

Employ Empathy and Sensitivity

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about the use of emotional appeals in a persuasive speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Employ Empathy and Sensitivity

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Appealing to the empathy and sensitivity of the audience is broadly termed an **emotional appeal**. Emotional appeals can be a powerful rhetorical element of a persuasive speech. They are an attempt to make the audience feel something, and in the process, be persuaded by the speech. A crowd that is feeling something is much more likely to be engaged, give consideration to your arguments, and remember the speech.

Appeals to empathy and sensitivity can create a sense of connection and trust between you and the audience. Since trust and connection are vital elements of being able to persuade an audience, emotional appeals can be incredibly useful.

However, emotional appeals can also backfire if used incorrectly. If taken too far, an appeal to emotion can seem to be forced. Audiences can tell the difference between an honest emotional appeal and an attempt to manipulate how they feel. Audiences loathe feeling manipulated, so an audience that senses inauthentic motives will strongly reject both the appeal and the speaker.

When the emotional appeal is both authentic and appropriately used, you can develop a much stronger connection to your audience than by using logic alone. However, to misuse an emotional appeal is to completely alienate your audience, and even foster negative feelings.



TERM TO KNOW

Emotional Appeal

An attempt to make the audience feel certain emotions so that they will be more likely to be engaged by the speech. Also known as pathos.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that appeals to **empathy and sensitivity** are called emotional appeals. Emotional appeals seek to impart certain feelings in the audience so that they will act a certain way.

They can be much more powerful than logical arguments in some situations. To deploy an emotional appeal, you need to share carefully selected information that naturally makes your audience feel a certain way. Audiences can sense inauthentic emotional appeals and react negatively because they feel that they are being negatively. Poorly used emotional appeals can have the exact opposite effect than intended.

Source: Boundless. "Employ Empathy and Sensitivity." Boundless Communications Boundless, 17 Mar. 2017. Retrieved 23 May. 2017 from <https://www.boundless.com/communications/textbooks/boundless-communications-textbook/methods-of-persuasive-speaking-15/getting-the-most-out-of-a-persuasive-speech-75/employ-empathy-and-sensitivity-293-7087/>



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