Joe Chaffin: Hi everyone! Welcome to Blood Bank Guy Essentials episode 009. I am super-excited to have as my guest today Dr. Kristine Krafts from the University of Minnesota. Kristine, welcome to the podcast!

Kristine Krafts: Thank you so much! So happy to be here!

Joe: It's so cool to have you here! I gotta tell you, there's going to be a lot of blood bank people that are going to say, "Kristine Krafts—not a familiar name." But I want to tell everyone exactly why you should be familiar to people. Dr. Krafts is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Basic Sciences at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine, as well as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Diagnostic and Biological Sciences in the University of Minnesota School of Dentistry. She is trained in both anatomic and clinical pathology, and did hematopathology and molecular diagnostic pathology fellowships all at the University of Minnesota. So you're a Minnesota girl, right, Kristine?

Kristine: I am! I never left!

Joe: Okay! (laughs) Fair enough! Why you should **know** about Dr. Krafts though, is my favorite part about this. There are 2 reasons: Number 1, back in 2009, Kristine decided to do something that many people have done, but quite frankly, she does it better than just about anyone I've seen. She started a website, which is called **pathologystudent.com**. **Pathologystudent.com** is a site that teaches not only basic pathology, but also has a special emphasis on hematopathology, given Kristine's expertise. This site has just an enormous amount of information for students of basic pathology. It really is incredible! It's a great resource. She blogs consistently there, she has a newsletter called "Path Bites" that goes out to—-I don't even know how many people everyday. If you look on Facebook, her Facebook page has over 21,000 followers, for crying out loud! Makes me feel totally inadequate! (laughs) So, not only does she do that, but she also has a number of e-books that are available on the site. I love that about Dr. Krafts' story, but in fact, my favorite thing about Dr. Krafts' story is that when you look at her bio—-and I did this, I looked back at all the honors and awards that she's gotten. Since 2001, and including this year, 2016, she has won at least one "Faculty of the Year" or "Teacher of the Year Award" at the University of Minnesota, for **every** freaking year, except 2003, 2007 and 2010. So Kristine, what were you doing in '03, '07 and '10? What's the deal?

Kristine: (laughs) You know, I don't know! (laughs) I must have been doing something different!

Joe: (laughs) Clearly!

Kristine: The students are really kind. It doesn't take a lot to make them appreciative. You just have to kind of show up and care and that's all it really takes.

Joe: Well, I would say it takes a *little bit* more than that, and one of my favorite things that I've ever seen is in the picture this year, that you got the "Distinguished Teacher Post-Baccalaureate Graduate and Professional Teaching Award." There's a picture of you, where you're holding a rubber chicken!

Kristine: (laughs) I like that one! I don't really like the picture that much, but I love the chicken! Love that! You see, I did not think I would win this award at all, and I told the person, who nominated me, "Are you sure? It's a lot of work!" because the people that win it are really, you know, they're really accomplished and they're international and I'm not. So, holding the chicken was awesome!

Joe: Well, I would argue that your impact, while, you know, maybe not "international" in the traditional sense, is international in terms of the impact you've had. I would love if you would just take a moment, before we get into our topic, just take a real quick moment to let us know, what is it that really gets you going about teaching? Why is this the pathway that you've chosen, which I think you would admit, it's somewhat of a non-traditional pathway?

Kristine: It is, it is non-traditional. It takes some thought, I think, to break out of the roles that are set ahead for you. When you go to medical school, you're kind of pushed to just go straight through, you're not encouraged to take a year off and think. You're certainly not encouraged to take time off, between medical school and residency. I did that. I took time off and it was more for personal reasons. I got married and I wanted to be in the same class as my husband, at the time, but it just gave me a chance to kind of pause and think. I just realized when I went to medical school, the med school was more of a family practice oriented school, and I realized I didn't really like that, that much! I still think it's very important, but it wasn't really me. So I kind of fell into pathology, not expecting to and then I went through pathology residency and everyone was going on to private practice and making a lot of money. It would have been easy to just kind of do that, but I realized I didn't really like that kind of work that much. What I liked was teaching, and I've been doing that all along. And so I just kind of kept doing what I enjoyed. It's just really energizing to interact with students and when you explain something and they get it, and they say, "Well that's all it is? (laughs) You know, it's no harder than that?" It's just really fun and like I said, they're really appreciative for very little effort. You kind of get a lot of good feeling back. So, it makes it sound really selfish! (laughs) I do want to do good things for people!

