

Ep #19: Unleashing Your Own Natural Charisma



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With Your Host

Michelle Barry Franco

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You are listening to the *Beyond Applause* podcast episode number 19.

Welcome to *Beyond Applause*, a podcast for mission-driven leaders, coaches, and creatives who are ready to share their expertise and stories through public speaking. Here's your host, Michelle Barry Franco.

Hello, my wonderful speaker friends. My greatest wish for you today is that you realize how beautifully naturally charismatic you already are, because our definitions of charisma are too narrow and that makes too many of us give up on being our most expressive versions of ourselves.

Yet, at the same time, it's this authenticity, this most expressive version of ourselves that creates that kind of genuine connection with our audience, the sense of them knowing who we really are that creates the kind of trust that allows us to move people, to inspire them to action, to make the greatest impact in the world.

So today, I want you to feel as connected as possible with that natural charisma that already lives within you. I want to dispel the myths, the misunderstandings about what charisma actually is and how you can tap into your own. And again, the fact that you actually do already have your own already there waiting for you, to reveal it, to surrender to it – one of my favorite ways of thinking about it.

So that's what we're going to talk about today; unleashing your own natural charisma. So it was a couple of years ago and I was at the Emerging Women Conference, which is a fabulous conference with extraordinary keynote speakers. And on this particular day, I was walking into the main stage area a little bit late and the speaker was already onstage. And despite her small stature, her energy just absolutely filled this large stage area and this conference room.

So she was wearing high heels and she had this finely tailored suit on and this short bob cut. She had this kind of buttoned-up look if you'd just seen her walking down the street. But that is not the energy that she brought to this talk.

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She was coming from stage right in the middle of this passionate story when I walked in – a story about her son, how her son had asked her to please put away all of her books on sex and relationships because it was embarrassing when his friends came over and he had friends coming over that day. And she was saying, “Why do you want me to put away these books on love and connection and relationship when you and your friends are surrounded by media about violence and disconnection?”

So this is the story that she was telling, which was definitely an interesting story, but it wasn't the story that was really captivating, it was this energy and passion that she was bringing to the room. See, there's nothing like watching a passionate surrendered fully engaged speaker as they share their love and their learning and their passion for their topic, especially from the stage, but really anywhere, right?

Esther Perel has this natural style of delivery. She is naturally dynamic. So when she comes up onto a stage, she brings that kind of energy. She's charismatic in the ways that we often think of in great speakers. There's no question that she has natural charisma. I think everybody in the room would have agreed with that.

But here's the point that I want to make; Esther's style of delivery is absolutely not the only way to be a charismatic speaker. In fact, at that very same conference just a bit later, I got to watch in the same kind of mesmerized captivated sense, Stella Paul of the organization World Pulse, whose delivery was much less physically active and her voice had way less fluctuation and booming sound.

Yet, it was her own kind of quiet but powerful and strong style and very precision and focused connection with us in the audience that kept me just as connected with her that felt equally charismatic. So these are examples of two different kinds of charisma, two different styles of delivery, both equally engaging, but uniquely suited for those individual speakers, and that's how I want you to be thinking about it.

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See, the thing is, charisma is less about you than you probably think. In fact, charisma is so much less about you than you probably think. It's actually far more about how others feel around you. Olivia Fox Cabane in *The Charisma Myth* talks about this, that we often think of Charisma as something somebody has, but in fact, while I will say that you do have a natural charisma living within you, everyone has it.

We often think of it as something that some people have and others don't. And as Olivia Fox Cabane talks about in her book, it's actually not even something within you as much as it is in how you make others feel around you or how others feel around you, not even necessarily how you make them feel.

Now, that doesn't mean there isn't a way to show up that releases that kind of charisma, and that is what we're going to talk about. But the truth is, we just misunderstand charisma. We think you're born with it when, in fact, we are experienced as charismatic.

When we emanate a sense of power and warmth together, which is the way that Olivia Fox Cabane describes it in her book, there's this kind of confidence and connection that gets created and that is when we are experienced as more charismatic.

In a great article in the Harvard Business Review titled Learning Charisma, the researchers found that to persuade others – which is something that great leaders do quite naturally and we often think of charisma as a leadership quality. When you are charismatic, it is so much easier to influence and persuade others. So it's sort of like a weaving together of the concepts.

