach out in front of you. Start at your feet and circle around your body - even tracing behind you. Now switch the legs and use the left arm to trace this circle. This is your lateral plane.

Take a moment to visualize the size of your sphere you just traced. The next step is filling that sphere with your energy. Imagine that your sphere is a haven for others as well as for yourself. Don't let weeds grow in your sphere. Don't let others define your sphere. You determine the qualities in your sphere. Practice walking, sitting, and standing while being aware of your sphere.

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Stephanie is the Founder and Director of Speak by Design, an executive coaching firm based out of Chicago. Speak by Design provides private and group trainings for people seeking to become crisp, confident, and credible communicators. Services include executive coaching, presentation skills, vocal image, accent reduction, and other custom training programs. Visit them at www.speakbydesign.com.

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