

# HOW TO SPEAK FROM THE HEART

*Three sentence starters that hit all the marks*



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When you have to write a birthday card, compose a thank-you note, say a few words at a graduation or retirement party, give a toast, or otherwise honor and appreciate someone, it can be hard to find the right words.

Those of us familiar with shyness, introversion, or social anxiety can find it challenging to speak from the heart. Expressing heartfelt emotion feels awkward. We *feel* gratitude and closeness, but turning that emotion into language feels like mass producing hot dogs--vaguely unnatural and a bit unseemly.

So too often, we end up saying too little, or skimming along the surface with generic phrases like “thank you” and “much appreciated.” We know our words are underwhelming, but it feels wrong or weird pushing into soul-stirring, tear-jerking territory. Plus we don’t want to be fake, like celebrities who say “I love you!” to their Twitter followers.

Therefore, here are three things to try.

ONE, start a sentence with “You are...”

- “You are so generous.”
- “You are unbelievably thoughtful.”
- “You are hardworking, ambitious, but most of all, kind, which is a rare combination.”



This is both personal and complimentary. Ta-da! Two birds with one sentence.

TWO, start a sentence with “I am...”

- “I am so grateful for our friendship.”
- “Today, I am delighted to honor my friend and personal hero, Aimee.”
- “I am so happy you were able to come celebrate with us.”

In short, share the positive impact they’ve had on you.

THREE, note their behind-the-scenes actions. Highlight their effort, thoughtfulness, dedication, sacrifice, or time invested.

- “I can’t imagine how hard it must have been to find chocolate-covered bacon for my birthday.”
- “Your dedication is on another level--from researching fun drills before each practice to keeping the balls inflated, thank you for everything you do.”
- “We’re here today in part because Todd drove 150 miles every weekend to keep this project going.”

This shows that you notice and appreciate their process and their effort, not just the end result. In short, it’s empathy.

So: “You are...” “I am...” and some empathetic thoughtfulness. Unlike mass producing hot dogs, you can’t go wrong.

