

Chapter 20
Persuasive Appeals
from
Public Speaking: An Idea Focus
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General Educational Objectives: This chapter helps you to:

1. understand the nature of appeals.
2. integrate the Bridge Models of Reasoning with motives to illustrate various types and levels of appeals.
3. generate effective appeals.

Specific Testable Objectives: As a result of studying this chapter, you should be able to:

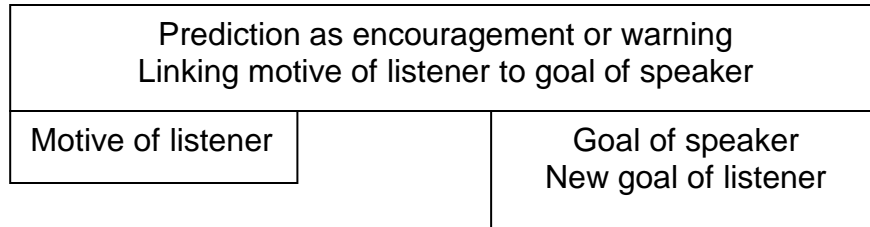
1. reproduce and explain the basic model for a successful appeal.
2. define, provide examples and distinguish positive appeals and fear appeals
3. on any topic, identify and provide examples of appeals to each of the seven impelling motives.
4. list, define, and provide examples of appeals based on five types of *bridges*.
5. list and illustrate on any given topic three ways that appeals may be implied.

As reflected in the model in Chapter 3, for persuasion to be effective, the audience must make a link between the goal of the speaker and what its members desire. Members are aided in making this link by the appeals that the speaker makes. These appeals provide the link or help members to reach the link on their own. This link is the *bridge*. The desires/motives of the audience yield the *premise* and the *conclusion* is the desired goal of the speaker, which, when the process succeeds, becomes the goal of the audience also (Figure 20-1). Thus, in this chapter, we will use *appeals* and *bridges* interchangeably. When the bridge is implied, the stated parts of the argument constitute the appeal.

In their most basic form, appeals make a prediction based on some course of action that the listener may or not take. The prediction can be in the form of encouragement or in the form of a warning. If the prediction is for something good to happen, the appeal is said to be positive. If the prediction is in the form of a warning against taking the action, it is said to be a fear appeal. So, in terms of the predicted consequences of the behavior, all appeals fall into two categories, positive appeals and fear appeals.

Figure 20-1

Basic Successful Motivational Appeal



Examples of positive appeals are: “If you practice your free throws, you could really help us win the game;” and, “If you eat well, you will grow up to be strong and attractive.” Obviously, the power of the appeal depends on the person’s desire to help win the game and to grow up strong and attractive. Probably neither would, in general, be considered “strong positive appeals” since neither prize is highly valued. If the prediction had been, “you’ll be the star of the game,” it would have been a stronger appeal.

Examples of fear appeals are: “If you don’t practice your free throws, the coach could take you out of the game;” and “If you eat too much candy, your face will break out.” Both are fear appeals even though neither is that scary. They might be labeled “mild fear appeals.”

The determination of the strength is based on the desirability or lack thereof of the consequences of the behavior. This criterion, obviously, applies regardless of whether the person is being encouraged to take a course of action or refrain from one.

In defining an appeal as a prediction linking motive to behavior, my goal is to distinguish it from a promise or a threat. Here, I use “promise” and “threat” as statements made by a person who has some ability and intent to ensure that the specified consequences do or do not occur. Threats and promises are legitimately made by parents, teachers, coaches, police officers and the like. Still, they fall outside the scope of this book. They use communication, but not persuasive communication.

Admittedly, an effective persuader may use appeals so effectively that the listeners will feel they have no choice but to comply. However, the speaker stops being a persuader and becomes a parent, boss or whatever if the listeners believe that it is the speaker who will ensure that the behavior results in the reward or punishment. A coach could say, “Practice your free throws and you’ll win the game for us and be our star,” and be a persuader because the consequences are beyond the coach’s power. However, he is in the role of coach only if he says, “Either you practice your free throws or you won’t start in the big game.” Control of consequences provides a clear line to separate persuasion from other means of control.

