

THE CENTER FOR SPEECH EXCELLENCE

How to Break the Anxiety Response When Speaking Publicly

Preparation

Decide on the message you need to deliver. Ask yourself who the audience will be. Learn something about them. How many people will be in the audience? What is the size of the room? Will there be a PA system? What equipment is available? When can you get into the room to rehearse and test out the equipment?

You should plan no more than three main points with illustrations or examples in a one-hour presentation. Prepare your words and supplemental material. Organize your material to fit into the time allotted and do not go over. Rehearse. Rehearse. Rehearse. Mark your notes to remind you to breathe just as you mark where slides go.

Waiting to Speak

Sit quietly in a chair that supports your back. Put both feet flat on the floor and make sure your shoulders are down on your back. Let your belly relax and take three slow deep breaths allowing your lower abdomen to expand on inhalation and contract on exhalation. By the third deep breath, you will notice that your muscles in your neck are beginning to stretch long and your jaw joint relaxes. You will be aware of being more alert. Your blood pressure will drop. Your heart rate will drop. Keep breathing slow and deep. Concentrate your thoughts on the purpose of your talk.

Think about the message you want your audience to understand and take with them when you are finished. When negative thoughts come in, brush them aside with the thought that you do not have time right now to think about yourself because you must think about helping your audience get your message. If you are well prepared and are clear about the message you are delivering, the audience will be more interested in the message than in evaluating your delivery. You are not the center of their attention, your message is.

Speaking

When you rise to the podium, move smoothly and keep breathing deeply. Smile and greet your audience as you would a friend or colleague. Breathe and talk from your belly. Don't rush but speak smoothly, phrase by phrase. Pause and breathe before each new paragraph, idea, or transition. Take a sip of water if available. Look your audience in the eye and talk directly to those who are showing interest. Do not waste time worrying about someone who is not attentive. Their inattention may have nothing to do with you or your presentation. Continue with your task of delivering your message. Before closing, repeat the points you want your audience to take with them and/or tell them what they should do in response to your message. You may close by thanking the audience for their attention. Smile. Sit down and continue to breathe slowly and deeply.

Pamela H. Bashor and Associates

Speech and Hearing Building, Suite 202, 320 Lillington Avenue, Charlotte, NC 28204,
704/375-5231