

Preparing for the Presentation

...IN ADVANCE:

1. Know your content

- Understanding your topic will enable you to speak more naturally and hence more confidently.

2. Practice, practice, practice

- In front of a mirror and in front of an audience—make it as realistic as possible.

3. Foster enthusiasm

- People respond better to an enthusiastic speech than an eloquent one

4. Prepare main points

- Knowing what to include and what to leave out is an important skill to develop.

5. Use visuals

- Enhance your speech using sensory stimulations such as captivating graphics.

...WHEN ANXIOUS:

1. Take slow, deep breaths

- By increasing the oxygen to your brain, you can decrease your body's stress response. During the presentation, take one breath at the beginning of every slide to allow you to pause and mentally gather your thoughts.

2. Smile

- Smiling increases endorphins, which reduces stress levels. It also demonstrates confidence and enthusiasm for the topic.

3. Use a power stance

- Studies show that using power stances a few minutes before giving a talk can create a lasting sense of confidence and assurance by raising testosterone levels and decreasing cortisol.

4. Change self-talk from negative to positive

- Shift your focus from yourself, and your fears, to the true purpose of your presentation—to educate and offer something of value to your audience.

5. Visualize success and positive outcomes

- The more you imagine it, the more you can achieve it. Focus your attention and thoughts on calming and reassuring images. Remind yourself of the things you've done to prepare in advance.

Delivering the Presentation

...THE DAY OF:

1. Exercise

- Boost endorphins through physical activity to calm your nerves

2. Stretch

- Loosen tense muscles, increase blood flow to your head, and relax your body.

3. Stress management techniques

- Yoga, meditation, prayer and tai chi are a few evidence-based strategies to elicit your parasympathetic nervous system, which calms you down

4. Drink water

- Decrease feelings of dry mouth, which is a common symptom of anxiety

5. Limit caffeine and sugar

- While in moderation, you may feel more energized, consuming too much will further exacerbate any symptoms of anxiety

...DURING:

1. Actively engage the audience

- Facilitate audience participation by asking questions, taking polls, and prompting responses in order to increase audience captivation and interest in your talk. Presentations do not have to feel like a one-sided proposition.

2. Be entertaining

- Including some jokes or light-hearted slides can help to keep your audience engaged and allow them to feel comfortable.

3. Keep a steady pace and use pauses

- People often rush through their presentation when they're nervous. Pausing helps with emphasizing the points you're making, and helps you maintain control of what you're saying.

4. Don't apologize for being nervous, or making a mistake

- Often, people can't even tell, and you're the only one who notices.

5. Understand blank faces

- Unlike individual conversations, where people will smile and nod in agreement with what you're saying, it is normal for people to have blank faces when listening in a presentation.