



Newsletter

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Terrified of Public Speaking



There was once a time when I had no fear. I was 11 years old and I entered a story telling competition. I was confidently telling the story and captured everyone's attention until suddenly I heard a voice from just in front of the stage commenting about my nose. It's totally disastrous from that moment on. I lost focus and forgot the script altogether.

That's the exact time that I began to have a certain fear of public speaking.

Over the years, I finally overcome my fear of public speaking. I can now speak at any function unprepared and even though the nervousness is still there, I am able to control it. It was not easy but I made it with some help from books and a few techniques I develop myself.

Hopefully these tricks will be able to help you as they had helped me in overcoming fear of public speaking.

1) Admit nervousness

All you have to do is admit that you are a bit nervous speaking to your audience. When you do this, the audience will be more forgiving if your nervousness shows up later on. More importantly you will feel more relaxed now that they are not expecting a world-class presentation. Imagine their surprise when you gave them the best presentation ever despite your nervousness.

2) Redefine your audience

Redefine your audience generally means changing how you see your audience. Instead of seeing them as lecturers who are evaluating you, maybe you can convince yourself that they are all fellow students who are in queue to present after you. They are all equally nervous so there is no reason why you should be too.

Or perceive them as long lost friends that you haven't seen for 10 years. This way you can maintain eye contact trying to figure out where you have seen him before. To the audiences, they will see a very friendly and personal presentation.

Do not try to convince yourself that they are babies in diapers or that nobody is around as suggested by some books. It is very hard to convince yourself that no one is around when you are actually speaking to them.

3) Invest in visual aids

Imagine a presentation with beautiful PowerPoint slides and even more impressive notes given to each of your audience members. Half of the time, their eyes will not be on you. They will read through the notes and your fancy slides. This will help a lot as you can then speak to the people who are not looking at you. When they look at you, you just change your focus to other people who are not looking. Giving a speech to people who are not looking at you is always easier.



4) Make mistakes intentionally

This is another trick I encourage you to try. Once I “accidentally” dropped my notes on the floor, and while picking them up, I warned the audiences that the presentation will be more confusing after this. I heard some laughter from the floor.

The idea is to gain control of your audience. If you can make them laugh and be more interactive with you, your presentation will have that casual feel to it which will make it more memorable than others. Ultimately you will find it easier to do.

5) Speak to one person at a time

One of the most terrifying things about public speaking is the crowd. Just by looking at the crowd, all in silence just to hear you speak, will send shivers down your spine. To overcome this, you just need to speak to one person at a time.

Choose one member of your audience and dedicate your whole presentation to him or her. Just assume that everyone else is not paying attention. When someone asks you a question, change your focus to that person and answer the question as if the two of you are in a coffee shop chatting away. Isn't that the most relaxing way to handle a crowd?

6) Be impressive with personal opinion

Just like blogging, everyone can copy an article and paste it onto their blog. However, people read blogs not only to know about things happening but to know what that particular blogger's opinion is on the matter.

When you speak or give a presentation, try to squeeze in a few of your personal thoughts on the matter. Of course these should be prepared early on. However, you should make it as if the ideas are “just in” while you are presenting. That will differentiate your presentation from the rest, and when you see the interested look on the faces of your audience, it will elevate your presentation to another new level, a level where you start having fun.

7) Have fun experimenting

This is the most important tips of all. Have fun with the crowd. Try new ways to give the best presentation to your audience. Maybe experiment with a new funny approach, or walk around the hall instead of being static on the stage. Have fun with experimenting on human behavior and you will see that public speaking is not that bad after all.

Remember that **there are no failures, only different results**. If you break out in a cold sweat or even feel butterflies when you think about standing in front of others for a presentation or interview, you are not alone. Fear of public speaking is estimated to affect 75 percent of adults. Rethinking the way we perceive stress may actually improve our physical and mental performance. It may be easier to give in to our fears, but you will accomplish much more in life and feel a greater sense of pride for facing them.



This newsletter has been issued by:
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