



Shola Kaye

AUTHOR · TEDX SPEAKER

Most inclusion efforts stall not because leaders lack the intention but because their people lack the skills. Psychological safety is treated as a cultural value when it is actually a communication practice. When teams cannot speak up, challenge honestly, or give feedback without defensiveness, the cost shows up in retention, innovation, and performance, not in engagement surveys.

A communication and empathy specialist with a career spanning STEM research, financial services, and professional performance, Shola Kaye gives organisations the behavioural frameworks to build cultures where people lead inclusively, speak up under pressure, and collaborate with genuine emotional intelligence.

Shola Kaye's 2026 Biography

Why organisations work with Shola Kaye

- Her Emotional Audacity™ framework reframes empathy as an organisational capability – not a personal virtue – giving leaders a structured approach to courageous communication that is immediately applicable in high-pressure, high-stakes environments
- She holds an unusual credibility position: a Cambridge and Emory-trained scientist who also performed professionally on four continents. That combination makes her content land differently with technical and analytical audiences who typically resist people-skills programming
- Her work addresses a gap that DEI programmes and EQ training often miss separately: the intersection of speaking up, psychological safety, and inclusive communication as a single, integrated practice
- Her two published books and LinkedIn Learning instructor role mean buyers are extending into a content ecosystem, not just a single keynote
- She has worked across the full range of organisational contexts – from board-level at institutions including The United Nations and Deloitte to company-wide culture programmes – with consistent evidence of rebooking

Biography highlights

- BA Natural Sciences, Cambridge University; PGCE, Oxford University; MSc Analytical Chemistry / Neuropharmacology, Emory University, with postgraduate research at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control
- Early career in IT management consulting with clients including Goldman Sachs and Prudential Assurance, followed by account director roles in aviation and finance

AVAILABLE FOR

- Executive Training
- Masterclass
- Speaking

SHOLA'S SPEAKING THEMES

- Corporate Culture
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Emotional Intelligence
- Employee Engagement
- Inclusive Leadership
- Storytelling & Business Communication

LANGUAGES: English

- Professional entertainer and jazz singer; performed on four continents including BBC appearances
- Author of *How to be a D.I.V.A. at Public Speaking* (Amazon.com #1 bestseller) and *Big Talk, Small Talk and Everything in Between* (Callisto Media, 2020)
- Winner of the Jenny Seagrove Speaking Award (2016); Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM), Toastmasters International; Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA)
- Regular contributor to *Management Today*, *HR Zone*, and *People Management*; featured in *Marie Claire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Forbes*, and *BBC*; TEDx speaker on empathy in the workplace

Biography

Shola Kaye spent her early career moving between worlds that rarely overlap: neuroscience research at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, management consulting at investment banks in New York and London, and professional performance on stages across four continents. That trajectory is not a curiosity: it is the basis of her work. She understands analytically rigorous environments, the dynamics of corporate invisibility, and what it takes to hold a room.

The core tension she addresses is one that organisations consistently underinvest in: the gap between stated inclusion values and the actual behavioural competencies required to make them real. Most people, even experienced leaders, struggle to give honest feedback, speak up under pressure, or navigate difficult conversations without defensiveness. Kaye's Emotional Audacity™ framework names this gap explicitly: combining empathy, self-regulation, and courageous communication into a single, teachable practice.

Her two books and a TEDx talk on workplace empathy establish the intellectual architecture behind the keynotes. Her contributors to *Management Today*, *HR Zone*, and *People Management* position her as a credible voice in the professional management conversation, not only on the conference circuit. Clients including The United Nations, Deloitte, HSBC, Google, and IBM have rebooked or extended her programmes into training formats, evidence that the content holds beyond a single session.

What makes Kaye distinctive in a crowded DEI and communication space is the precise nature of her argument: that empathy, done seriously, is not a softening of leadership but a structural condition for high performance. For organisations navigating transformation, hybrid work, or underrepresentation challenges, that reframe tends to land where other approaches have not.

