Interviewer:

How you doing tonight, Dr. Peterson?

Jordan Peterson:

Not too bad. Pretty good questions so far on the brutal side, I might say, but

Interviewer:

I'm incredibly nervous to talk in front of you because you've got to be one of the most formidable people that I've ever heard of or ever listened to or ever seen. So my question is, again, you're one of the best communicators that I've ever listened to. If I could be half as good at you or at communicating as you are, I would be set. How can I teach myself to do that

Jordan Peterson:

Practice really well? There's a couple of things is helps to read a lot. It really helps to write. So if you want to make yourself articulate, which is a very good idea, then not only should you read, but you should write down what you think. And if you can do that a little bit every day, 15 minutes, maybe you could steal 15 minutes and do it every day. But if you do that for 10 years, you really straighten out your thinking. If you're going to speak effectively, you have to know way more than you're talking about. So this is often difficult for beginning lectures at university, do a lecture on a topic, but they only know as much as they're saying in the lecture and they get kind of stuck to their notes because of it. But you want to know 10 times as much as you are saying in the lecture, and then you can specify a stepping path through it and elaborate with the other things that you know.

But to do that you have to do a lot of reading, but you also have to do a lot of reading because that's where the synthesizing comes. So that's on the input side. And then on the output side, well, there's some tricks, techniques. Let's say if you're speaking in front of a group, you are not delivering a talk to a group. That's not what you're doing. The talk isn't a package thing that you present to a group. There isn't a group. There's a bunch of individuals and you talk to them. So when I talk to a group, I always talk to people one at a time. And that makes it easier too, because you know how to talk to a person. It's like, can you talk to a thousand people? Well, probably not because it's too intimidating, but there isn't a thousand people there, there's a thousand individuals.

And so you just look at an individual and you say something and you can tell if they're engaged, they look confused, or they look interested, or they look angry, or they look bored, or maybe they're asleep. In which case you look at someone else and they give you feedback about how you're doing. And so one thing is to have something to say, but the next thing is pay attention to who you're talking to. Because unless you're very badly socialized, and that seems unlikely in your case because you present yourself at least moderately well, well, I mean, I don't know you very well, but on first site, you're doing fine. So the probability that if you pay attention to the individuals that you're talking to, that your natural wealth of social skill will manifest itself as extremely high. And so you don't deliver a talk to an audience, that's a really bad way of thinking about it.

You're actually engaged in a conversation with an audience, even if they're not talking, they're nodding and shifting position looking like this. And you can pull all that in and use it to govern the level at which you're addressing the entire audience. So the last thing I would say is, well, having the aim to be a good communicator is a good start. And you think, well, I could buttress that to some degree. And there isn't anything that you can possibly, this is the whole point of a liberal education. There isn't anything that you can possibly do that makes you more competent in everything you do than to learn how to communicate. I don't care if you're going to be a carpenter. I mean, being a carpenter, by the way, is very difficult, especially if you're a good carpenter. But if you're good at communicating as a carpenter, you're like 10 times better as a carpenter.

And this is something that the liberal arts colleges, I think have, I dunno if they've forgotten it, but they don't do a very good job of marketing. It's like, well, what's the use of a bachelor's degree? A bachelor of arts? It's like, well, it can think. You can write, you can speak, you've read something. It's like the economic value of that is incalculable. The people that I've watched in my life who've been spectacularly successful are they have skills. Clearly that's a minimum precondition, but they're also very, very good at articulating themselves. And so whenever they negotiate, they're successful. Well, that's kind of like the definition of success in life, right? You negotiate and you're, it doesn't mean you win. Because if you're a good negotiator, if you're a really good negotiator, everybody walks away from the negotiation thrilled. And so then people line up to do things with you. And that's all dependent on your ability to communicate. So practice,

Interviewer:

Thank you very much.