



You're Not a
Bad Communicator.
You Just Never
Felt Safe to Speak.

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You prepared.

You knew your stuff.

Then you stood up, and your brain left your body.

You saw the faces around the table. And you heard the question in them: Why didn't she prepare?

But you did. You just could not get it out.

So next time, you find a reason not to go.

That is not a story about a bad communicator. That is Samantha DeLena, a communication coach, telling me what happened to her in her own leadership roles. Board meetings. Committee meetings. A woman who was smart, prepared and responsible, going quiet where it mattered most.

And I think you know someone like her. Maybe you are her.



The truth most of us were never told

When I asked Sam if this was a communication problem, she said something that stopped me.

“It’s technically not a communication issue. It just is visible at that communication layer.”

Read that again.

The freeze, the replaying, the rambling, the over-explaining. That is only what shows on the outside.

Underneath is a question your body is asking: Will I be okay if this goes wrong?

If the answer is “not sure,” your mind starts working overtime. It scans every option. It rehearses every sentence. It lives in the future and the past, and never in the room.

That is not weakness. That is a self-trust gap.



Where it really started

Sam traced her overthinking back to primary school. She was seven, eight, nine.

School came easily. People expected a lot from her. She became the good girl. The smart one.

And being perfect felt safe. If she did everything right, she knew what would happen next. She had control.

But perfect has a hidden cost. To be perfect, you have to check every option. Every word. Every possible outcome.

That is where overthinking is born.

Then came the choice point. She said it plainly: either I do this perfectly, or I won't do it at all.

For her, “not at all” meant silence.



The reframe

You do not have a speaking problem.

You have a safety strategy.

It worked beautifully when you were seven.
It got you praise. It kept you safe.

But you are not seven now. You are a
woman carrying a team, a family, a calendar
and a mental load that never switches off.

And the same strategy that once protected
you is now quietly running your life.

It is why you replay every conversation on
the drive home.

It is why you explain your “no” for three
minutes. Sam made this point beautifully:
your answer is still no, no matter how much
flowery explanation you wrap around it.
The explanation is not for them. It is trying
to control how they see you.

It is why you say “that’s just not me” about
the stage, the promotion, the room.

That is not who you are. That
is a pattern that learned to
look like your identity.



What staying quiet is costing you

Every time you edit yourself out of the room, your brain files away new proof: silence is safer.

The room never gets your idea. You never get evidence that you would have been okay.

Sam shared a story of a family member who was promoted into a role that meant standing in front of teams. The anxiety got so big, she quit. She had the promotion in her hands, and she opted out.

Not because she lacked talent. Because she did not yet trust herself in that moment.

That is the real cost. Not one awkward meeting. A slow shrinking of what you believe is possible for you.

Your one shift this week

You do not need to become louder. You need to collect evidence that you are okay.

Here is one small way to start. Next time you speak, in a meeting, at the dinner table or in a group chat:

Say your point first. One line. Two at most. Reasons come after, and only if they are needed.

Then ask yourself one question:

Whose opinion was I editing for?

That question is not about blame. It is about noticing. When you notice who you are editing for, you start to see where your voice went.

Do it once this week. Let it be small. Each time you speak and you are still okay, you build self-trust.



One last thing

When I asked Sam what was the most inconvenient part of her journey, she did not say “public speaking.”

She said it was realising she had to work out who she was and what she wanted to say.

She had been copying everyone else.

And once she found her own opinion, her own beliefs, her own “this is what I stand for,” speaking got easier. Because the truth was already in her. She did not have to think it up.

Maybe the invitation is not to become a perfect communicator.

Maybe it is to come back to the voice that was already there, before the fear, before the pressure, before the need to get it right.

You are not broken. You are a capable woman who learned to stay safe by being perfect. And you can learn to be safe by being present.



About Rachna Khanna

I'm Rachna Khanna, Midlife Leadership Expert, Emotional Integration Practitioner, and host of The Daily Life Hero - The InConvenient Truth podcast. I help high-achieving women in midlife lead their body, mind, and relationships — so they feel like themselves again.

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Real work, not theory. Until next time, you deserve to know you. Rachna

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"I see you and you deserve to know you."
Rachna Khanna

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If you want to go deeper

Sam and I went further on the podcast. We talked about:

- why overthinking is rarely about the words you say
- her live coaching demo for speaking up in a meeting, with a simple three-step frame you can use tomorrow
- what she wishes every overthinker would stop doing, and start doing

Listen to the full episode of The Daily Life Hero — The InConvenient Truth: [**I Knew The Answer; I just could not speak**]

If this resonated and you want to get clear on what your next right step looks like personally, book a free discovery call at [**transformwithrachna.com**](https://transformwithrachna.com). No pitch. No pressure. Rachna will tell you honestly whether her work is the right fit for where you are right now.

With you on the quest,

Rachna