

10 Steps to Managing Stage Fright

As mentioned already it is perfectly natural to feel nervousness before speaking or performing on a stage. However, too much nervousness can adversely affect your performance. Here are some tips that will help you control your nervousness so you will be able to achieve your goals while delivering an effective and memorable presentation for your audience:

1. Know your material.

The easiest way to minimize nervousness is through maintaining confidence. Proper preparation prevents poor performance! (PPPPP!!!) Know your subject. You should be the expert on the topic. Don't just memorize what you will say. Be prepared to talk about it enthusiastically. Be passionate about your topic. Be prepared to answer questions

2. Know your target audience.

Have your audience in mind as you plan, prepare and practice your speech. Try to visualize your audience in front of you while you are practicing. This will help to mentally prepare you for speaking in front of them. If you are going to meet the audience for the first time on the day of your speech, you should arrive early and greet them as they enter the room. Try to make small talk with some of the audience while they are settling in their seats. This will help establish a bond between you and the audience. After all, it is easier to speak in front of familiar people than perfect strangers.

3. Know the environment.

Be familiar with the place in which you will speak. Arrive early and set up any audio or visual aids that you will use. If you will be using a microphone, then practice using the microphone that is available. Test any other audio-visual equipment you plan to use.

4. Relax your body and your mind.

Try to ease tension by doing simple exercises and stretches. In addition to stretching your body muscles also work on your facial muscles. Look in a mirror and practice smiling, raising your eyebrows, and other expressions that you will use to communicate non-verbal messages with your audience. Be sure to stretch neck muscles by doing some neck rolls.

5. Breathe properly to relax

Take slow and gentle deep breaths to calm your mind and body. While you do this, focus on thoughts and images that are calm, peaceful and uplifting.

6. View your audience as your supporters not your adversaries.

People in the audience want you to succeed. Believe that!!! It is true. Nobody wants to see you get nervous and fail miserably. The better your presentation is, the better your audience will feel. So remember they are on your side. They are not your opponents.

7. Never say “Sorry”.

If you apologize for your nervousness or for any problems you think you have with your presentation, you may be calling the audience's attention to something they may not have noticed. *An apology is the same as admitting that you are not prepared or saying you are not good enough for the audience.* Apologizing is like admitting defeat. As a speaker you need to show you are confident and in control. When you apologize you do the exact opposite.

8. Don't feel you have to be perfect.

Nobody is perfect. You should have specific goals for your presentation. Work to achieve those goals and to provide the audience with the message you intend for them. Being perfect is not your goal so don't feel you have to be perfect. That is just setting unrealistic standards for yourself and will only increase your tension and anxiety.

9. Take care of your mind and body.

In order to minimize your nervousness it is essential that you are in the best physical and psychological shape possible. That means, eat well and get enough sleep. Don't stay up all night preparing for your presentation in the morning. Prepare well ahead of time and get a good night's rest. Avoid alcohol the night before and avoid drinking too much coffee the day of your presentation. (Avoid caffeine before presenting, if possible.)

10. Give yourself a pep talk.

Talk to yourself by using positive, supportive, encouraging self-talk. Convince yourself that you can do it. Don't be negative. Get yourself “pepped-up” and ready to meet the audience. Tell yourself that this is a great opportunity and you should be excited that you have this chance to speak to your audience.