Inset 20-1

SELF-INSTRUCTION BLOCK INTEGRATING APPEALS WITH GOALS

For each of the following, decide if it is a Positive Appeal (P), or a Fear Appeal (F), and if the goal is to have the person (A) adapt a new behavior; (C) continue a behavior, (S) discontinue a behavior, or (D) not start a behavior (i.e., deter).

1. Q: If you don't stop gambling, you're going to destroy your marriage.
A: F/S
2. Q: You'll have a happier life if you never go into your first casino,
A: P/D
3. Q: By calling this hotline number, you'll find people who care.
A: P/A
4. Q: If you stop your counseling, your self-control will soon be shot.
A: F/C
5. Q: If you don't start coming to services, you'll never know peace.
A: F/A
6. Q: It'll be a waste of your money if you ever go into a casino.
A: F/D
7. Q: You could become the leader if you stay with this support group.
A: P/C
8. Q: If you don't go gambling tonight, we could go looking for women together.
A: P/D

Types of Appeals

Once the category (positive or fear) of the appeal is identified, the most useful way to type an appeal is by the motive that it taps. Understanding types of appeals helps you to vary them and reach more members of your audience.

Using Phillip's Seven Impelling Motives, from Chapter 13, we have seven types of appeals. Below is an example of each directed to encouraging an individual to exercise:

Life Preservation: If you exercise, you'll live longer.

Property: If you exercise, you'll work more productively and gain in your purchasing power.

Power: If you exercise, others will also.

Reputation: If you exercise, people will be talking about how fit you are and how much better you look.

Affection: If you exercise, your soul mate will love you for it.

Sentiment: If you exercise, you will feel better about yourself.

Taste: If you exercise, you can enjoy your food more.

I kept the examples above in the form of a prediction for the sake of clarity. It is the most obvious form for an appeal. A close second is the format of a suggestion, "If you want to feel better about yourself, you could exercise." Suggestions make the prediction less apparent and, thus, the appeal less direct. To that degree, a suggestion may be viewed as more subtle.

Certainly, a major factor in the effectiveness of an appeal is how obvious it is. We associate the "hard sale" with clear appeals. The hard sale does work better in speeches than in conversations. Often, a partisan audience expects a highly motivational speech. Sometimes, for an uninformed audience, it is essential for the speaker to make sure that the intent is clear.

Beyond its subtleness, there are two other factors that vary with the form of the expression of an appeal. The first is how realistic the form is generally. The less realistic the form, probably the less valid is the appeal. I like to think that this validity factor is related to whether the appeal will be accepted by the audience. However, I know that this thinking is too idealistic. Less informed and more partisan audiences generally prefer the less valid forms.

The second factor is how compelling the appeal is once accepted by a person. That is, if the person believes the prediction, how much will that belief impact on his or her behavior? This compelling factor seems to work in opposite directions of the validity factor. When the form is more valid, the belief it generates is less compelling; when the form is less valid, once accepted, the belief is more compelling.

These two factors are roughly related to the type of *bridge* that states the appeal. There are five types of *bridges*, based on wording either explicit or implied.

Types of Bridges

Cause: an action/event leads eventually to a result (y if and only if x). In reality, few things have only one cause; so, beliefs and statements of cause generally lack validity. However, we still think in terms of what causes good and bad things to happen. Once we accept a causal relationship between a behavior and a negative outcome, that belief is a strong deterrent to the behavior. Similarly our behavior is increased when linked as a cause to positive outcomes: Candy makes me happy.

Contingency: if one action/event occurs another action/event is likely to occur (x then y or y then x). This relationship is often termed *co-occurrence*. Also, when a person reasons from a *sign*, the person already accepts a contingency between the sign and some event yet to occur. This type reasoning is a more realistic refraction of reality than is causal reasoning. However, since contingency thinking is more probabilistic, it doesn't have as much power in affecting behavior.