So to persuade others, you really need to use the three kind of classic public speaking elements, ethos, logos, pathos. So ethos really is about your own credibility, your personal sense of credibility. Pathos is the ability to rouse other's emotions, connect with them emotionally, bring in emotional components. Really, this is where we can think of that warmth

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element that I talked about earlier. And then finally there's logos, that reasoning and logic; smarts.

So we can combine this to say that you really need power and warmth with a strong thread of smarts in there. And when you've got all of that, you've got charisma. You've got a baseline of charisma.

But that doesn't really tell us how to be that, right? It just kind of sets this conceptual picture up there. So the real question is, how do you connect with your own natural charisma? And I love talking about this. In fact, for the last 12 years, I have been working with people on actually naming their own natural charisma style, so I'm going to talk you through that in a minute.

But first of all, let's just kind of connect in with what are some unique natural charisma styles. And there are so many that we couldn't possibly name them all, but of course, you can think of the classic motivational speaker like Tony Robbins, who is super dynamic onstage, jumping up and down, riling up the crowd using even shock as part of his repertoire that he brings to the stage, bounding around the room, walking into the crowd, all of that. It is one style.

Of course, Esther Perel, who I talked about earlier, has something on the path to that, but she doesn't have that sort of bouncing up and down high energy, but that power and dynamism on the stage and the moving around quite a bit. And I talked about Stella Paul of World Pulse, right.

So you've got these three different styles, and then there's also people like Brené Brown, who has that very casual style of just kind of storytelling. You can almost imagine her just kind of leaning up against the side of the bar at the coffee shop or whatever and chatting with you in this way, or Steve Jobs' classic style of kind of walking around delighted beyond himself with his own products onstage, seeming like it's all just happening in that moment, when in fact he practiced endlessly.

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So those are just some of the styles. Your style may be totally different. There are speakers who are super funny. There are speakers who are really thoughtful and contemplative. So the point is, when you know what your natural style is, you're able to step into it more fully and release all of the other ideas of who you're supposed to be to be a great speaker.

So I want to talk with you about how to name your style. Before I do that though, I want to talk with you about the number one thing that's blocking you, probably, if you don't feel strongly connected to your natural style, that's blocking all of us from being our most naturally charismatic self, and that is speaking anxiety.

The thing that gets in the way most is that speaking anxiety, our thoughts. you know the way I define speaking anxiety, right? It's just our thoughts about speaking. It's not the actual public speaking that causes speaking anxiety, and we'll put a link to the previous podcast I've done on speaking anxiety.

But nonetheless, it's real. Those thoughts do show up. And so when they do, we need to work with them. We need to do something to move them out of the way enough so that we can release our most natural style. So I'm just going to give you a few of the strategies that work the best and they work over and over again.

And again, I want to emphasize, releasing speaking anxiety isn't something we just do and then we're done with it. For the vast majority of us, we do it again and again and again. We do it over and over as we're preparing our talk. We do it over and over as we're waiting in the greenroom and we're doing it sometimes over and over again as we're standing up there onstage.

And it's okay, like, you can release it over and over again in those ways. And in fact, that too becomes a sort of natural normal part of the speaking process, but it is important in order to reveal your most natural speaking style. So the number one way to release the stronghold of those anxious thoughts is breathing, and especially belly-breathing.

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So taking those deep breaths through your nose all the way down into your belly, and then releasing it all the way, all the way, all the way. It is immediately impactful. Now, it may or may not release everything. It's okay, you don't have to get rid of all the speaking anxiety feelings. Those are normal. Those are a natural part of speaking. You're about to do something really cool and high stakes that matters to you. There is going to be high energy in your body.

But a really deep belly-breath does so much to release a stronghold, a sense of stuckness you might feel. And then, of course, there's just a letting go, which can happen with that breath. It can also happen next to that breath before and between breaths, but it is a, "Oh yeah, I'm feeling this. Oh yeah, there are those thoughts again."

