

Quick Tips! How to Overcome Speaker Anxiety



Advocates are **great listeners** – so *speaking* anxiety is normal.

Use these quick tips to feel like the superstar you are!

You're Not Alone

Don't judge your performance by how you feel... you are your own worst critic!

Why?

- Though you may be inclined to despair about what you forgot to say, or had to leave out because of time, your audience will focus on what they learned from you! Focus on all you shared.
- Most of those in your audience are like you – they're nervous speakers too. They will empathize and root for you. Many will be in awe that you're on the stage – and grateful that they're not.
- Yes, there are judgmental people... a minority. Even if you give an A+++ presentation, these 'professional critics' would judge you poorly for your shoes! Forget about them.

Be prepared, be organized and you'll be great! Here's how....

Control Your Introduction

If someone else is introducing you, give her the script. Keep it short and a bit personal: you may have lots of accomplishments but *why you do what you do* is most important. Your audience will be warmed up to meet you.

If you are introducing yourself, follow the same format. Keep it short and sweet!

Prepare an Interactive Presentation

- Start by thanking your host and say a good word about them/the organization.
- Think of your presentation in “blocks”, with each focusing on a key message. Try to let your audience know the path you’re taking them on early in your remarks by quickly outlining the flow of your presentation.
- Use a personal story or others’ stories early in your presentation – or as a way to help you set up the main focus of your presentation. The best are anecdotes, drawn from your practice or other advocacy situations, that illustrate your expertise, but err on the side of modesty – trust with your audience will break down if they perceive that your giving a commercial for yourself.
- Build in audience Interaction (beyond Q & A at the end) – throw out questions as you go along, for example:
 - “Can you guess what happens next?”
 - What would you do in this situation?
 - Are you surprised – or did you know this already?

Use your imagination; just be sure to allow time for audience answers. Be prepared with a diplomatic strategy for curtailing long-winded or off-topic responses.

- Use clear, arresting visuals: 4-color, clear, clean, icons, photos.
- If the venue will provide AV equipment for sound and any Internet connection needed, Include multi-media such as a video.
- Take audience questions at the end, not as you go through your presentation. Let your audience know how much time they’ll have for questions. Make sure you do a hard stop at the right time to make good on this promise.

- For Q and A: Ask, “Who has questions?” (Not “Any questions?”)
 - Quickly restate question asked by each audience member and thank for asking. Provide affirmation before answering: “I’m glad you asked that.” “Good point.” “Interesting question.” “I bet others may have the same question.”
- Worried that no one will have questions? Arrange beforehand to have a “plant” in the audience who is prepped with a question to ask you. You can even provide the question!
- Stick to your time slot. Even if you get a late start because the person ahead of you went over-time – or the person who introduces you cuts into your time (which happens frequently), plan to stop on time, as planned with the time promised for Q & A left intact.
 - This may mean that you have to skip some slides or gloss over some remarks – and this can feel very unsettling. It’s normal to feel a bit flustered under the circumstances.
 - Regain composure explaining to your audience that your time slot is scheduled to end at (X time) so you are skipping some things, but that you are always available to chat afterward or take any calls later. NOTE: Never assign blame to anyone who caused your late start! Remain upbeat!
- Wrap up at the very end by thanking your audience and saying how much you appreciate and enjoyed your time with them.
- Collect evaluations. Focus on the positive ones and look for nuggets of constructive criticism to fine-tune your approach.

Rehearse with an Audience

- Invite a few friends or family members for coffee and present to them.
- Record yourself presenting – just use your phone.
- Present to yourself in the mirror!
- Caveat: Don’t over-rehearse or memorize, you’ll risk sounding canned.
- Go through your presentation the day before (but not before bed!)
- Focus on remembering your message points, not memorizing the words. Unless you are a superb actor, reading your presentation is deadly!

Be Organized

- See the venue before your presentation if possible.
- Lay out your clothes and supplies the night before.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Don't eat a heavy meal or drink a lot of liquids before presenting. Make a quick trip to the restroom just before you present.
- Bring back-up equipment: your deck on a thumb drive and your own laptop. If you're on a Mac, bring power cord that works with projectors as most facilities are equipped to support PC's.
- It's surprising how many venues don't have wall clocks, so bring a portable digital clock with a large face. Place it in a spot somewhere in the audience facing you.
- Bring a sweater! Wear comfy shoes. Wear an outfit you really like. Dress a bit better than the audience but not as an executive: you want to communicate professionalism, but that you're very approachable too.
- Smile A LOT. If in doubt, smile some more.
- Don't start with a joke. It may fall flat. Not fun.
- Practice mental imagery: see yourself on stage, in front of the audience and loving the chance to share your message!
- **Finally, just before you go onstage, stand up straight, square your shoulders, take a few deep breaths and ...**

Remember, you're a Super Star!

