



Dear Michael:

I wanted to take just a moment to personally thank you for an outstanding presentation at the 2002 Newspaper Association of America Foundation's Newspaper In Education Conference in Hershey, PA. You not only lived up to my very high expectations, you surpassed them in every way possible.

NIE professionals tend to be the only person at a newspaper who knows what they do. It is a lonely and frequently thankless job. The people I work with truly see themselves as the saviors of the newspaper industry but do not get much recognition for that. As a result, they are prime candidates for burnout. Your presentation on The Art of Taking Care of Yourself was just what the doctor ordered!

I know you could hear the reaction during your presentation: hearty laughter; gasps of shock; tears; nods of agreement; and applause at a number of points. What you did not hear were the comments after you had to leave on Thursday. I had many people come up and thank me for bringing you to the conference. I had statements of praise that would both warm your heart and inflate your ego! The written evaluations of the conference were nearly unanimous. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the best, you scored a collective 4.7.

My real pleasure, however, came from the people who approached me and made comment to the effect that they have never felt so appreciated, so needed and so welcomed at any conference they have attended. I believe we did many things to make people feel special but it was your keynote that truly set the tone for the entire conference. You reached the attendees at many levels. Most importantly, you showed them that you cared for them as human beings. That showed as you talked with people in the registration area, between sessions and at meals. You became "one of us" and I am proud to say that many of us became one of you! I am proud to be a card-carrying, certified, nerd!

Michael, I have worked with many keynote speakers over the years and have actually enjoyed many of them. You are the first that I can say has become a friend as well as someone who was hired to do a job.

I am happy to report that I have retreated from stage four to simply being very tired, stage two. In fact, I took a long weekend just because I wanted to and thanks to lots of sleep I may be quickly headed for stage one!

On behalf of all the attendees that you helped learn to take care of themselves, thank you. And a personal thank you for helping me look really good for being bright enough to bring you to Hershey!

Warmest personal regards,

James L. Abbott, Manager
Education Programs