

Overcome Presentation Fears



Whoever said, "The brain starts working the minute we are born and stops working the minute we stand up in front of a group to talk" accurately described the feeling of most people about making presentations. Performance anxiety can be a dreadful experience and certainly is not good for your career.

The cold hard reality

Most people want to know how to make fear go away. The hard, cold reality of public speaking is that it never really does. In fact, professional speakers will tell you that a certain amount of "excitement" is healthy and adds to their enthusiasm in the presentation. Recognize that most of your nervousness is on the inside and is not noticeable on the outside. Most people will be completely unaware that you are uncomfortable.

Transfer fear into excitement

Check out the location ahead of time. It can be a real confidence-booster to stand on the platform in the empty room and become comfortable with your surroundings. Try out microphones ahead of time for volume and sound quality.

Visualize. Sit in a quiet room away from all distractions. Close your eyes and see yourself at the podium. Picture yourself addressing the group with enthusiasm and confidence. Envision your relaxed stance, your smile, your natural physical gestures.

Breathe. Calm a telltale quiver in your voice by inhaling deeply through you nose and exhaling slowly out your mouth on your way up to the podium. Practice this type of controlled deep breathing ahead of time so the technique will go unnoticed.

Talk to yourself. We talk to ourselves all the time. The key is to make these messages conscious and positive in content. A few minutes spent in front of the mirror giving yourself a pep talk can be just the boost your ego needs.

Be yourself. It is far easier and more convincing to tell a story based on real life than to rely on an old joke. Make personal stories brief and be sure they have a point relevant to your talk. Tie the story to the content immediately after you have told it.

Find a friendly face. Identify several people in the room who seem to be receptive and focus on them. Make sure they are spaced throughout the room. They are likely to provide welcome encouragement as you glance from face to face.

Your fear may never go away completely. But you'll soon learn to become comfortable with it. In fact, you may even find overcoming your fears is one of the most rewarding parts of making a presentation in the first place.