

Dive into this Chicago Deep Dish Ten Bite-Sized Tips for a Yummier Slice of Life

By Maryanne Pope

“In playing ball, and in life, a person occasionally gets the opportunity to do something great. When that time comes, only two things matter: being prepared to seize the moment and having the courage to take your best swing.”

- Hank Aaron

If a great opportunity came along, ARE you ready to grab it?

And by that I mean...are you **prepared** to grab it?

A tremendous work opportunity came my way recently and I am pleased to report I was able to grab it AND run with it, so I wanted to share that story with you.

I am a writer, who also does public speaking, and I was asked to deliver a presentation in Chicago - all expenses paid.

(That's me in the photo to the right, enjoying my first bite of Chicago Deep Dish pizza...yum!)

The audience was law enforcement and my presentation was to be only 18-minutes, as it was going to be filmed and shared on You Tube. I was to share my experience of coming to terms with the on-duty death of my police officer husband.

I said yes...and off I trundled to Chicago.

End of story? Not *quite*. For just a like a slice of authentic Chicago Deep Dish, there are some delicious layers to be discovered 🍕

Here's a post-game analysis - broken down into bite-sized bits:

#1. Go WAY Past Your Comfort Zone

In terms of enjoyable activities, for most of my life, public speaking was right up here with, say...sticking knitting needles in my eyes. I HATED it!

But after my book, [A Widow's Awakening](#), came out in 2008, I realized that delivering presentations was an effective way to **sell** a self-published book. I had spent nearly a decade *writing* the damn thing, I was determined to sell a significant number of copies.





story of the Willis Tower in Chicago. Ugh!

And so, kicking and screaming (and expending vast quantities of nervous energy), over the next decade I delivered presentation after presentation after presentation on a wide variety of topics, from workplace safety to grief to achieving your dreams.

“You must do the thing that you think you cannot do.”

- Eleanor Roosevelt

Slowly but surely, I became better at public speaking. At some point, I even began to slow my speech down enough so that audiences could actually understand what I was saying!

I still speak rapidly – but believe me, it is a vast improvement on my early days.

(Speaking of being out of one’s comfort zone, the pic to the left is of me and Lynda Willis on the glass floor of the 103rd story of the Willis Tower in Chicago. Ugh!)

#2. Prepare Thyself

Although I still wouldn’t say that delivering a presentation is my all-time favourite activity (or anywhere near the top of the list, truth be told), I *have* got to the point where I at least somewhat enjoy the experience – and appreciate the challenge.

Why? Because **challenges are how we grow.**

So when a fabulous opportunity, such as the Chicago gig, came along, I was ready – and able – to say yes. But it took a decade of experience to get my skill level as a speaker up to where it needed to be so that I *could* deliver said presentation...without the audience feeling like they’d just been hit by a gale force wind 😞

#3 It’s Not Just About You

Somewhere along the line, I also figured out that public speaking is NOT ABOUT ME. The whole point of delivering a presentation is to reach the people in the *audience*...enrich **their** lives in some way or, in my case, communicate an important safety message that could impact other people’s lives.

I mention this because sometimes we forget *why* we’re doing what we’re doing.

To me, a successful person is someone who excels at their chosen path for the ultimate purpose of **servicing others** in some capacity. It was my mentor, Brian R. Willis of Winning Mind Training Inc., who taught me this rather important fact.

Which brings me to...

#4 Be Sure to Build and Maintain Relationships

Sometimes great opportunities come right out of left field. But in my experience, more often than not they are the result of consistently building and maintaining healthy and productive working relationships with **high-calibre people**.

Case in point is my relationship with Brian Willis. Brian is a retired Calgary police officer. He actually trained my husband, John, in recruit class.

Brian now trains emergency responders all over North America. Not only has he been a mentor of mine over the years, he has been a key supporter of the John Petropoulos Memorial Fund – a charity that was started after John’s death. The [JPMF](#) educates the public about why and how to ensure their workplaces, and the roads, are safer for *everyone*, including emergency responders.

Brian is a powerful public speaker. I have heard him present multiple times and have taken dozens of pages of notes. So when he asked ME to deliver a presentation at the law enforcement event, WINx Chicago 2017, I jumped at the chance.



#5. What’s Important NOW?

“What if there was no secret but there was a question? Not just any question...Life’s Most Powerful Question: What’s Important Now?”

– Brian R. Willis

Brian’s presentations offer many valuable insights but one of his key messages is a brilliant tool that *really* helps with **prioritizing**. It’s called the “W.I.N” philosophy.