Key speaking topics

- Empathy at work
- Inclusive leadership
- Psychological safety and communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Courageous workplace communication
- Diversity, equity and belonging
- People-first culture
- Feedback and difficult conversations

Ideal for

- CHROs and People Directors building cultures where psychological safety is a practical reality, not an aspiration
- Leadership development programmes targeting mid-to-senior leaders managing diverse, distributed, or technically-oriented teams
- Organisations running DEI initiatives that need to move beyond awareness into behavioural change
- International Women's Day and women's leadership events where communication confidence and visibility are the focus

Audience outcomes

- A named framework (Emotional Audacity™) for integrating empathy, courageous communication, and inclusive behaviour into daily leadership practice
- Practical tools for navigating difficult conversations, delivering constructive feedback, and creating environments where people feel safe to speak up
- Greater understanding of the structural conditions – not just the personal attitudes – that determine whether inclusion is felt in practice
- Specific techniques for communicating with clarity and impact, particularly for those in technical, analytical, or STEM-rooted working environments
- Renewed understanding of how communication behaviours at the manager level directly affect team performance, retention, and innovation output

Why Choose Shola Kaye as Your Keynote Speaker?

1. Inspiring Storytelling & Emotional Audacity

Facts wrapped in story are up to 22 x more memorable than data alone. Shola's vivid real-life narratives spark emotion and lock the lessons in, so audiences leave motivated and ready to act.

2. Engaging, Interactive Experience

66.8 % of event organisers rate audience engagement as their No. 1 speaker goal. Shola delivers live polls, paired conversations, and on-the-spot practice that turn listeners into participants—and boost energy in the room or on the call.

3. Professional & Planner-Friendly

Lack of timely speaker communication is the second-biggest pain point for planners (14 %). With 15 years on global stages, Shola's process is responsive, transparent, and hassle-free — earning her repeat bookings and enthusiastic referrals.

4. Global & Inclusive Perspective

A strong sense of belonging lifts job performance by 56 %. Having spoken on four continents, Shola tailors every keynote to local culture while championing People-First, inclusive values that resonate everywhere.

5. Ready-to-Use Frameworks & Fast Results

Interactive, framework-based learning lifts retention rates by 25–60 %. Shola packages her insights into simple formulas, making it easy for audiences to apply new skills immediately — and many email her days later to share their wins.

Shola Kaye's 2026 talks & topics

Emotional Audacity™

Introduces Kaye's proprietary framework for leading with empathy, courageous communication, and bold action; positioning emotional intelligence not as a personal virtue but as an organisational performance driver.

Key takeaways:

- Why the human elements of self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation to act determine the success or failure of transformation efforts
 - Practical tools for listening without defensiveness and communicating with both honesty and compassion
 - How to build team cultures where speaking up is safe, feedback is constructive, and new ideas are acted upon
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Elevating Empathy

Explores empathy as a practical workplace skill – not an abstract value – with tools for reducing resistance to change, building cohesion across difference, and sustaining performance without burnout.

Key takeaways:

- The vital components of empathy and how to apply them in high-pressure management situations
 - How empathic leadership reduces friction in restructuring, change programmes, and cross-cultural team contexts
 - Techniques for demonstrating curiosity and understanding in ways that shift team dynamics measurably
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Psychological Safety and Inclusive Communication

Examines the role of psychological safety in creating environments where open, authentic communication is the norm – and provides a step-by-step approach to building it.

Key takeaways:

- What psychological safety actually requires behaviourally, beyond policy and intention
 - How to identify and address communication patterns that undermine trust and inclusion
 - Practical frameworks for ensuring every team member can contribute at full capacity
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The Power of Asking

