

How to deal with Stage Fright

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Here's the good news - nobody ever died of stage fright.

And there are some ways to deal with it. Here's some simple ideas for you to try:-

1) Breathe - if you don't breathe, you can't speak!

Yes, I know everybody says "breathe", but that's because it works!

If you are having an attack of stage-fright, you are suffering from the effects of a dose of adrenaline, a powerful drug released by your body in times of stress. One of the effects of this powerful stimulant drug is to make your heart race, your muscles tremble, and your breathing fast and shallow. Great if you're about to fight a sabre-tooth tiger, but less useful when presenting this year's results to the shareholders.

Slow, deep and steady breathing will help reduce the effects of adrenaline, and will flush your system with oxygen, slow your heart rate, and help you concentrate. Breathe slowly from the diaphragm. Count on the in-breath and the out-breath. . Pause between breathing in and out. Count to 5 for a few breaths, then 7, then 9, then 11. Remember to pause and breathe while speaking, too.

2) Remember, Visualise, Affirm

Remember a time when you were feeling calm and in control. Put aside time to sit quietly with closed eyes and do this. Try and recall it in detail – how it looked, how it sounded, what was happening, how you felt. Practice this recall at regular intervals. When feeling nervous before a presentation, take the time to return to this place – it will calm you and fill you with confidence.

Visualise yourself up in front of the audience, speaking powerfully, holding everyone's attention. See it from the audience's point of view – you being engaging, riveting. See it from the first person point of view – you looking out over a sea of rapt faces, everyone enjoying your words. Hear the sounds, feel the sensations. Enjoy the feeling of control and relaxed power.

Affirm to yourself your own good qualities. Make a list of them. Repeat them out loud.

3) Look Out Not In - it's not always about you!

Think about your audience, not yourself. Performance fear is the worry of getting it wrong, of looking foolish, of making a mistake. It's all centred on you. But you can change that focus - think about your audience's needs. What are they hoping to hear? What are their anxieties? How can you help them see the value in what you have to say? What will capture their hearts and minds.

Most audiences want a speaker to succeed, they are hoping to be engaged and entertained - they are on your side. Think of them as friends, prepare to talk to them as friends, and be concerned for their well-being, not your own.

4) Rehearse out loud.

The more times you make your speech or presentation, the more familiar you will be with it, the easier you will find it, and the more relaxed you will become. Then, even when you are feeling nervous, you will be rehearsed enough to carry it off. But you **must** rehearse out loud. In your head is good for memory, but will not familiarise and desensitise you to the sensations of actual delivery.

5) Fake It - everyone else does!

Not as dishonest as it sounds.

If you watch a video of yourself speaking in public, I guarantee you'll be surprised by how confident you look. We can't see how fast your heart is beating, or that your knees are trembling. Just as you can't see how nervous other speakers are. Most of your nervousness is invisible.

Now play a game with yourself. You might not be feeling confident, but you can act the part of someone who is! In your mind, decide on the personality of a dynamite speaker, It could be someone you have actually heard, or someone you make up. Think about how they would walk, how they would look at the audience, how they would sound.

Simply act as if you were that presenter. Stand tall, speak up, look confident. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to fool yourself into actually feeling more confident too.