W.I.N. stands for [“What’s Important NOW?”](#) and if you can get into the habit of asking yourself that question multiple times throughout your day, you will be amazed at the results.



#6. Sometimes you gotta say, HELL YEAH!

We all know the importance of learning how to say NO to unreasonable and unwanted demands on our time (not that we *do* always say no to those requests...but you get my drift).

But sometimes we say “no” for the wrong reasons. We may say no because, despite the excuses we come up with, deep down we suspect we aren’t up to the challenge. Maybe we **fear failure**?

However, I have learned the hard way that when an excellent opportunity for growth is sent your way, you are probably *supposed* to take it.

When Brian asked me to speak at WINx in Chicago, although my knees buckled a little at the thought of presenting in a TedX style series of talks, I still said, “HELL, YEAH!” (which is one of [Jo Dibblee's](#) famous expressions...now *there's* a woman who not only seizes opportunities – but creates them for others!)

Then I got to work preparing a significantly shortened version of my “Officer Down” presentation. And let me tell you: condensing a 45-minute presentation down to 18-minutes AND adding in my perspective on the W.I.N. philosophy was no easy feat.

“Preparation dispels pressure because it builds confidence.”

- Lou Holtz, Winning Every Day

And no – although I could've simply spoke FASTER so as to squeeze in all my usual key points, that wasn't a viable option!

#7. There's No Harm in Asking...

After I said yes to delivering the presentation in Chicago, it took me approximately 7 seconds to realize that...I WOULD BE GOING TO CHICAGO! So when in Rome...

I e-mailed Brian back and asked him if he would mind if I extended my stay a few days, so I could see the sights. He was cool with that.

But then I realized it might be even more fun if I had a buddy to see the sights *with* – and I thought of his wife, Lynda...perhaps she would like to join me?

The next thing I knew, I got an e-mail back from Brian saying that Lynda would be thrilled to join me in Chicago AND he would be booking us into a hotel in the theatre district...on HIS points.

I blinked and re-read the e-mail. So...let me get this straight: not only would the work portion of my Chicago trip be entirely paid for, so, too, would the FUN portion?

Yup, that's right.

It doesn't hurt to ask...you just never know what decadent extra toppings will be added to your 'za 🍷

(The cute photo to the right is us outside the theatre where we saw the musical, Hamilton. THAT I paid for...big of me.)



#8 Don't Forget to Leverage

But back to business...speaking of additional toppings, how's this for an extra layer of gooey cheese? Remember how I mentioned that delivering presentations is an effective way to sell books? Well, get this: prior to the WINx event, Brian purchased **150 copies** of my book – to give as a gift to each attendee.

Ya gotta love it when that kind of leveraging happens...a cool speaking gig (surrounded by sexy cops), a free trip AND bulk book sales!

The moral of the story: one opportunity often holds multiple potential benefits.

#9. Step Up to the Plate



This much I know: if you **show up** to the plate, I can guarantee that life will throw you a ball to swing at. Yes, sometimes it will be a low ball (but you still swing) and sometimes it will be way too high (and you still swing).

But sometimes that ball will be coming right towards you, straight down the middle – and if you DON'T swing, someone, somewhere is gonna yell, “STRIKE!”

And we all know what happens when we hear *that* three times. It's back to the bench for you!

So batter-up baby...show up to the plate each and every day and have the courage to take that swing. You just never know when you're gonna hit one out of the ball-park 😊

“My motto was always to keep swinging. Whether I was in a slump or feeling badly or having trouble off the field, the only thing to do was keep swinging.”

- Hank Aaron

#10. Have Patience; Exercise Perseverance

Just remember: it took the Chicago Cubs **108 years** to win the World Series again! Now *that* is perseverance! If they can do it...so can you 😊

#11. Bonus Tip: Give Thanks

“Pause for a moment and give thanks. Let your heart awaken to the transforming power of gratefulness.”

- Sarah Ban Breathnach

If you would like to view yours truly delivering my **18-minute Chicago presentation**, [here is the link](#) (okay...I actually went a little over and spoke for 20 minutes. I should've spoke faster...kidding!)



About Maryanne

Maryanne Pope is the author of the creative non-fiction book, [A Widow's Awakening](#), the playwright of [Saviour](#), the screenwriter of [God's Country](#) and the executive producer of the documentary, [Whatever Floats Your Boat...Perspectives on Motherhood](#).

Maryanne is the Founder & CEO of [Pink Gazelle Productions Inc](#) and Chair of the [John Petropoulos Memorial Fund](#). If you would like to receive her weekly blog, please [subscribe here](#).

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