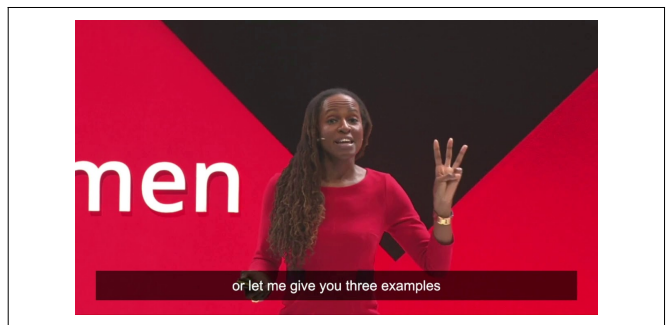
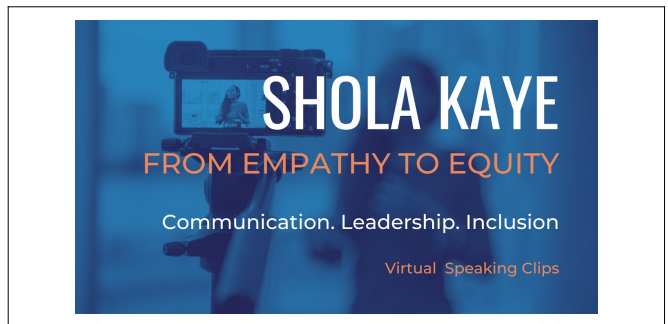
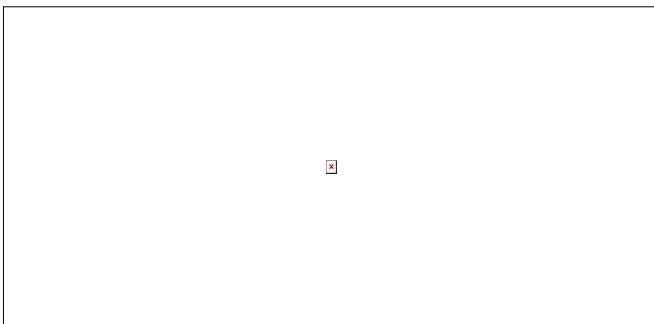
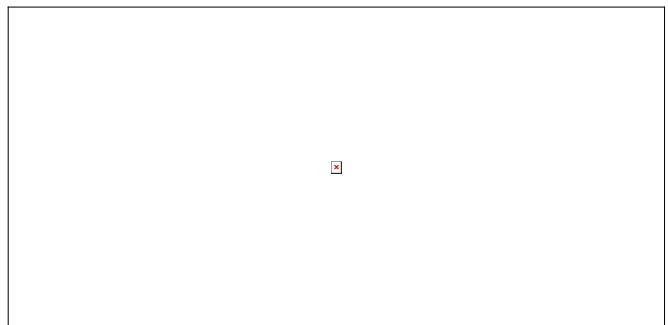
Examines the psychological barriers that prevent people – particularly underrepresented groups – from making strategic requests, and provides a clear framework for building the communication confidence to

ask effectively.

Key takeaways:

- How to shift from hesitation to empowerment in professional communication
- A clear framework for making well-timed, well-framed requests that build connection and create visibility
- How asking behaviour, when normalised at team level, changes culture and accelerates career progression

Shola Kaye's Videos





What Shola Kaye's clients say

Shola delivered an insightful and meaningful session that left people feeling empowered and inspired. Beyond that, Shola provided our team with the tools we can use to become more empathetic individuals. We continue to receive positive feedback on Shola's session and have teams already looking to work with her on new projects. She is a true professional and a real joy to work with. Can't recommend Shola enough!

Sylvie Russo

Communications Manager, Mondelez International

If you are looking for a top-notch, engaging, high-energy speaker to help motivate your company, Shola is your person. I had the opportunity to hear Shola speak on Empathy and Inclusive Leadership, and she speaks effortlessly on these topics, imparting knowledge in a way that makes the audience participate and take away solid messages.

Sonia Zacher-Martini

Manager, PSEG

Shola has been incredible to work with. She accepted the challenge of a last-minute brief to deliver a virtual Keynote speech on Empathy to a global audience and blew us away ... inspiring, relatable, engaging and empowering. Thank you Shola!

Rachael Rowland

Global Marketer, Ex-L'Oréal, Henkel

This session was very informative, relevant, and engaging! Shola's presentation style makes the material interactive. I found myself doing a lot of introspection and wanting to learn more about the topic.

John Justice

Senior Manager, LexisNexis Risk Solutions

We were lucky enough to have Shola as our keynote speaker this week for our global Women's network @GlanbiaNow. Shola was perfect in addressing the breakthebias focus of IWD and provided us strategies and practical ideas on how to manage this in the workplace. She was engaging and energetic and was a great speaker even in a virtual format. Thanks Shola and please let me know if you ever need a recommendation.

