

Effectively Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety

Getting Ready

- 1 Select a topic of interest to you
- 2 Prepare carefully—know your material
- 3 Practice—rehearse your talk with a friend
- 4 Know your audience
- 5 Challenge negative thinking—make 3 x 5 cards of positive thoughts or have friends write out inspirational thoughts for you.
- 6 Expect positive reactions—expect success!
- 7 Know the room—if unfamiliar, visit your speaking space before you talk.
- 8 Employ aerobic exercise strategies—daily aerobic exercise can cut anxiety by 50%.
- 9 Eat for success—foods containing tryptophan (dairy products, turkey, salmon) and complex carbohydrates tend to calm the body. Eliminate caffeine, sweets, and empty calories.
- 10 Sleep for success—know and get the number of hours of sleep you need for optimal performance.

The Day of the Presentation

11. Eat several hours before the talk—not immediately before
12. Dress for success—your success! Dress comfortably and appropriately for the situation. Look your best.
Review 3 x 5 cards of inspirational thoughts
16. Practice your talk one last time
17. Go to the room early to ready equipment and your podium.
18. Exercise immediately before the talk to reduce adrenalin levels (run in place for one minute, pretend skip (but not in heels)).
 - Employ anxiety reduction techniques
 - Aerobic exercise
 - Deep muscle relaxation
 - Visualization strategies
 - Deep, rhythmic breathing (4 hold 7)
19. Use the restroom immediately before the talk
20. Take a glass of water to the talk

The Presentation: A positive experience stemming from careful preparation!

21. Interpret anxiety symptoms as excitement
22. Use the podium to practice grounding strategies. Touch the podium to steady yourself and to remind yourself that you are safely connected to the ground which is firm and steady beneath your feet.
23. Take a security blanket with you—a complete typed version of your talk to only be used as a backup strategy.
24. Use tools to reduce audience attention on you.
 - PowerPoint presentation
 - Video film clips
 - Handouts
 - “Show and tell” objects to pass
25. Get out of yourself—engage the audience
26. Look at friendly faces in your audience
27. Use humor as needed
28. Use the room’s physical space to your advantage—walk around as appropriate.
29. Appropriately regulate your voice
 - Speak clearly—enunciate
 - Open your mouth—do not mumble
 - Slow down if necessary
 - Lower your voice—speak from your diaphragm
 - Project your voice—use energy when you speak
 - Use appropriate animation

Additional Considerations

- Seek out public speaking opportunities to desensitize (reduce) your fear of communication apprehension.
- Consider use of anti-anxiety medication
- Join Toastmasters International to have a supportive and safe way to practice public speaking
- Gain experience—practice makes perfect.