Joe: And you clearly have! I think what I've said to people when people ask me about why I like to teach, and I know from knowing you well enough that this will ring true for you as well, is just the feeling that you get when someone is sitting across from you and you come up with some creative, out-of-your-mind, "never thought of it this way before" way to make something clear to them, and the LIGHT goes on in their eyes?! As a teacher, there's nothing better!

Kristine: Yeah! That's absolutely true! There's a lot of creativity that you can use if you choose, and I like that, too. You don't just have to stick to somebody else's rules. So that's fun!

Joe: For sure! Well, and that actually brings us to the reason that I wanted you to be on the podcast. You are NOT going to take us through some obscure blood bank thing today…I know you're relieved about that.

Kristine: No, I was planning on that! Can't we do that? (laughs)

Joe: Oh really? (laughs) Darn! Okay, well, I'm going to through a big curve at you, then!

Kristine: Okay! (laughs)

Joe: Because we are going to talk about something that you have talked about extensively on your blog that I just love! So we're going to talk today about the **"Top Five Tips to Make Your Next Presentation AWESOME!"** This is something that you've covered on your blog pretty extensively. You did several posts back in 2014 discussing this. Before we get started, before we do tip #1, why don't you tell us a little bit what caused you—-what's the *need* that you saw that caused you to address this?

Kristine: Well I think, from the very first lecture I gave, I realized that there was a lot of room for improvement, in my own lectures. There were some slides that clicked with students and some that didn't. And I think having been a medical student, I was a little bit ahead of the curve for people who hadn't been medical students, they hadn't sat through, you know, eight hours of lecture a day with some PowerPoints that weren't so great. So I feel like, having been through that, I started out okay, but there was a lot of room for improvement. Just listening to what the students liked and what they didn't like, and what worked, and when they seemed to "zone-out" — I just wanted to be more effective. So, it's just kind of trial and error over the years. A lot of it just makes total sense, but you have to do it for a long time to get to that point.

Joe: That's the thing, isn't it? And it's so important because when you're up there and you're presenting—whether you're doing it in front of a bunch of people, whether you're doing it one-on-one, whether you're doing it on a webinar—really, the principles are fairly similar. Your job is to get the points across to people, in the least distracting and most effective way possible. I mean, is that a fair way to put it? Is that what you think of?

Kristine: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, although, I would add that if you're giving a lecture in a lecture hall, and the lights are low, especially for pathology—we tend to turn them low so you can see the pictures—-and sometimes, a little distraction is a good thing, because you can't really pay attention for more than—-studies say that is it 10 minutes or so. You can pay attention for 10 minutes. And so—but it has to be a healthy distraction, it can't be something too bizarre! (laughs)

Joe: Right. (laughs)

Kristine: But in general, no, I think that's true. You don't want your presentation, itself, to take the attention. You want the attention to be on the content and extraneous stuff tends to just detract from that.

Joe: Cool. With that, let us get started! We've got the "Top Five Tips" to go through, we need to start with number one! Kristine, why don't you tell us? What is the first tip to make your next presentation awesome?

Kristine: Well, I think the first tip that I thought of was related to the **template** that you can pick, either in PowerPoint or Keynote. I thought of that first because that's where most people start, when they have a presentation due they'll just open up PowerPoint and pick a template and start writing. That may or may not be the best way to do it, but that seems to be kind of typical. I wanted to address that idea of a template, because so many people will pick a template and that's not always necessarily the best way to do it. I find for medical presentations, it's often better to not have a template, to have your own template, I guess. If you pick something that has already been designed by PowerPoint, it's very likely going to have something kind of fancy on it. It's going to have a border that's got curly cues or it's gonna have some weird lines going through the back, that you have no idea why they're there, and they're on every slide….you know, a lot of colors…

Joe: I was gonna make a joke there about Microsoft, but sadly, Apple Keynote has the same deal, just incredibly complicated backgrounds

Kristine: They do. They're a little bit classier, but they're still too complicated! (laughs) And something can look pretty classy and interesting, but that might not be the best, you know? It's not necessarily the best, most interesting-looking thing, it's the simplest thing.

Joe: So how would you go about that? I mean when you open up a new presentation, you're typically presented with this grand array, this palette of different themes that you can choose from. Just practically speaking, how do you avoid that? What do you do?

