

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Video: Public Speaking Panic

Public Speaking Nervousness

If you feel nervous about giving a speech, you are in very good company. Some of the greatest public speakers in history have suffered from stage fright, including Abraham Lincoln, Margaret Sanger, and Winston Churchill.

It is perfectly normal – even desirable – to be nervous at the start of a speech. Your body is responding as it would to any stressful situation – by producing extra adrenaline. This sudden shot of adrenaline is what makes your heart race, your hands shake, your knees knock, and your skin perspire. Every public speaker experiences all of these reactions to some extent.

Most experienced speakers have stage fright before taking the floor, but their nervousness is a healthy sign that they are getting “psyched up” for a good effort.

Proven Strategies to Boost Your Confidence

Prepare and Practice – organize and practice your speech in advance

Modify Thoughts and Attitudes – allow only positive thoughts

Accept Your Nervousness – it is normal to be nervous

Concentrate on Your Message – don’t focus on yourself

Visualize Success – picture yourself successfully completing your speech

Breathe Deeply and Stretch – physically relax

Enjoy the Occasion – think about what you like about the event/speech

Learn from Your Experience – welcome feedback

References:

Lucas, S.E. (2009). The art of public speaking. McGraw Hill, Madison, WI. (9-10)

O’Hair, D., Rubenstein, H., & Stewart, R. (2010). A pocket guide to public speaking. Bedford/St. Martin’s, Boston MA. (22)