Division: only a limited number of options exist (x can only be a, b, c or d). In an either/or form, this type *bridge* is similar to a cause. As more options are considered, it increasing is likely to reflect reality; but also loses some of its power. Sometimes, this type of reasoning is called disjunctive.

Classification: members of a class tend to have the same characteristics (X_i has c). The tendency with classification is to make the belief categorical. Indeed, reasoning that reflects these bridges are often labeled *categorical*. Statements that begin with “all,” or simply make a blanket statement about a group, invite our minds to overlook the exceptions; thus, they suffer in terms of validity. However, these simplifications make it easier to reach conclusions and act on these conclusions. Reasoning using this type bridge has been discussed under various other names, e. g.: genus, definition and generalization. When the word *generalization* is used for what I call classification, the definition typically involves the reaching of a conclusion when observing one member of a class. The process, then, demands that the *bridge* already existed in the observer's mind. Of course, this differs from *induction* where a proposition is generalized only after (hopefully) a large number of observations; the bridge statement that forms the proposition, obviously, could be any of these five types.

Similarity: two events/acts/entities share some characteristics (x and y are alike). What is known about one of the entities is the more likely to be true of the other. Extended versions of this type are said to be *parallel cases*. Thinking based on this form of reasoning, usually, doesn't have the power of that based on classification. By thinking that two things are similar, we are forced to recognize that there are differences. A typical example of this type of bridge is an analogy. The literal analogy that mirrors actual events/acts/entities may be very logical. As might be expected, figurative analogies, where the two things being related are most dissimilar, may have more impact on behavior. This effect is often true when the bridge is stated as a metaphor. An accepted metaphor can become so empowered that it is almost impossible to counteract. (Table 20-1 summarizes, in general, the characteristics of the types of bridges.)

The discussion of appeals that follows is organized by types of bridges moving from the generally more obvious appeals to the least obvious. Within each section I provide examples to illustrate some variation in subtlety. In the discussion, the examples center around the topic of exercise so that the emphasis can be on variety in the form. However, the motives used in the examples do vary to reinforce the array of possibilities. You should create your own examples on other topics and generate different types of appeals for each form.

Forms of the Expression of an Appeal

1. A cause link:

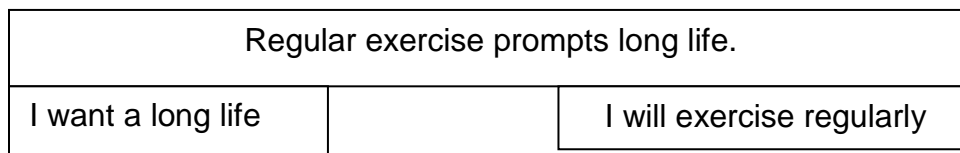
“If you exercise regularly, you'll live longer,” and the example in Figure 20-2 are in an indirect form of a *cause bridge*. These statements are functional equivalent statements to “Regular exercise causes this good thing to happen.” If the statement is expressed in this more obvious “cause” format, its intent as an appeal may not be as clear. The cause statement can be presented as if it is only a fact for the listeners to use or not.

Table 20-1
Relative Validity and Compelling Force
of Appeals based on Type of Bridge

| Type Bridge | General Degree of Validity | General Degree of Compelling Force |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Cause | LOW | HIGH |
| Contingency | HIGH | LOW |
| Either-or Division | LOW | HIGH |
| Classification | LOW | HIGH |
| Similarity | VARIES | VERIES |

In any format, cause bridges aren't generally realistic. Most events in life have multiple causes. More often than not, the causes are difficult to determine and even more difficult to generalize into a *bridge* that is always, or even generally, true. Still, when we believe that an action will cause a good thing to happen or prevent a bad thing from happening, we have a strong desire to take that action. If we believe that the act causes bad events, we have a strong desire to avoid performing it.

