

SIX TIPS ON GETTING PAST YOUR FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

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TIP #1: BE PREPARED

**TIP #2: SILENCE YOUR
INNER CRITIC**

TIP #3: PRACTICE

**TIP #4: IT'S ABOUT THE
AUDIENCE**

**TIP #5: YOU CAN
CONTROL YOUR
NERVES**

TIP #6: BE AUTHENTIC

YES! AND

Your heart is racing, your palms are sweaty, your mouth is dry as the Mojave desert. You don't have butterflies – you have a Cinereous Vulture flying in your stomach! You feel nauseated and want to run away, but you can't because 100 people are waiting to hear your presentation. You are experiencing glossophobia: the fear of public speaking.

According to the article *5 Quotes To Help Overcome The Fear Of Public Speaking*, “25 percent of Americans are afraid to speak in front of large groups of people. 25 percent of the U.S. population equates to almost 80 million or ten times all the people of New York City. People's fear of public speaking beat out that of drowning, needles, snakes, heights, and even clowns.”¹

Overcoming your fear of speaking in front of a group is difficult. Sometimes even the thought of overcoming your fear of speaking can be crippling! So what can you do?

First, realize you are not alone! Even professional speakers like me get a little nervous before a presentation. Working with clients, I help everyone understand that standing in front a group and presenting is an acquired skill. Here are six tips to help you overcome your fear of public speaking.

Tip #1: Be Prepared

Be the expert and know your subject. There is a difference between preparation and perfection, and no presentation is perfect. Yes, you will make a mistake, maybe more than one. Most of the time, unless it's a real blooper, the only person who will know about it is you. If you know your material inside and out, you can have a conversation with the audience instead of a presentation.

Tip #2: Silence Your Inner Critic

It's hard to ignore that voice in your head, and you know the one that gives you negative feedback about your presentation. “You don't like speaking in front of crowds” or “you are terrible at this, you should have called in sick.” On especially bad days it says “your audience will not like you, and you will come off looking stupid.”

Silence that voice by using the improv technique of Yes! And to boost your confidence. Yes! And, I'm prepared because I am the expert on this topic. Yes! And I may not like speaking in front of crowds, but I am prepared, and I accept that I am nervous. Yes! And I am not terrible at this, I just haven't had as many opportunities, so I am a little rusty. The story that you tell yourself will dictate the outcome.

Professor Amy Cuddy was terrified about giving a presentation. However her TED talk “Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are” has been viewed over 11 million times. She states, “even if you don't feel confident, act like it, and your chances of success greatly improve.” To help increase confidence, silence your inner critic. Her most famous quote is “Don't fake it till you make it. Fake it till you become it.”²

Tip #3: Practice

Two pieces of advice that never work are picture the audience naked and practice in front of a mirror.

Seeing the audience naked would make me more nervous and very uncomfortable. When you practice in front of a mirror, you are just looking at your reflection. Is that who you are speaking too? No.

The best advice that a National Speaker Association member gave me was to practice where you will deliver your presentation, or at least a similar room or space. Use a camera to video yourself, so you can watch it and make necessary adjustments. Bring



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family and friends to watch you practice to offer honest, constructive critique. Also, and this is very important, know your introduction well. How you begin your presentation can dictate how it all goes. A strong opening can help calm your nerves and increase your confidence. This kind of positive practice will help you succeed.

Tip #4: It's About Your Audience

Anytime you present to a group, you should provide useful solutions for them. You want them to walk away with tips and tools to make their life easier, solve a problem or expand their skills. Don't focus on how you look to the audience. Switch that thought to how your presentation will help them. My new mantra is "It starts with me, AND it is not about me, it's about us." Focus on the US: your audience and the benefits they receive from your presentation.

Tip #5: You Can Control Your Nerves

Before I speak, I have a case of the butterflies, and that is okay. I want to be a little nervous because that helps keep me on my toes and ready for the presentation. I did not, however, develop that strategy overnight. To be honest, when I was first starting out, I was very nervous and here practiced specific techniques to calm my nerves, things I do to this day.

Deep breathing exercises in the morning of and right before a presentation help get more oxygen to the brain and slows down your wildly spinning inner clock. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated. Our brains need to be properly hydrated to operate at peak performance. Too much caffeine will do the opposite

and increase your level of nervousness.

Arrive at least 45 minutes early to make sure everything is setup, and your equipment is operating properly. When everything is working, it's time for you to work the room. Greet the attendees and thank them for coming to your presentation. By doing this, you remove the barrier between you and the audience which helps reduce your level of nervousness. Become a student of public speaking and seek out other opportunities to present in front of an audience, no matter the size. The more comfortable you are in front of an audience, the less nervous you will be.

Tip #6: Be Authentic

We all watch and admire other speakers. I do! When I watch other speakers, I pick up on nuances of their presentation style, not to copy them but to help me become the best I can be. When I am presenting I am myself, not Tony Robbins, Bill Clinton, or Steve Jobs. I am authentic to me and my style, and what helps in being authentic is being passionate about your topic. When you are passionate, it comes through in your voice and your body language. You are not as nervous because you are talking about something you believe. You are not lecturing; you are having a conversation. When you do this, the fear goes away. When you lack passion, your fear factor is high because you are not living Tip #1. (That is called a callback in comedy).

These six tips are the foundation to get past your fear so you can deliver a compelling and engaging presentation.



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