

Ice breaker Speech - About Myself

*Calumet Toastmasters, Club# 3313
Munster, IN
12th March 2009.*

Opening

The best part of giving an Ice Breaker is you have all excuses to make mistakes in your speech. It is your first speech so the audience knows you have just started and you don't have to worry about organizing your speech, vocal variety, choosing best words, your body movement, Ahs, Ums, you knows etc. All you will be noticed is - how much excited you are to become a better speaker of tomorrow.

Body

I will try to share some of my experiences in this country.

Myself

So, let me start with myself. My name is Surya (S-U-R-Y-A) and my family name is Padala. I am called by all kinds of names you can imagine. It's not a tongue twisted name right?

In fact I have a longer middle name which has 11 letters in it and no one ever dared to pronounce it. As I look, I am an immigrant from INDIA. I came to this country in 1997 to start working as a Computer Programmer and since then I've been moving all over.

My experiences in this country

When I first landed in 1997, I never realized the complexity of my name until the Social Security Office people have started having problems with it. They made my first name last, last name first and no middle name at all. When I tried to explain them over the phone, they did make some changes but not exactly the way I wanted - this time they made my first name last, last name middle and no first name at all- so, I actually made it worse. Then, I decided I should go and meet them personally. Finally, that worked out and I never had to see them again. That was my first embarrassing experience.

At that time (1997), one other thing that was really strange and confusing to we INDIANS was the dating process before the marriage in western culture. Having brought up from an orthodox Hindu family, I never heard about how dating works here and how people can stay together for years without getting married & how they can divorce each other so easily. I always believed marriages are arranged as they happen in INDIA and we are always obligated to live with one person all the way through no matter what happens.

Then, I met this one guy who joined my project as a programmer and he was reporting to me. He had a girl friend with whom he was dating. Being very new to the word 'dating', he explained what it means and I used to ask him -

"Are you really going to marry this girl?"

His answer was - "Give me a break man? I am not going to marry her".

I said, "Are you not loving her" :

"May be?"

"What the heck? What do you mean by May be, you either love a person or don't love. If you love, you should be marrying her and be with her rest of your life."

"Rest of my life?" - He didn't like that.

Then he started asking about the marriage system in INDIA. I told him it is our parents who work with other elders to look for a suitable partner and once the elders from both sides agree with each other then the boy & girl get to see each other, talk to each other (but no partying yet). If everyone is okay and both families like each other, then the boy and girl marry each other. It is an ARRANGED marriage.

Once the marriage is done, we lock each other for life time. We are not supposed to divorce and we should forgive each other for our mistakes and try to live a happy life. It is that SIMPLE.

This guy couldn't believe what I was saying. You should look at his face. He had a series of questions to me:

1. So, you don't meet the girl until your parents tell you so? - **NO**
2. You can't take the girl out to a bar - **NO? Not even to a public park**
3. Once you tie the knot, you are supposed to forgive everything she does - **YES, and she does the same thing**
4. AND you can not touch any other girl for rest of your life - **ABSOLUTELY!**

Finally, he said only one thing - "I WILL NEVER BORN IN INDIA"

Conclusion

But overall, it has been a great experience to me in last 12 yrs in this country. I have met many nice people, got a chance to learn about the culture here, became a much better speaker by joining Toastmasters.

As am planning to make a permanent move to INDIA for good in next couple of years, I am going to miss this country and miss wonderful people like you.

But guess what, I will not miss Toastmasters since I am planning to start few toastmaster clubs in INDIA to help people around and offer my help to the best I can.

Suryaprasad Padala
padalasurya@yahoo.com