Figure 20-2
Example of an Appeal as a Cause Bridge

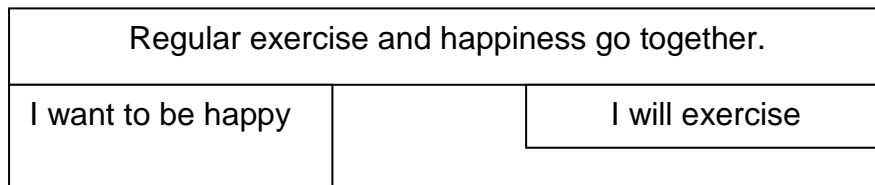


2. A contingency link

"If you exercise regularly, you'll probably be happier," is an example of a prediction based on a contingency. It is more logical than a cause because the asserted link between exercise and happiness is not as definite. A fair interpretation of this prediction in "factual" format is, "Exercising and happiness tend to occur in the same people." The two things tend to go together but one isn't presented as a cause of the other. Since the link isn't as strong, its acceptance

isn't as compelling. "If you want to live longer, you might try exercising." would be a less direct, suggestion form of the appeal. It would have the same characteristics. Figure 20-3 diagrams this appeal.

Figure 20-3
Example of an Appeal as a Contingency Bridge



3. Division Links

"You can either exercise or be unpopular," is an example of a *division bridge* that has the same properties as a cause statement because it establishes the same type of absolute link, just not as directly. It isn't a logical form, but once accepted is compelling. The question, "Do you want to exercise or to be unpopular," would be less direct, but otherwise would have the same characteristics. When a division bridge offers more than two options, its complexity demands a chained appeal of another type bridge. More than two options is a more realistic form, but the appeal would have the same characteristics of the final bridge in the chained argument. Figure 20-4 shows an either-or appeal; Figure 20-5 is an example of the division bridge with more options that is changed to a cause appeal.

Figure 20-4
Example of an Appeal as an Either-Or Division Bridge

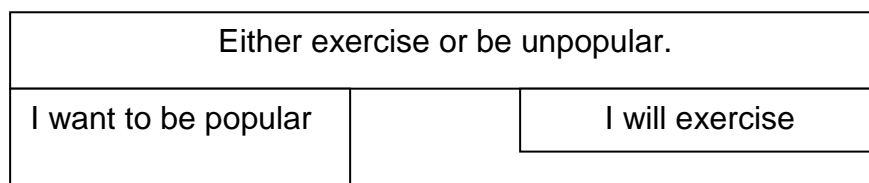
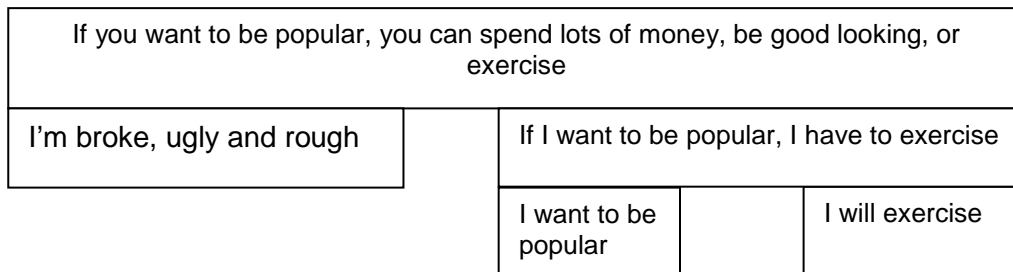


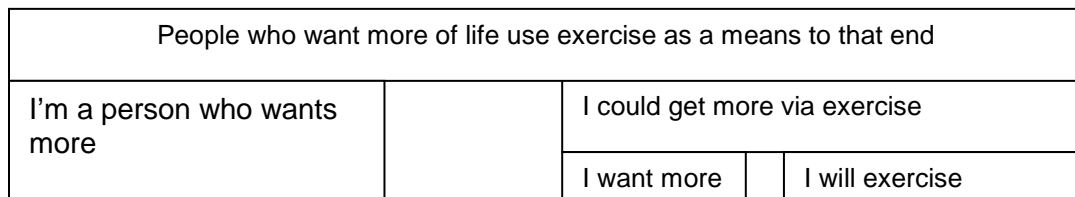
Figure 20-5
Example a Multi-Option Division Reasoning



