



Speaking Apprehension: Managing Nervousness in Public Speaking

Speaking apprehension, commonly referred to as the fear of public speaking, is very common. Even seasoned speakers experience nervousness before or during a speech. While speaking apprehension can be uncomfortable, it is possible to limit the negative effects it can have on your performance, and even use the adrenaline to enhance your speech.

1. Before the Speech:

- A. Choose a topic that interests you. If you are genuinely interested in your topic, you will be able to communicate that during your presentation.
- B. Prepare early. The earlier you begin the process of researching, organizing, and writing your speech, the more familiar you will be with your presentation.
- C. Practice. Practice increases the quality of your presentation, as well as your confidence. While practicing, envision your audience and the room in which you will be speaking.
- D. Scrimmage. Find a friend or family member to listen to your presentation, and deliver it exactly as if you were in the real setting. Not only will this help you become more comfortable, but you may also receive valuable feedback.
- E. Set realistic expectations. Unless you are performing a role in a play, you should not memorize your speech. It is unrealistic to expect perfect recitation, and it damages your ability to be flexible during your presentation. Instead, remember your main points, arguments, and evidence, and speak to your audience conversationally.
- F. Think positively. If you genuinely believe in your topic, you only need to communicate your arguments and information honestly. Your preparation, practice, and attitude give you the best possible advantage. Positivity is the difference between nervousness and enthusiasm.

2. During the Speech:

- A. Start loud and strong. The very first sentence of your introduction sets the tone for the rest of the presentation. Begin with enthusiasm, confidence, and volume.
- B. Breathe deeply and slowly. Slowing your breathing will lower your heart rate and prevent you from speeding through your presentation. Take your time.
- C. Channel nervous energy into movement. While it can be tempting to freeze in one place while delivering a speech, walking and gesturing will help you use your adrenaline to engage with your audience. It will also help you to appear more confident.
- D. Focus on friendly faces. While speaking, find audience members who are nodding or smiling, and make frequent eye contact. This will both engage your audience and reduce nervousness.
- E. Do not take yourself too seriously. Even professional speakers make mistakes during presentations, and it does not have to distract from your speech. If you do make a mistake, simply correct your error and move on. Try to be as conversational as possible while remaining appropriate to the situation.