

Presentation Nerves

It is entirely natural to feel nervous before making a presentation.

Many seasoned teachers, lecturers and other presenters feel nervous beforehand despite having given hundreds of presentations. The same is true of actors and actresses, celebrities, politicians, preachers and other people working in the media or in the public eye.

Being nervous is not a problem or a weakness, you just need to channel your nervous energy wisely. On the other hand, being over-confident and not nervous could be a weakness!

The symptoms of nerves can include "butterflies" or a queasy feeling in your stomach, sweaty palms, a dry throat and the panic that your mind has gone blank about your opening lines.

Fortunately, there are some tried and tested strategies and techniques to manage your nerves so that you can concentrate on delivering an effective and engaging presentation.

These techniques will not get rid of your nerves; instead they will help you to use your nervous to your advantage. When you are in a heightened state from the adrenaline that is being pumped around your body, you can use that energy to communicate enthusiastically, convincingly, and passionately. The key is to decrease your level of nervousness so you can focus your energy on these positive activities, not on trying to control your nerves.

Coping with Nerves

DIRECTIONS: When you feel nervous before a presentation, the following strategies and exercises should help you. As you read through these, highlight or star the ones that you might try as this month as we begin oral presentations. Cross out the ones that you know you will not do or try.

Practice Deep Breathing

Adrenalin causes your breathing to shallow. By deliberately breathing deeply your brain will get the oxygen it needs and the slower pace will trick your body into believing you are calmer. This also helps with voice quivers, which can occur when your breathing is shallow and irregular.

Drink Water

Adrenalin can cause a dry mouth, which in turn leads to getting tongue-tied. Have a glass or bottle of water handy and take sips occasionally, especially when you wish to pause or emphasize a point. Take care not to take large gulps of water.

Chew Gum

Chewing gum before a presentation may help you to feel more relaxed. Research has shown that the act of chewing can increase your alertness and help to reduce anxiety. It is usually best to get rid of the gum when you start your presentation.

Smile

Smiling is a natural relaxant that sends positive chemical messages through your body. Smiling and maintaining eye contact also help you build rapport with your audience.

Use Visualization Techniques

Imagine that you are delivering your presentation to an audience that is interested, enthused, smiling, and reacting positively. Cement this positive image in your mind and recall it just before you are ready to start.

Self-Massage

Press and massage your forehead to energize the front of the brain and speech center.

Pause

Just before you start talking, pause, make eye contact, and smile. This last moment of peace is very relaxing and gives you time to adjust to being the centre of attention.

Slow Down

Speak more slowly than you would in a conversation, and leave longer pauses between sentences. This slower pace will calm you down, and it will also make you easier to hear, especially at the back of a large room.

Move Around

Move around a little during your presentation as this will expend some of your nervous energy. However, try not to pace backwards and forwards or rock on your heels as these activities can be distracting to your audience.

Stop Thinking About Yourself

Remember that the audience is there to get some information and that it is your job to put that information across to them. Try to put your nerves aside and think about communicating your message as effectively as possible.

Relaxation Exercises

Although you may not feel relaxed before you give your presentation relaxation exercises can help. Try the following relaxation exercises, but do not continue with them if they cause pain or discomfort although remember that you may use some muscles you have not exercised for a while and so feel a little stiff afterwards.

<http://www.skillsyouneed.com/present/presentation-nerves.html#ixzz3Sshf8>
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