4. A classification link

“People who want more out of life have found that exercise is the key,” is an example of a *classification bridge*. It is a little more subtle than the appeals based on the previous bridges because the listeners must place themselves in the group of people who want more out of life. It has more of a “factual nature.” It isn’t very logical because it, as all classifications, is an overgeneralization. Still, if the listeners do place themselves in the category and accept that exercise is the key to getting the most out of life, that belief, for them, will be compelling. Figure 20-6 illustrates the logic of this classification appeal.

Figure 20-6
Example of a Classification Appeal



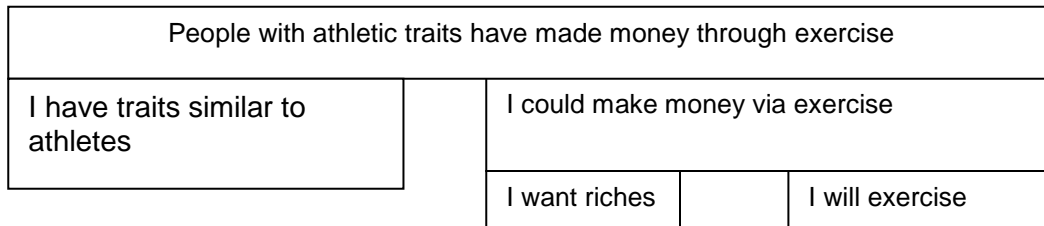
5. A similarity link

As a *similarity bridge*, the appeal could take various forms, many would be very subtle, such as, “Exercise is like a money chest.” Most listeners probably wouldn’t find this appeal very reasonable. Some listeners might link this appeal to obtaining property. For those that did make the link, the resulting belief could be very compelling.

A more direct similarity link would be, “Athletic individuals similar to you have found exercise a profitable endeavor. This link probably reflects reality more clearly. If the listeners do see themselves as athletic, they would likely accept the

statement as being logical. Still, since the link, with the word, “similar,” invites questioning, it isn’t likely to become a belief with much force. Even if the listeners accept the belief, they would likely still have doubts about whether it applies to them. Thus, the belief would not be as compelling. Figure 20-7 shows the more direct example of a similarity appeal.

Figure 20-7
Example of a Similarity Appeal



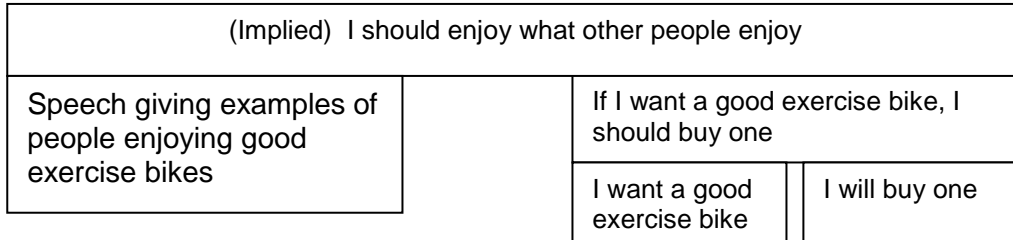
Implied Links

Appeals range in their subtleness from those discussed above to those that are subliminal, not detectable by the unassisted human eye or ear. Subliminal appeals are certainly beyond the scope of this text. Indeed, the art of openly implying a link between listeners’ motives and a course of action is sufficiently developed that I can only highlight three potential areas for you. Again, to the extent you find this area of interest, I encourage you to continue its study in more advanced classes, workshops and readings.

