

Tips to overcome fear of Public Speaking

Do your knees feel like Gumby's when you have to get up and speak in front of a group? Do you feel like the next words out of your mouth are going to be the dumbest words ever uttered by a human?

Over 41% of people have some fear or anxiety dealing with speaking in front of groups. People who have this fear can experience all kinds of symptoms: Sweaty palms, accelerated heart rate, memory loss and even difficulty in breathing.

Everyone, even experienced speakers, has some anxiety when speaking in front of a group of people. This is perfectly normal. The best way to deal with this anxiety is to first acknowledge that this fear is perfectly normal and you are not alone. To reduce your fear, you need to make sure you properly and thoroughly prepare yourself before you speak. Proper preparation and rehearsal can help to reduce this fear by about 75%. Proper breathing techniques can further reduce this fear by another 15%. Your mental state accounts for the remaining 10%.

Few suggestions you should use to overcome your speaking anxiety. The first and most important of all is preparation. I like to think of it as the 9 P's: Prior Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance of the Person Putting on the Presentation.

10 steps you can take to reduce your speech anxiety.

1. Know the room - become familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early and walk around the room including the speaking area. Walk from where you will be seated to the place where you will be speaking.

2. Know the Audience - If possible, greet some of the audience as they arrive and chat with them. It is easier to speak to a group of friends than to a group of strangers.

3. Know Your Material - If you are not familiar with your material or are uncomfortable with it, your nervousness will increase. Practice your speech or presentation and revise it

until you can present it with ease.

4. Learn How to Relax - You can ease tension by doing exercises. Sit comfortable with your back straight. Breathe in slowly, hold your breath for 4 to 5 seconds, then slowly exhale. To relax your facial muscles, open your mouth and eyes wide, then close them tightly.

5. Visualize Yourself Speaking - Imagine yourself walking confidently to the lectern as the audience applauds. Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear and assured. When you visualize yourself as successful, you will be successful.

6. Realize People Want You To Succeed - All audiences want speakers to be interesting, stimulating, informative and entertaining. They want you to succeed - not fail.

7. Don't apologize For Being Nervous - Most of the time your nervousness does not show at all. If you don't say anything about it, nobody will notice. If you mention your nervousness or apologize for any problems you think you have with your speech, you'll only be calling attention to it. Had you remained silent, your listeners may not have noticed at all.

8. Concentrate on Your Message - not the audience. Your nervous feelings will dissipate if you focus your attention away from your anxieties and concentrate on your message and your audience, not yourself.

9. Turn Nervousness into Positive Energy - the same nervous energy that causes stage fright can be an asset to you. Harness it, and transform it into vitality and enthusiasm.

10. Gain Experience - Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking. Most beginning speakers find their anxieties decrease after each speech they give.