Kristine: I just don't use 'em! That sounds really glib! But I don't. I've come to learn what works best in my lecture hall or in a different presentation setting when I'm presenting, you know, maybe to a small room of people and we're just sitting in front of the computer, that's different, too. So in every setting, I think there's probably some good rules to use. In the lecture hall, the slides should be dark, I think, because the lights are low—for my presentations—we're looking at a lot of histology slides, so the lights are down and if you switch to a white background, that's like a shock to the eyes. It's like, "Whoa! It's really bright!" So I have just a plain black background now. I used to do colors and I don't even do that anymore—and just simple white text. It sounds really boring and it kind of is, but there's really nothing in there, and I've played around with that, trying to put lines in, to separate the header from the rest of the slide and stuff, and I just find that it's better not to! In other settings, you might want to pick a template, you know, if you're presenting to a room full of people, it's more like a boardroom and it's

more of a professional, "business-y" kind of setting, then maybe it's a little bit different. But for medical presentations to students, I think you want to avoid using those templates. Now having said that, I'm sure there are some that are reasonable, that aren't that bad, but it's probably better to just start with your own.

Joe: Sure.

Kristine: Just plain background, white or black, and start from there.

Joe: Well, in some cases, obviously you know this, in some cases for example, when I'm giving a presentation to a hospital and I'm representing my blood center, my blood center has already picked out a background or a template to use. So in some cases, there's not any choices and I think we can talk about the rest of your tips will kind of help when you're dealing with a background that's already been chosen for you or a template that's already been chosen for you.

Kristine: Right. You just have to work with within what you have. I know what you mean; having the name of the center, whatever on it.

Joe: So, what I hear you saying is, "Choose something that will work within the context of what you're trying to do." If you're doing image-heavy slides, for example, dark backgrounds work better. Text-heavy slides, it would vary, I guess, depending on the setting in which you're going to give it?

Kristine: I think so. If it's a room where the light is fairly bright, I like a white background better because it looks more like a page, I guess—a page of a book. The black can be kind of annoying after a while.

Joe: Right.

Kristine: It's like, "why is the background black? I think if you just kind of think about where you're presenting, you can kind of decide, light or dark. That's kind of the main decision. I think you can play around with what you want on your slide. If you want a border, okay, don't make it too fussy! But I think less is more. Look at Steve Job's talks for Apple—there's nothing on those slides! It's kind of like "Spinal Tap," I don't know if you've seen that movie? (laughs)

Joe: (laughs) I have, of course!

Kristine: Look at that black album! There's nothin' on that album!

Joe: Right! That's exactly true! And one other thing I just wanted to get your thoughts on, in terms of, if you're going to make your own template or if you're going to go without a template, or whatever, one of the things that I've always found, (and I think you mentioned this in one of your presentations), that it drives me nuts when I don't have consistency on where to look for particular things on the slide, like where the title is, where the text starts, all that stuff. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Kristine: Yeah, I do. I like the title and the text to be in very consistent places. If I'm going to use a running header, throughout the presentation (which I'm kind of going away from), but if I do have a header, then I put it on the same exact place on every slide and I just start with one slide and I duplicate that slide. So I make a slide with text and a header, then I'll duplicate it and then use that slide for my next one, and so forth. That way everything is exactly the same, because it bugs me.

Joe: Ah! Totally understand! It maybe just our shared neurosis on that, Kristine, but I don't think we're alone! (laughs)

Kristine: I know blood bank is kind of an OCD sort of a speciality.

Joe: NO!!!

Kristine: I don't mean that badly! (laughs) Heme is the same way! It's very detailed.

Joe: Yes. Good. So, I think we've—unless I'm missing something—I think we've covered the first tip, which is to either to pick a simple template or make your own template, avoiding the busy stuff in the background. Is that a fair way to put it?

Kristine: Yeah. I think so. You put it very well.

Joe: Awesome. Oh, thank you! (laughs)

Kristine: (laughs)

Joe; You wrote it! (laughs) Okay! So that is tip #1. Let's move on and do tip #2. I love this tip because if there's any pet peeve about presentations, it would be, well—either this one or #4, but let's do #2. What is Top Tip #2 to make your next presentation awesome, Kristine?

Kristine: This tip is **"Don't Crowd the Slide With Text."** This is the post that I got the most responses on, I think. And that's what everybody says, "Just don't put so much text on the slide!" Part of the bad thing about doing that is you can't read it if you're sitting in the audience, but the other bad thing is that the presenter is sort of tempted to stand up there and just read the whole thing. That's no good. I mean, then why would you need to come?

Joe: More to come on that, yeah. So how do you judge how much is too much?

Kristine: Well, that's a good question. I kind of listened to different people talk about presentations and some people have very specific rules, like no more than 30 words on a slide.

Joe: Oh wow.