1. In an Extension to the Bridge

The main points developed in most speeches are conclusions that the speaker wants the audience to accept based on the supporting material presented in the speech. However, the supporting materials and the main points may help establish a bridge in the minds of the listeners. For example, in a speech about a new exercise machine, the points might be: “The machine take up little space,” “The machine is well constructed,” and “The machine is easy to use.” These points could be an informative speech for an uninformed, passive audience. However, for a partisan, concerted audience the speech could suggest the link, “This machine would make a nice possession for someone who is into exercise.” For that audience, the speech represents an extension for the bridge; the speech implies an appeal (see Figure 20-8).

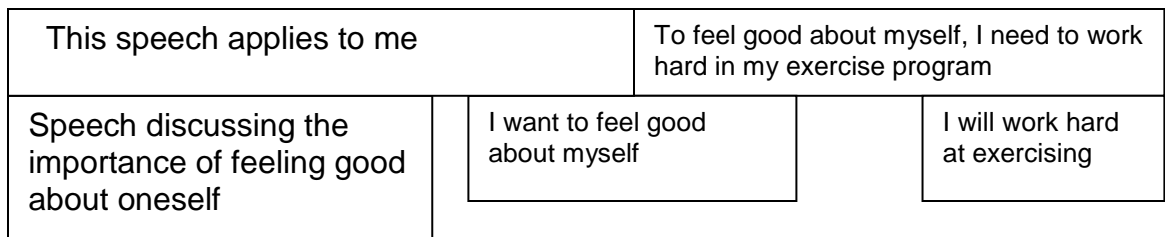
Figure 20-8
An Example of a Speech Serving
as Extension for an Appeal



2. In an Extension to the Premise

In strengthening and triggering the intended motive of the audience, the speech may be stimulating, reflective or plain spoken. It may be in situations such as a pep rally. It may be after a tragedy or a disappointment. It may be when the group has lost a sense of purpose. Usually, the group is homogeneous. In each case, the speech stresses goals and intents. The speech probably reviews the history of the group and what brought them to the moment. It probably speaks of people rising to the occasion. It probably addresses a sense of urgency and a faith in the group. The speech seeks to heighten the group's awareness of what they want as a group. The speech serves as an extension to the premise (see Figure 20-9)

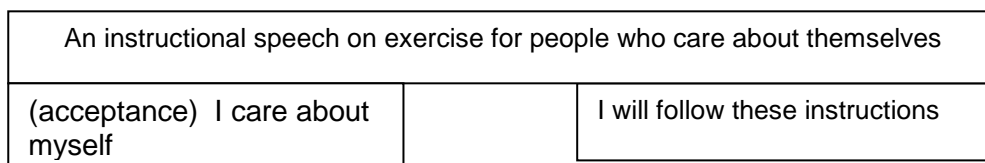
Figure 20-9
An Example of a Speech Serving
as Extension to the Motive



3. In Describing a Course of Action

In speaking to an organized audience, the speaker knows that the listeners want to be involved and it is the speaker's task to provide clear and adequate instructions to get the job completed successfully. No motivation is, theoretically, needed. However, the speaker may help the audience visualize the completion of the task in such a way as to heighten their motivation. Similarly for a concerted audience and some uninformed and, even, unconcerned neutral audiences, the speaker may focus on the outcome as if the audience is motivated to follow the instructions provided. Often, this technique is labeled, "implied consent," since in informing the audience of what needs to be done, the appeal is implied (see Figure 20-10).

Figure 20-10
An Example of a Speech
Implying Consent



Summary

In this chapter, I developed the idea that an appeal links a motive with a course of action. I discussed how scholars divide appeals into two categories, positive and fear, based on whether the motive is for something good to happen or to avoid something bad. Next, I defined types of appeals based on the motive involved using the seven impelling motives. Then, I provided examples of appeals based on the type of bridge involved, ordered loosely on how the characteristics of the appeals varied from obvious to more subtle. Finally, I discussed three approaches where the appeals were only implied: (1) in an extension to a bridge; (2) in an extension to a premise; and, (3) in describing the course of action.

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