

Transcript:

I'm used to thinking of the TED audience as a wonderful collection of some of the most effective, intelligent, intellectual, savvy, worldly and innovative people in the world. And I think that's true. However, I also have reason to believe that many, if not most, of you are actually tying your shoes incorrectly.

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(Laughter)

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Now I know that seems ludicrous. I know that seems ludicrous. And believe me, I lived the same sad life until about three years ago. And what happened to me was I bought, what was for me, a very expensive pair of shoes. But those shoes came with round nylon laces, and I couldn't keep them tied. So I went back to the store and said to the owner, "I love the shoes, but I hate the laces." He took a look and said, "Oh, you're tying them wrong." Now up until that moment, I would have thought that, by age 50, one of the life skills that I had really nailed was tying my shoes.

01:03

(Laughter)

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But not so -- let me demonstrate.

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This is the way that most of us were taught to tie our shoes. Now as it turns out -- thank you.

01:18

(Applause)

01:19

Wait, there's more. As it turns out --

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(Laughter)

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there's a strong form and a weak form of this knot, and we were taught the weak form. And here's how to tell. If you pull the strands at the base of the knot, you will see that the bow will orient itself down the long axis of the shoe. That's the weak form of the knot.

01:38

But not to worry. If we start over and simply go the other direction around the bow, we get this, the strong form of the knot. And if you pull the cords under the knot, you will see that the bow orients itself along the transverse axis of the shoe. This is a stronger knot. It will come untied less often. It will let you down less, and not only that, it looks better.

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We're going to do this one more time.

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(Applause)

02:11

Start as usual --

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(Applause)

02:15

go the other way around the loop. This is a little hard for children, but I think you can handle it. Pull the knot. There it is: the strong form of the shoe knot.

02:27

Now, in keeping with today's theme, I'd like to point out -- something you already know -- that sometimes a small advantage someplace in life can yield tremendous results someplace else.

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(Laughter)

02:41

Live long and prosper.

02:43

(Applause)