Kristine: Which is kind of impossible with medical presentations. I would say, I don't have any specific rules, but you can kind of just see what looks good and what doesn't. I don't think you should have really more than four bullets or maybe five. If you're going to use bullets, which I don't really like that much, but you can end up falling into that, I think a lot of times. And when you do make a bullet, it shouldn't have eight lines of text associated with it, like one or two. I think the problem that people have is that they feel like they're not going to have everything on the slide, that they're going to be missing something, and you **will** miss something! But you can't put everything on each slide, that's kind of the point. So either, just be comfortable with that and get used to it or make a handout that has everything in it, if you really feel like you want to make sure the audience walks away with something that has all the information.

Joe: That's so important! I was just going to interject, that is something that people miss. They think about, "Okay, if someone looks at my slide later and they see that I left *this* out? Oh my goodness, they're going to freak out!" But realistically, people don't understand that you're defeating the purpose of the people that are listening to you present right now, by drowning them with information!

Kristine: Right, right! And they end up just reading the slide, too, and then they don't hear what you're saying. Plus, it's just ugly and I don't like ugly things. I like pretty things! (laughs)

Joe: (laughs) Yeah, for sure. That is an excellent point! Do you have any other—one of the things that I always have seen people struggle with on this, is when they're trying to reduce the amount of text on a slide, they will resort sometimes, to doing funky things like using abbreviations that no one knows what they mean. Any comments on that?

Kristine: Yes! That's a really good point. I think I've been tempted to do that, too, just to cut the wording down, but don't do that. Just don't! Write the word out or leave it out or think of a different word because there's nothing more—well, there is some more annoying things than that—but that's one of the most annoying things when you see an abbreviation and it's not something that's really, really obvious. "MD"—okay, you can do that! You just don't ever want to assume that people are going to know what those abbreviations are. I actually read through my post—you referred to the post I've written, I read through them a couple of days ago and I've written something like the "Mom Rule?" I can't remember what it is now! I love my mom! She isn't a medical person and so my rule—if she knew what the abbreviation, if she knows what that is, then I can put it in there. If she doesn't, then I shouldn't.

Joe: Nice! (laughs)

Kristine: Part of the reason is, is because I'm lecturing to medical students where they're beginning on their journey. Maybe if you're lecturing to "super-specialized fellows" then you have a different rule.

Joe: I think the principle is still the same. I really do. It is annoying to make people try and figure out what you mean by putting some obscure abbreviation. Even if it's

something that some of them know, I would argue, even if it's something that everybody knows! If it's not blatantly obvious on your slide, it really has no place in there, from my perspective.

Kristine: I agree. I definitely agree. You certainly don't want to seem like you're trying to come off as—well, you are an expert, but you want to be on the student's level or the audience's level, so, those barriers, I think.

Joe: One of the things that I will often tell residents when I'm giving them feedback about presentations is, that it really doesn't cost anything to make a second slide on a particular thing. So you've got ALL THIS STUFF that you're trying to smush into one slide; okay, well, make it a couple of slides. Decrease the amount of words on each slide. In the old days—you may be too young for this, Kristine—but back in my day, when I was starting doing presentations and you would make a slide and you had to either take a picture of it or run it through a program, to make like an actual 35 mm slide? Each slide cost you money! So, you'd get everything you could, but digital is cheap! It's literally no cost to make an additional slide.

Kristine: Yep, I think that's a good point, a very good point.

Joe: Okay, so we've got Tip #2 which is: "Don't crowd the slide with text." I know I can speak for Kristine when I say, "I'm **begging** you! Don't crowd the slide with text, PLEASE." (laughs) We don't like that. Nobody likes that. So that's Tip #2, let us move on and do Tip #3. What is that, Kristine?

Kristine: Tip #3 is: **"Use the Right Font."** This is something that I have struggled with. I don't even want to know, I don't even know if I have them, but my initial—my very first presentations, I'm sure were just in the worst font ever! The font that you use on a slide that you project in front of a room is not the same, the qualities that make that font good, do not hold for like fonts in books. They're not the same. You'd think they would be, but they're not. You want to make sure that whatever font you choose for your slide is first of all, it's legible and readable from the very back of the room. If it's too fancy, people won't be able to read it. And you also want it to convey some authority or credibility. You don't want it to be too "foofy," either! And if it's too cute, then, you know—if it's ==Comic Sans==, (don't even get me going on that), or ==Curlz== or something like that—you know, of course, that's going to give a very, sort of "child-like" feeling to your presentations.

Joe: But yet I see that a lot!

Kristine: I see it too! What the heck?

Joe: Even at national meetings, I see people using Comic Sans and I want to throw something! (laughs)

Kristine: I know! It's like, "REALLY?" (laughs) It's so funny! It looks like a kindergarten font.

