



## **Your Personal Growth At Toastmasters**

By Lynne Kobus

It seems to me that personal growth can be anything you want it to be. It will be different for everyone: something you do for yourself, something that is probably scary for you, something you approach with uncertainty.

I think personal growth will always involve some level of fear. As you grow, which equals change, you realize that you are on a one-way street and you can't turn back.

You might worry that you won't be able to be the new you and know that you can't go back to the old, safe, comfortable, taken-for-granted you.

In the last Toastmasters newspaper article, I made light of fear of Toastmasters, but fear is not light – it weighs on you.

In one of my favourite movies, "Strictly Ballroom", there is a line, "A life lived in fear is a life half-lived." Overcoming fears gives you opportunities.

It seems that personal growth involves taking some chances. I don't mean taunting angry dogs or dodging trains. You show the world the you they don't know about yet.

In the June 2006 Toastmasters magazine, there is an article about a man whose comedy career was sparked by Toastmasters. He had always felt he was an underachiever and unmotivated. Toastmasters gave him the confidence to do stand-up comedy and comedy writing.

People seem to take delight in seeing others overcome fears. I've been following "Dancing With The Stars". Professional dancers teach celebrities who are non-dancers how to really dance. Judges comments are often: loosen up, don't be so stiff, let us see the real you, have fun.

Jerry Springer, who couldn't dance a step and wanted to learn to dance for his daughter's wedding, got up there and survived six eliminations but not because he was a great dancer. He danced his best, but also let the real Jerry shine even though he lacked self-confidence and knew that technically the others were better dancers. The judges would mention the performance value of his dancing. He was entertaining and people appreciated it.

So, it seems to me, that if you want to fast-track your personal growth, get up there and do something – sing, dance, give a speech – not alone in front of a mirror, but in front of people.

Take a chance and let yourself shine in front of other people, not for other people, but for yourself. Let them see the you you are hiding.

Your opportunity to begin your personal growth happens on Monday evenings. Visit Renfrew Toastmasters at 7p.m. at 236 Hall Avenue in the Common Room. Check out three meetings free. For information call 649-2950 or 432-7557.