

Tips for Overcoming Stage Fright

Don't undress your audience

Have you ever been told to imagine your audience naked? Supposedly it calms your nerves. I don't know about you, but it would make me nervous to talk to a room of naked people! Instead, imagine them interested and wanting to listen and learn - they came to hear you after all! Keep them dressed.

Believe they want you to succeed!

We get nervous because we are focused on ourselves and fear we will fail. Do you attend a presentation looking to be disappointed? Neither does your audience. They came to be informed, engaged, and inspired. Believe they want you to succeed - that's what they came for.

Be prepared!

The founder of Toastmasters, Dr. Ralph Smedley said, "The unprepared speaker has a right to be scared." The best prevention for stage fright is preparation: know your audience, research your topic, and practice your speech until you know it inside and out. Polish and practice what you will say and how you will say it. When you are prepared there is no need to be scared.

Open with a smile!

Smile with your mouth, your eyes, and your entire face. Smiling will calm you and your audience. Displaying a warm and engaging smile tells people, "I'm glad you're here. "I'm glad I'm here. There's nowhere else I'd rather be." Make direct eye contact with all who smile back. Smiling is contagious.

Engage your audience!

When all eyes are on you, it's easy to feel nervous. Turn off the jitters by turning the focus on your audience. Engage them in a brief discussion or activity early in your presentation. Not only will it connect them to the topic, you, and each other... it will provide you an opportunity to take a deep breath and relax with the focus no longer on you. Keep the focus on your audience - engage them!