Joe: It does. (laughs)

Kristine: I really hate that font!

Joe: So NOTED! (laughs)

Kristine: Sorry! I'll get off that, but another thing, with trying to use a simple font is to try to stay away from serifs; I'm not sure how you say that.

Joe: I'm not either. Explain that to us, though. That's a phrase that I've heard a lot and I don't know what it means.

Kristine: Serifs are those little "line-y" things on the top of letters or on the bottom. So like a "m" some fonts will just have the lines that touch the baseline and some will have little horizontal lines on each of three points of the "m" at the bottom, like "little feet." They exist on the top of some letters, too. They're just like little things that hang off the letter and they look really nice when you reading a book, actually. And I like those fonts better for books, for sure, but they don't work well on a slide. They just don't. So you should look for sans-serif fonts, for the most part.

Joe: Ok, I get it! Without the squigglies! Sans-serif! Okay, yay! You've taught me something.

Kristine: (laughs) You can sometimes get away with a serif font, I think, if you're just using it for a heading or you're just using it for the title. But I think you should be wary of combining fonts, too. You have to be very judicial, I think about using multiple fonts. It just gets too messy. So, yeah, I think that's all I want to say about the fonts.

Joe: So what are some examples of fonts that you might recommend?

Kristine: My favorite one right now is—(laughs) my favorite font—-that sounds so silly! But my favorite font right now is "Calibri." It's a sans-serif font. I believe it's Mac and Microsoft, both. But I think if you just really want to make sure that it's a very traditional sans-serif font, and that you're going to absolutely draw no attention to it, then I would go with "Helvetica," which has been around forever. There's actually a cool video about Helvetica on Netflix. It's a documentary about how they came up with it and how some people said it was boring, but why it really works. So, Helvetica, I think, is traditional and you can't ever go wrong. Calibri is a little bit more slanty, just a little more interesting. "Verdana" is good, too. NOT Arial! Gosh! Don't use that! It's the **worst! THE WORST**!

Joe: What's wrong with Arial? (laughs)

Kristine: It's just HORRIBLE! I tell you, you make a slide and you know, do it all right, make the heading and make like four bullets, if you want or whatever, and make your little text, and put it all in Arial and then duplicate the slide and put it all in Calibri—or Helvetica (even better, Helvetica). And you flip them both up and you'll want to puke when you look at Arial!

Joe: (laughs)

Kristine: I'm serious! I don't even know what it is! There's something about the width of the letters? I don't know. It's too "round-y?"

Joe: Oh gosh, that's fantastic! Okay, I'm going to try that! (laughs)

Kristine: I could be crazy—I might be crazy! (laughs)

Joe: I have no comment! (laughs)

Kristine: That's wise! (laughs)

Joe: So you've talked about the style of the font and that is obviously important. It's also important to—and this kind of goes a little bit with the previous topic, the previous point about "crowding the slide"—but what about the size?

Kristine: Yeah, the size is really important, too. I think that's another thing that people do wrong, in my opinion. In trying to get what they think is enough text on to the slide, they'll just make the font smaller and you really shouldn't do that. For one thing, it's not great to have inconsistent sizes on different slides, for the most part, because it just conveys this kind of disorderly look. But also, it's just not legible! Even from the front of the room a small font isn't. So really, for presenting, I suggest nothing smaller than 28 point and you can get away with 24, sometimes, but 28 would be best. Headings, of course, should be bigger than that, maybe 32 or 36, but really nothing smaller than 28. And once you do that, you'll realize how few words you really can put on a slide, without running off the slide.

Joe: And that's okay, I mean, that goes to point #2. If you don't have your text size adjusting and I know…*can* you do it in Keynote? I know you can do it in PowerPoint, to set it to automatically change the size of the font to make it fit. Bad move, in my opinion!

Kristine: Yeah, I hate it when it's set to that. I go in and change it because you want to just keep it all consistent.

Joe: Agreed. And one of the things that, again, as long as we're doing "pet peeves," and we're in FULL "Nerd Alert" right now, by the way! We're actually talking about style and size of fonts! But it's awesome! It's **really** important! But one of the things—okay, you gave your "pet peeve" and Arial makes you want to throw up!

Kristine: Yep.

Joe: When I'm sitting in a presentation and someone throws a slide up, and they immediately apologize for the slide?

Kristine: I know!

Joe: It's like, "Okay, then fix it!" If the text is too small and if you know this is a problem, then fix it. In full disclosure, I've done it myself, I admit it!