There's nothing to do about them. You definitely don't need to challenge them certainly in those moments, just releasing and letting go of those thoughts and really not resisting your experience. So there's nothing wrong with having extra energy in your body, even a lot of extra energy in your body, when you're about to speak.

The last thing we want to do is resist that feeling. You can just say, "Oh, okay, here it is." This too, as the Buddhists say, I think. So those are my most valuable anxiety reduction strategies and I share them here especially because you can use them over and over again in the moment.

You can do a belly-breath quietly while you just do a nice pause in your speaking. You can let go over and over, even just in your head, "There are those thoughts again, let them go. I'm here with this audience and I'm here to serve."

Okay, so there's our little mini-session on releasing speaking anxiety so that you can step into your most natural charisma style. So I want to help you name your style and I want to do that using this exercise that I've used for the last ten years or so with clients and they absolutely love it because there's something really powerful about putting positive labels on

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ourselves; labels that we feel great about but that also feel true, labels that light us up and also help us aspire to be our best self.

So that is what we're going to create for you right now through this process. So if you can, grab a journal, a piece of paper or something, you're going to want to jot some things down. If you can't do that right now because you're driving or whatever, just kind of go through this with me and you can jot things down later. There aren't a lot of notes to take, so you'll probably even remember.

So I want you to go back in your mind to a time when you were standing in a circle or sitting around with friends, somewhere where you're with a group of people and you're all talking and laughing – maybe you're not laughing, maybe you're just having a really rich wonderful conversation, but it's a conversation you love. You're really enjoying it.

It feels really good to you. And this can be a group of people of any combination. It could be family. It could be friends. It could be an event at work. It could be a conference you were at. Whatever it is, you're in this exchange and you're really, really enjoying it. And as you see this scenario in your mind, I want you to focus in on you in this group, how you're being. And as you watch yourself, come up with some words.

What are some words that come to you that describe the way you're being in this exchange? And I'm asking you to do this because when we're in an exchange that we're really enjoying that feels really natural and good and rich for us, we are tapped into our most natural expressive style because it is not just the other people that are being awesome and fun or engaging, it's us too. That's why it feels so good.

So what I want you to do is tap in here to how you be when you are being your most natural expressive self. And then I'd like you to come up with three words. What are three words to describe the way that you're being? You might choose words like funny, smart, intellectual, reflective, compassionate, curious. It could be anything; any words, but they have to

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be positive because you wouldn't be feeling that good if you weren't feeling good about yourself too. So these words are inherently going to be positive.

Sometimes this is hard for people to do, to put positive labels on themselves, but it's really important that you do that because it's actually the whole exercise, to get labels that feel true but also ride the edges of who you are at your best. But you don't have to come up with those three words, the best words possible, yet, because I'm going to take you through a process to get you there. Right now, just what are the words that come to you?

And then I want you to write those three words down and then you're going to take each of those words to the thesaurus. You can go to the online thesaurus that is pretty fun. There's a visual thesaurus that kind of like puts out this big star of different synonyms. But you can also just go to [thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com).

Look up that one word that you have written down. Say that word was thoughtful. So you're going to look up thoughtful in the thesaurus and decide maybe that observant is even better. And then when you look at observant – so I want you to go a few layers deep – when you look up observant, you find the word perceptive. And you might think to yourself, “Yeah, perceptive is even better than thoughtful because it's not just about me being thoughtful, it's that I actually see what's going on and I'm able to kind of see what's going on underneath the surface.” So then you love the word perceptive.

Maybe that's the word you want to land on, that at your best you're being really perceptive. That's one of your three words. So you're going to do this with each of the words on your list. And you want to look for some contrast here. So you don't want three words that are, you know, exactly the same.

And when I go through this exercise with clients, we often think of them as their deeper, kind of like, soul word. There's one of those that's like the inside of them, who they are inside when they're at their best. This might not even be a word other people would put upon them or use to describe

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them, but it's a word that they know is true deeply within them when they're at their best.

And then there's another word, what I call their personality word, which is the most expressive word. It's the word that other people would probably agree with, although no one ever has to agree with these Expression Élan words. I call this your Expression Élan. And these are just for you to help you live into your greatest expression. But that personality word is your more external expression of yourself. And it often is kind of in contrast to that soul word.

