

Many people say they would prefer any task to delivering a speech. Three basic fears involve what people think, failure, and the unknown. Presenting a speech may be daunting because it includes all three fears. Consequences of stage fright can even include physical illness. Earl Nightingale made this point vividly. He said this about giving a speech: "You may feel like you are in the terminal stages of some type of tropical fever."

Probably the most frequently asked question of me when training presentation skills is "How do you deal with stage fright?" The key is not to eliminate these fears, but to control them. Here are a couple of methods.

Practice aloud. I'm not talking about closing the door to your office and pulling out your notes and pondering what you plan to say. That part is important, but to conquer your fears, actually practice what you plan to say. A talented basketball player can't just think about hitting free throws; he or she must shoot foul shots over and over to have the disciplined calm needed to hit two foul shots when the game is on. To be in control when speaking to an audience of 10 or 1000, practicing aloud is crucial. This practice helps control the unknown; you know how long you take for your presentation because you timed the speech. You will have less fear of failure because you have successfully gotten through the speech in practice sessions.

How many times should you practice? My comfort level is three times. Going over the material aloud three times gives me opportunities to tighten up structure as well as helping me feel comfortable with the pacing and nonverbal aspects. Any more frequently than three times I am in danger of getting tired of the material before I face my audience.

Arrive early. A second method to control stage fright is to arrive early to check all variables surrounding your speech. Rushing to get to the speaking room is frustrating, whether it is down the hall or across town or on the other side of your campus. Plan to arrive early to check the room where you will be speaking. Check the physical aspects including sound, temperature, configuration of the room, number of seats, and lighting. Sit in the back of the room to see what the audience sees at the greatest distance from the speaker. Do a sound check. If you are using visuals, try out the technology support you need. Walk around the room and become familiar with the space and feel of the room. Talk to the people who arrive early. All of these will relax you and help you feel comfortable with your surroundings. You will be less tense and more at ease because you don't have to worry about getting to the engagement on time and dealing with any unexpected variables.

Stage Fright Itself

As I sat in the Mercantile Library on the 11th floor of a building in downtown Cincinnati, I watched window washers hanging from the side of an office building. They were washing windows at about the 24th floor of a high-rise building just next to the library. I began to get a little uneasy just thinking about standing on a plank so high above the ground, actually moving my body enough to wash windows rather than hanging on for dear life. As you might have guessed, I have a terrible fear of heights. These guys make a living dangling on the side of a high-rise building each day.

Fear is such a personal matter. These performers who think nothing about swinging back and forth at such an elevation might not for any amount of money stand in front of an audience to deliver a speech. I certainly do get "butterflies in the stomach" when I speak, but I crave the challenge of holding an audience's attention and sharing information that will be helpful to them. I don't know

what a window washer might say to me that would ease my fear of washing windows on a skyscraper, but here are some suggestions for the speaker to conquer his or her fears of speaking.

1. Be prepared. There is no substitute for preparation. Practice your speech, revise, and then practice again.
2. Choose friendly faces in the audience to speak to. These pleasant expressions will inspire you and help you relax.
3. Think positive things about your content.
4. Pause before you begin to speak as you make eye contact with those friendly faces.
5. If you have one, try to include a personal experience early in your speech. You are most comfortable relating a story.

Maybe someday someone will convince me that washing windows 200 feet in the air is nothing to fear (I can't imagine such a day), but I know these are ways that will relieve your anxiety in delivering a speech.

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<http://www.speaking-tips.com/Articles/Dealing-With-Stagefright.aspx>

→ OVER TO YOU →

- 1) MAKE A LIST OF ABOUT **10 TO 12** EXPRESSIONS/PHRASES WHICH (1) ARE NEW FOR YOU AND / OR (2) YOU CAN INCLUDE IN YOUR VOCABULARY?

- 2) WHAT KIND OF TECHNIQUES DO **YOU** USE TO CALM YOURSELF DOWN?

- 3) FOR THE NEXT LESSON, PLEASE, GO BACK TO OUR MATERIALS ON PRESENTATIONS. MAKE A LIST OF THOSE **PRESENTATION ASPECTS** IN WHICH YOU THINK YOU ARE:

CONFIDENT or CERTAIN ABOUT, YOU HAVE NO PROBLEM DEALING WITH THEM (I am good at)	NOT VERY CONFIDENT AND YOU THINK THERE CAN BE SOME IMPROVEMENT DONE (It is difficult for me to ...)
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→ e.g. using eye contact

→ e.g. following my structure

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