Kristine: I have too! (laughs)

Joe: But, man, it just drives you crazy, doesn't it?

Kristine: Yeah. Right! It's like, you know, you had five minutes before the presentation —you could just take it out or change it or whatever.

Joe: I think that you'll have a tip for us little bit later on, in Tip #5 that actually can help with that. So let's hang on for that thought for now. So, Tip #3 is to, "Use the Right Font." Just to summarize, you want to think about using a relatively simple font, a sans-serif font, if possible, however you want to pronounce it. Consider making the size of the font, not only consistent between slides, but generally, in the range of 28 points for your body text. Did I get that right?

Kristine: Yep, that's what I would suggest.

Joe: I win! Yay! (laughs) Okay, Tip #4—-what is that, Kristine?

Kristine: Tip #4 is: **"Don't read off your slides."** I think that's something that I've done, I've certainly done it. It's a horrific thing when I get up there and I realize, "I don't know what I was going to say about this slide!" And so I look at the slide and I read it. And if you've done your slides right, you really can't do that very well because you won't have full sentence after full sentence. So, it kind of forces you to talk a little bit more, but I think that is probably a "pet peeve" of many people. I hear that and I read that in evaluations all the time of our lecturers, "He or she just stood there and read the slides. I could have just stayed home."

Joe: Exactly! You know what? I'm sorry for interrupting, but in this age where I'm sure you're experiencing this in your medical school and dental school classes, where more and more people are wanting to do that. They're just like, "I don't need to go to the presentations. I'll have someone FaceTime me in or something!" or just, "I'll look at it later or whatever." In that age, if you're not giving people a reason to actually be there, they're not gonna!

Kristine: I totally agree with that! I couldn't agree more. We record our lectures, both at the medical school and at the dental school. The medical school pretty much makes us, The dental school is kind of optional. So, the students do have the option to stay home. If they're not coming to class, it means something. It means you're not giving them a reason. It's boring and you're reading off the slides or there's no interaction and there's no point to coming.

Joe: So, how can people avoid that? I mean, obviously, it's easy to say, "Hey, don't read off your slides!" But from the practical perspective, how can they do that?

Kristine: I think **the most important thing is to <u>practice your </u>talk**. That's something that I think I've been guilty of not doing, quite often. I spend all this time making pretty slides because I like them to look good and then, it's like the day before the presentation or the hour before, and I'm like, "Oh crap! I didn't think about what I was going to *say*!" (laughs)

Joe: (laughs) Yes!

Kristine: So, practicing is really important. And there's all kinds of things that we can talk about, you know, how to go about practicing, but just that general idea of talking through it, I think is really important. And not just sitting at your computer, in your chair all comfy and flipping through the slides and thinking in your head. You actually have to vocalize, you have to say it out loud, because once you start talking, you realize, "Oh, I got to pick that word." or "How am I going to explain this thing?" Talking through it is important.

Joe: Right. And actually, I misspoke earlier. I said you were going to give us tips about this very thing in point 5, I actually meant point 4. But before we let this go, and don't worry about time, we're good on time. I would love for you to just give us some practical tips on "practice." That sounds weird, doesn't it? Practical tips on "practice." So, you're sitting there and you know you've got a presentation in three or four days or whatever, hopefully…I admit, I'm guilty of this all the time, you haven't procrastinated, you've got your slides, at least, somewhat close to ready! So, just for someone who's trying to figure out how best to do this, how would you advise people to consider the whole practice regimen?

Kristine: I'll tell you how I do it and what works for me. You can read tons of books on this and I think that can be really helpful. Steve Jobs, his presentations were **amazing!** I love to watch them! He makes it look so effortless, like he just got up there and talked about it, but he practiced for hours. Just hours and hours for a single presentation! So, I think you need to make sure you set aside enough time and like you said, it's really easy to procrastinate and I do that all the time. But *save time for practicing, even at the expense of your slides*. The temptation for me is to try to keep focusing my the slides and making them more and more perfect, but at a certain point, you don't get that much back. You can spend another hour, but you're just shuffling things around on the screen and it's not really going to do anything. So, leave time. I think the best advice I would have is to try to leave time to go through it at least three times. The whole thing—-start to finish. So if it's an hour lecture, at least three, one hour run-throughs, and it's probably going to take you more time than that. That sounds crazy, but I think Steve Jobs went through his like—I don't even know how many times, twenty or thirty.