Wendy Chang Smith

CFO, Glanbia

Shola has been incredible to work with. She accepted the challenge of a last minute brief to deliver a virtual Keynote speech on Empathy to a global audience and blew us away ... inspiring, relatable, engaging and empowering. Thank you Shola!

Rachael Rowland

Global Marketer, Ex-L'Oréal,, Henfiel

One way to assess a speaker's impact is by the number of positive feedback generated from the audience long after they are gone. We hired Shola to deliver a keynote address on Empathy during our internal Black History Month celebrations. Shola was flexible and dedicated to learning about our organization, our people and customized her talk according to our needs. Delivering an interactive and engaging keynote address in the remote and virtual climate, we find ourselves in is ever-so-challenging. Shola was able to conduct a dynamic keynote address on Empathy with meaningful storytelling elements to emotionally engage us while driving home practical and implementable lessons to create a workplace of belonging. Overall, working with Shola has been a rewarding experience. I am looking forward to collaborating with her again in the future.

Jennifer Landgren

MBA, Dentsply Sirona

Shola delivered a top-notch remote keynote address for our Bryant University IDEA Program focused on "Elevating Empathy." Shola was engaging, informative, and inspiring. She spoke to a group of about 900 students, faculty, and staff, and we received excellent feedback. Everyone loved her message and the practical tips she shared for how we might all learn to be more empathetic and emotionally intelligent. Shola told great stories during her talk and created opportunities for meaningful interaction with attendees even in the large webinar format. In the planning process, Shola was wonderful to collaborate with, and she delivered exactly what we were looking for. I highly recommend Shola if you seeking an outstanding keynote related to empathy.

Allison Butler

Professor, Bryant University

Shola was a joy to work with as closing keynote for our recent all-company, virtual event. Shola took time to fully understand the organisation and the brief and delivered not one but TWO closing keynotes in one day for global teams spanning across the world, from Sydney to San Francisco.

The content was so powerful and authentically delivered, our teams are still raving about it today.

If you're looking for a standout presenter, with lasting impact and actionable outtakes - Shola is the woman for you!

Victoria O'Brien

Head of Marketing, Hotwire PR

Shola is a big impact speaker and compelling story teller. Her contribution to a critical event was arresting, memorable and inspiring. Be warned: her energy and positivity are highly contagious.

Paul Keenan

President, Bauer Media Audio

A great company-wide virtual keynote on Empathy in the workplace. It was a fascinating subject, and I think it was the most engagement I have seen with a topic - clearly it gave people food for thought and resonated. Our HR team has already said that they would like to incorporate some of the tools you gave us into the updated manager training programme. Our Diversity & Inclusion sponsor on the board of directors even contacted me to say that he really enjoyed the talk and especially how engaging it was for the audience - which I consider a great success!

Natasha Gibbs

Diversity & Inclusion Council, S-RM Corporate Intelligence

Shola has been running workshops for our organisation FOCUS for a few years and we love working with her. Shola's energy and engagement skills are very strong. We have experienced her skills live and online and her engagement and results are exactly the same in both settings which is a true strength. Shola has a real warmth and human approach which makes all the difference to our professional audience. People do listen to her and benefit from her knowledge.

Gael Panhelleux

Executive Director, FOCUS Info UK

Shola is a fabulous speaker, she has excellent tips and techniques for public speaking... Shola is highly intelligent and approachable and was so well received by our Women In the Law audience at Grant Thornton. Shola is so unique in that she has an outstanding education, professional experience in the corporate world, is a writer and also a professional singer, and draws on all of her experience to deliver very inspiring sessions.

Sandra Mossios

Director, Forensic and Investigation Services (Valuations), Grant Thornton UK LLP

Shola Kaye's 2026 speaking fees

Specific fees fall within the ranges shown. These are presented as a guide only and are subject to change without notice.

	EUR	GBP	USD
Home Country	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Asia Pacific	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Europe	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
Middle East & Africa	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
South America	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
United Kingdom	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000
US East Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
US West Coast	€12000 to €40000	£10,001 - £35,000	\$15000 - \$50000
Virtual	Under €12000	Under £10,000	Under \$15000