So these words kind of work together. Don't worry, I'm actually going to give you a link to an exercise that will guide you through this all written out, so you don't have to be able to follow this as we go, but I want you to have a conceptual idea of it for sure.

So you look up the second word and you find the best word to describe it. And maybe you're thinking about, "Wow, which one of these better describes the deepest inside of me and which one better describes my personality?" And then finally, I like to have clients look for a verb; a word that described what they're always trying to do underneath it all.

And some people are – I've had clients say, "You know what, underneath it all, I'm always trying to play. Like, I just want to play. I want to have fun, even as I'm doing my most serious work." I've had other clients who are like, "You know, underneath it all, I want people to feel compassion, so I'm bringing compassion." We're not super tight about it being a verb-verb, you just have to be able to create action out of it.

So what is that third one? What is that third word? Go at least two layers deep into the thesaurus to discover an even better word. And I'll give you some examples of some Expression Élans that clients have come up with over the years or that we've come up with together, but these are the words that they feel best represent them.

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One of the trios was present, so that's their soul word, sparkle, that's their personality word, truth is what they're always trying to get to underneath it all. Another client had purposeful; inside they are always on purpose, so their soul word is purposeful. Their personality word is joy. So out in the world, they're always expressing joy, or at least when they're at their best, they're expressing joy. And underneath it all, their verb is inspire. They want to inspire other people. That's what they're always trying to do underneath it all.

One more, because I like this one because it has a different angle on it. So her soul word is river. It evokes all kinds of images, right? You can have any word you want. So river has flow. It has life and richness and energy all within it. So that's what she felt best represented who she is in her soul when she's at her best. Her personality word was radiant; so when she's at her best, she is radiant out in the world. And then her verb is direct.

See how these can sometimes feel like they're kind of contrasty, right? She really just wants to say it like it is, with that sense of river underneath, with radiance, but she wants to be direct. That's what she's always trying to do.

So there are three examples of Expression Élan words that we've come up with. But you have your own and you have the whole vast language – actually, you have all the languages, anything you want, because these words are for you. They describe you at your best. And because they do that, you're the only one who has to agree with them.

And in fact, I've often had clients share their Expression Élan words and then regret it because we don't want other people's opinion. This is about how you aspire to be your greatest expression in your best moments. So there you have it. There's the process of naming your own Expression Élan.

When you have this kind of label – you know, we know that labels are powerful. We know that because of things like self-fulfilling prophecy, you know, once you actually set this expectation by putting words around something and then you live into that expectation. We know that about

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labeling kids. They don't want to label kids, especially kids that are struggling early in school, because then they find that they actually kind of live into those labels.

Well what if you put a label on yourself that had you live into the greatest version of your expression? So I'm super excited for you to have your own Expression Élan articulated and I actually have created a tool that you can use. So you can get that at michellebarryfranco.com/charisma. You can download the tool that will guide you through this process.

Your most powerful natural charisma already lives in you and when you allow yourself to surrender to the style onstage, it's the most powerful engagement strategy that I know of. It's what happens when you aren't trying to be anything or anyone other than who you are. You're giving it all up for your audience and for the impact that you can make.

So this doesn't mean you don't prepare. I'm not talking about just showing up and counting on this natural charisma style and going all stream of consciousness. That doesn't work for almost anyone. In fact, you are able to step into, to surrender to, your most natural charisma style when you prepare like crazy because your speaking anxiety is so much lower when you know you've done everything you can to make this awesome.

I cannot wait to see you out there changing even more lives and loving it all the more as you release into your authentic powerful expression, your own natural charisma style. Send me all the videos of you. I want to see them and I want to cheer you on.

As I said, this week, I have a special exercise for you to guide you through this natural charisma style, your Expression Élan process, so you can get that at michellebarryfranco.com/charisma. That is all for this week, my friends.

Get out there and change some lives and do your great work. I'm so grateful for you in this world, in my world, and never forget, you were made

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for this. I know that because you know that and that is the sign. See you next week.

Thanks for listening to this episode of *Beyond Applause*. If you like what was offered in today's show and want more, head on over to michellebarryfranco.com/start to get your free complete guide to stepping into leadership speaking right away.