I think also the other thing, is to initially start out by making notes and you can do that right in the notes part, of either Keynote or PowerPoint, and just remind yourself of points you want to explain more fully and you can feel free to write as much as you want down there because the audience isn't going to see it. That way, you can kind of "dump your brain" in that part of the slide and you'll have it permanently. So make notes about

what you want to say, and then, don't look at them when you practice or try not to! Run through it the first time, try to remember all those points that you made in your note section, but don't let yourself look at it. You'll see just where you are, what you need to try to remember. Second time you run through it, is more about getting the words right, specific words that you want to say, and trying to get the ancillary points or the filling-in points, to get them into your head. By the time you do it a couple of times, you'll start to really stick there. And then the last time, is just to kind of finesse and to get the timing down, to kind of get into your "muscle memory," I don't know if that's the right terminology, but the more times you do it, the more comfortable you'll be. And when you get up in front of the students, you'll feel more, like you've done this before. You know, it's like riding a bike! That's kind of the way I do it.

Joe: Very true! I have to say, it's rare for me to practice 3 times, but I always try to run through mine at least once. One of the things that jumps out at me when I do that, is what we were talking about in the last tip. When I get to a slide and I'm practicing my presentation and I feel like apologizing for it? That's the time that I say, "I gotta fix this slide!" If you're surprised by something that you have to apologize for, then you haven't done enough prep work, basically, from my perspective.

Kristine: That's a really good point! It helps you see your slides from the point of view from the audience when you're talking through them. It's also, if you can, it's a great idea to walk through the slides in the room you're going to be in. That's not always possible, but that even makes the "stage fright" thing a little bit easier, I think. Videotaping is also good, but that Ooooh! It's a really good idea to do it and just to force yourself and then just—I don't know, go have a drink or something! (laughs) If you're a drinker!

Joe: (laughs)

Kristine: I'm not! But something like that because it's painful! (laughs)

Joe: Yeah, me neither! But doing that might make me want to start!

Kristine: (laughs) It's a good exercise!

Joe: I think you make a really crucial point there, even if you don't video yourself, at least audio record yourself! What you'll almost always find is little—not necessarily annoying things, but things that you're doing that you don't necessarily realize. How many times you say, "Um." How many times—there was a time in my experience as a lecturer, and I didn't realize this until someone made a joke about it at the end of one of my lectures, that I said, "basically," as a transition word approximately 4,000 times per lecture! "So basically, blah, blah blah….so basically, blah, blah, blah!"—and by the time the end of the lecture came, people were saying it along with me and I said, "I might have a problem here!"

Kristine: That's funny! That's really true, though. You don't realize when you're talking in front of a room, you're so "in the moment" that you don't really realize you're doing that!

Joe: Exactly.

Kristine: This is a personal disclosure, but I'll say it!

Joe: It's okay. Nobody's listening, Kristine! Sorry, don't worry. (laughs)

Kristine: You can always cut this out! (laughs) I realized, once I started doing that— taping myself, I had this really annoying habit of, I don't even know what it's called, but it's like making a little "sss sound?" "And then," and I'd take a little breath and it's so annoying! I listened to it and I couldn't even watch the lecture. So, I had to really try not to do it and I periodically will watch videos, even though it's annoying, just to make sure I don't that. I wouldn't want to sit in that lecture. (laughs)

Joe: I understand. Okay, so Tip #4 is, "Don't read off the slides." Let's actually quickly summarize where we've been so far. Tip #1: "Pick a simple template."
Tip #2: "Don't crowd the slide with text." Tip #3: "Use the right font." Tip #4: "Please! For the love of God, don't read off the slides!" I added a little bit to that. And so finally, "*basically*",…sorry, couldn't help myself! Let us do Tip #5. What is Tip #5, Kristine?

Kristine: Let me do mine, (deep breath…"sss sound") "Tip #5 is,…"

Joe: Nice! (laughs)

Kristine: And this one is particularly important, I think, for medical presentations. **"Make your graphs awesome."** Make them legible, make them not painful! I think a lot of the slides, you mentioned people apologizing for slides, and I think a lot them are graph slides.

Joe: Yes.

Kristine: Tables or graphs or whatever—data, you put it up and you're like, "Oh, I'm sorry! This is so small, I'm sure you can't see it!" Well, then don't, you know, re-do it. And not all of us have a lot of time. I have more time because it's my job now, it's to teach, but if you're a busy medical student and you got to give a presentation tomorrow, you might not have time. But if you do have time, you can re-do a graph and make it, so it is legible, and there's some things we can talk about with that.

Joe: Yes, please. One thing I do want to, before we get to the details of "*how* to do this," I think it's important, since we're talking to students and people maybe beginning in the field, that you do have to be a little bit careful with this. You can't just steal someone else's data and make a brand new chart without crediting them, for example. It's important to understand that copyrights are important and they're there for a reason, right?

