

Dealing With Nerves During Presentations

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A Perspective 101 Series



Dealing With Nerves During Presentations

We've all been there.

You've been asked to make a presentation and you've not had a lot of experience or training in doing it. Or maybe you've done it before and are naturally a bit nervous, especially when you have to present to work colleagues who know you, or to large groups of people. When surveyed about what frightened them most, people interviewed by the Times newspaper gave these answers ranked in this order:

1. Public speaking/making presentations
2. Heights
3. Insects and bugs
4. Financial problems
5. Deep water
6. Sickness
7. Death
8. Flying
9. Loneliness
10. Dogs

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Making presentations topped the list.

What I find strange is that death only came 7th! So we are naturally nervous when put into stressful situations like this.

What can we do to improve the situation? Before you are about to stand up your stomach is queasy, your palms are sweaty, you are shaking, your body is pumped up with adrenalin and your mind has gone blank about what you are going to say.

What can you do to eliminate nerves completely? Well, nothing is going to eliminate nerves completely because it is our body's way of dealing with stress.

However, you can make things a bit easier for yourself. If you are like most people, and public speaking or presenting is one of your major fears, help is at hand.

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You owe it to yourself to develop some strategies and techniques to manage your nerves so you can concentrate on delivering an effective and engaging presentation.

When you are in a heightened state from the adrenaline that is being pumped into your body, you can use that energy to communicate enthusiastically, convincingly, and passionately.

The key is to decrease your level of nervousness so you can use your energy on these positive activities, not on trying to control your nerves.

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Here are 10 ways to reduce nerves

1. **Get your preparation right.** Work out the objectives of your presentation and prepare content that you feel will be of interest to the audience. While we can't all be great presenters, with a bit of effort and lots of practice we can become very competent
2. **Think about the audience.** Most people in the audience want you to do well and are on your side. What they want to know is "What's in this for me?" If you get this right you will get a better reaction from the audience and this will boost your confidence
3. **Get off to a good start.** As well as thinking about what's in it for them the audience wants to know some other things. These include "What is the objective of the presentation?" "How long will it last?" "Am I allowed to ask questions?" "What is the content going to be?" These should all be included in your introduction.
4. **Learn your introduction by heart.** This way you can focus on the audience and make positive eye contact when you begin your presentation
5. **Prepare a good finish.** This should be a brief summary of the key points and a positive thank you at the end. Avoid saying "Any questions?" as this usually causes embarrassment and ensures the presentation fizzles out rather than ending on a high.

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6. **Think positive.** Try to picture a successful outcome and avoid having negative conversations with yourself about how nervous you feel and what a poor presenter you are. Negative thoughts can lead to negative outcomes
7. **Get the content right.** Don't overcomplicate the presentation with too much information and too many visuals. Death by PowerPoint causes more than its fair share of trouble during presentations. Get the audience to focus on you and don't hide behind your visual aids
8. **Practice, practice and then practice again.** During practice you will produce a shorter presentation than on the day so be ready to leave out some of the content if you have to do. Nobody will notice as long as you get your main points across and achieve your objectives
9. **Don't draw attention to yourself and your lack of experience.** If you make a mistake just move on. Also, have a plan B in case your visuals fail to work
10. **Take a few deep breaths before you start.** Not too many or you will hyperventilate and pass out. Have some water handy to keep your throat from getting dry and finally, try to enjoy yourself

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Good Selling !



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