

# Public Speaking: Overcoming the Fear

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Have you ever declined an opportunity to speak because of anxiety? Or experienced a less-than-stellar presentation because of nerves? Regardless of your level of comfort, you can transform immediately into a confident, powerful, engaging and effective presenter. Here are some of the tips I have used for myself and for the people I coach.

## 1. Define your motivation.

You must have a reason and a desire to speak in public. Write your answers to these questions. What will you lose, or how will you sabotage yourself by not being able to public speak? What will you gain, or how will you benefit by being able to public speak?

Here are some of what can be sabotaged or improved based on your public speaking skills:

Confidence  
Opportunities  
Income  
Credibility  
Ability to make a difference  
Personal power  
Relationships  
Joy

The stronger your desire to be a powerful presenter, the easier it is to achieve.

## 2. Practice creative visualization. (The most powerful tool I know.)

How do you REALLY WANT to be as a speaker? Create the greatest, clearest fantasy that you can. The best time to do this is just before you fall asleep, as you are in a relaxed state. Imagine everything in great detail – the room, how you look and sound, your confidence, the ease, the audience's standing ovation.... Whatever you can create in your mind, you can create in your reality. Your non-conscious mind will store your visualization as a memory. What you have done before, you can do again.

Repeat this process every night, or as often as you can. When I did my first professional presentation, I had “been there, done that” so often in my mind, that the presentation was very comfortable and it went even beyond what I was able to imagine.

### **3. Practice systematic desensitization.**

I once had a Psychology Professor take my presentations course, because she was afraid of speaking to her classes! All she had to do was this one step, and she was fine. Here is the formula.

- a. Put yourself in a very relaxed place (a bath with candles, lavender, soft music).
- b. Close your eyes and relax your body and mind.
- c. Imagine you are in the room where you might be presenting. You're just standing at the back of the room. Keep your mind-body relaxed.
- d. Imagine the room and all of the people in it. If you start to get anxious, go back to 'c'. When you can stay relaxed, proceed to 'e'.
- e. Imagine you are being introduced. If you feel anxious, go back to 'd'. When you can stay relaxed, proceed to 'f'.
- f. Imagine walking to the front of the room.... Proceed in this manner through each step of your presentation until you are able to imagine the entire event in a relaxed and calm state.

When you master this, you will be more able to create a calm and peaceful state in any situation.

### **4. Prepare.**

Prepare your presentation, visual aids, hand-outs, etc. to the very best of your ability. Ask for help if you need it. Practice at least 7 times.

### **5. Speak from and about your experience.**

When you do this, no one can make you wrong. You can speak to a group of experts on your subject, and they can still learn.

### **6. Use positive energy.**

You will likely get a rush of energy going through your system prior to the presentation. If you label this rush as fear, and try to stop it, this energy may be released through shaking, perspiring, flushing, and butterflies. BUT if you welcome this rush as excitement, you can use it as Personal Power. Let it make you big!

### **7. Love your audience.**

Fill up the entire room with a positive, loving, joyful energy. People get what you feel. When you're in a state of love, you're not able to feel fear. There is no power in fear.

### **8. Let go your ego and come from the heart.**

Your ego (Left Brain) is concerned with being the centre of attention and judged. The ego wants control, and can put on a façade because it thinks you're not enough. You can consciously let go of the ego, and surrender to the heart or Higher Right Brain. Be authentic and in the experience that you want your audience to get.

### **9. Create a positive space.**

You can lower adrenaline – and other stress-related chemicals, and increase endorphins – and other euphoric chemicals, through:

- a. humour
- b. ice breakers
- c. audience interaction
- d. physical movements (have your audience do a simple exercise)
- e. hugging, if it's appropriate
- f. music

### **10. Use peripheral vision rather than tunnel.**

Practice this technique:

- a. Stand looking straight ahead with your arms straight out at your sides so that you look like the letter T.
- b. Position your arms so that even though you're looking straight ahead, you can see your fingers wiggling.

- c. Now imagine a speaking situation that would create anxiety.
- d. While in an anxious state, watch your fingers wiggle. You can't do both at the same time!

Anxiety uses tunnel vision – the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) is aroused. Peripheral vision allows you to be calm – the Parasympathetic Nervous System is aroused (PNS).

#### **11. Breathe through your nose rather than your mouth.**

Nose-breathing uses the PNS, mouth-breathing uses the SNS. Breathe deeply from the diaphragm.

#### **12. Drink water.**

When you're under stress, your mouth will get dry. Drinking water can help you maintain control.

These are my top 12 techniques (I have more!). I invite you to experiment with them – you might prefer some over others. I believe that any person can become the speaker that they really want to be. Embrace the journey!

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