

Public Speaking: How To Overcome your Fears



"According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."

- Jerry Seinfeld

The fear of public speaking (i.e., glossophobia) consistently ranks amongst the greatest fears a person can experience. You are not alone in this.

Let's face it: Your body's primal response to a scary situation is fight or flight. You can try to avoid speaking in public all you want. But at some point, you'll be asked to undertake a presentation at work, propose a toast at a wedding, or some other important speech.

But in my experience (and you can take solace in this fact), even the most accomplished speakers still feel unsettled before an important event. So this tells me a) no one is born with a natural talent for public speaking, which means b) you can learn to deal with the fear that comes with public speaking. So let's learn how...

Here's a few tips to help you give the best speech possible:

- *Tell stories whenever possible.* In your opening, use a funny or memorable story from your life. The audience is more receptive to an idea when they relate to it. For a product launch or demo, a related anecdote from work often breaks the barrier between you and your listeners.
- *If you have the choice, speak on a familiar/interesting topic.* In a company setting, this choice may be difficult if your knowledge of the product or service is

- limited. However, knowledge is key, so thoroughly researching the subject and organize your thoughts into a short script.
- *When faced with unfamiliar situations, focus on the best possible outcomes.* Imagine a confident version of yourself stepping onstage. Each member of your audience is your friend, and they are hanging onto your every word. This may sound a bit poxy, but trust me, if you practice this enough, it really works...
- *Before the actual day, record a video of yourself presenting the speech.* Pay attention to your voice and delivery. Are you pacing yourself by varying your sentences and creating a good flow? Study your body language. Do you come across as stiff? Are your gestures distracting? Do you address the audience in a friendly manner? Improve, improvise, and practice your speech.
- *Relax before the presentation.* Take a walk, listen to soothing music, or just slow your breathing. Making small talk with a few audience members can really help. Knowing that you already have a connection with a few of them does wonders for building confidence.

Don't fight the situation or run away. Instead, accept it and manage your fears.

How can you stop imagining that you'll fail? How can you inject some personality into your speech and enjoy yourself?