Kristine: Oh yeah! Absolutely! You certainly want to honor that, but I don't think there's anything wrong with showing the data in a different way, as long as you're referencing the original source. Because you're trying to get the point across and showing a busy graph that you can see when you're reading a journal, something like that is just not going to work, on a PowerPoint slide.

Joe: Agreed. And I actually think you honor the people that have done the work more when you, rather than throwing up a blurry, tiny, weird-looking screen capture of something they've done in a journal, but to actually make it so that it can be visible in your presentation, as long as you're crediting them, I have no issue with that, either.

Kristine: Yeah. Well I think, if you are re-doing a graph, one thing to do is to clean up the x and y axes. So, you don't have to have all those tick marks on there. You have to have enough so that the graph makes sense, but if you're looking at 6 month and 12 month outcomes or something, you don't have to have 6 ticks between 0 and 6, you can just put in the 6, and that makes it easier to see. You can also clean up the titles for the x and y axes and summarize them or make them bigger! The font needs to be big enough so people can see it. So, that "size rule" comes into play and you might be able to get away with 24 font, especially in a graph, but you really have to watch that.

Joe: As long as it's Comic Sans, you mean? Or Arial?

Kristine: That's right! OH GAG! (laughs) Don't! Don't even!

Joe: Sorry! I just wanted the reaction! (laughs) I knew I would get it!

Kristine: Yeah, that will do it! So, the axes are important. If you're doing a graph or a chart, then you want to also look at the lines for the data and you may be able to remove some points on there, too. You want to show where the data changes and make sure you got the main point across in your rendition, but you don't necessarily need a bazillion data points in there, because you can see whether it's going up or down! So it's kind of the same rules for simplifying it. Make it as simple as you can but no simpler.

Joe: And you made a point in your post that I loved the way you put this. You basically said, "Decide what the single most important point of the graph is." That's the key, to figure out exactly—how does this graph work into my presentation, in terms of what I'm trying to illustrate and what the graph was trying to illustrate?

Kristine: Right. I think this is one of the most difficult parts of medical presentations and nobody really talks about this a lot, when you look at presentation literature. They talk about how to make your slide pretty, but they don't talk about what if you have to show a graph that's got a bunch of different lines on it, a bunch of different data points, and how do you do that so it's visible from the back of the room and it gets the point across. I think that is important to try to think of, "What exactly I'm trying to—if I had to summarize this slide in a sentence, what am I trying to show with this graph?" and go from there.

Joe: So important! I agree. Okay, so we have done all five. I'm going to repeat them one more time, just so everybody gets them really clearly in their head. "The Top Five Tips to Make Your Next Presentation Awesome":

    #1) Pick a simple template
    #2) Don't crowd that slide with text
    #3) Use the right font
    #4) Don't read off the slides
    #5) Make your graphs **awesome**

Kristine, I think you've made some amazingly good points! I can't thank you enough for doing this. Before we close, are we missing anything? Is there anything else you'd like to leave us with, as we think about making our presentations better?

Kristine: I think that covers the basics and I would just—part of #4, "Don't read off the slides," is practicing. But I would just remind people that, that's a really, really important part. You can get your slides looking perfect, but if you don't practice out loud, it's not going to go as well as you would like.

Joe: Very, very true. Well, before I leave you, I do want to mention to everyone, Dr. Krafts did not come on this podcast to advertise her stuff, but I'm going to do it a little bit for her. One of the things that, most of the people that are listening to this are going to be blood bank folks, although obviously, I'm sure a lot of your audience will listen to this, as well, Kristine. But people that are in blood banking, I just wanted to let you know, there's several really great resources that Kristine has on her website: pathologystudent.com. One of them is one of the best summaries of coagulation that you will ever read! Iron-clad guarantee! It's called "Clot or Bleed." It's an e-book. There's a charge for it, it's nominal and again, Dr. Krafts did not ask me to this. I'm doing this on my own. And also, for those of you interested in hemepath, there's some things including her "Complete (but not obsessive) Hematopathology Guide" that you can get from pathologystudent.com. So free commercial there, Kristine! Again, I know you didn't ask me to do that.

Kristine: Thank you! I didn't! (laughs)

Joe: So, as we close today, once again, Kristine, I want to thank you so much for being here! You've really, really helped us, I think, in terms of learning what and what not to do and hopefully we can all go out and give better presentations. So thank you!

Kristine: Aw, thank you! This is a lot of fun! I really appreciate you inviting me.