

Psychology of Public Speaking Tips

Methods for minimizing anxiety/discomfort when having to give a public speech/lecture:

- **Fully outline the presentation with all main points, examples and ideas- but do not write it out word for word!** Then rehearse giving your presentation based solely on the outline. This will reduce anxiety because it makes the material seem more natural and familiar. Having to memorize word-for-word increases pressure and the fear of messing up. Practicing this method allows one to be able to deliver a speech as if one were talking to a friend. As you do this, try to imagine delivering your speech as if it were a movie/series of ideas playing in your head. That way it will be easier to remember the connection between points in a natural manner.
- **Develop rituals that reduce anxiety.** Sports stars have lucky charms and rituals they use in order to more at ease. There is no reason that as presenters we cannot do the same. Pick something that may give you emotional security so that you have the sense that no matter how the speech goes, you will still survive. (i.e. a stuffed animal in your bag, sentimental jewelry, etc.) Doing this helps curb the fight-of-flight response that causes anxiety, and hence, interferes with effective communication.
- **Realize that the people you are speaking to are just as insecure.** Anxious public speakers assume that their audience will be scrutinizing every word, thought and non-verbal gesture they make. This is far from true. The audience is very likely to be distracted most of the time you are speaking to them from various sources: (online chatting in classes, day dreaming, etc.) What the audience will remember the most is the way you delivered your speech and the key points you bring up, not so much about the details.
- **Note that the more comfortable you act in front of the audience, the more comfortable the audience will be with you.** Most communication is non-verbal: through voice, posture, and indicators of confidence. Hence, journalists tell reporters to “fake it until you make it,” to act as if one is already super confident. Therefore, decide to put away your anxiety until before/after the speech itself, don’t allow negative self-talk or nervous thoughts to interfere during the talk. That way, even if you are nervous the audience will never know—and hence, you will build more confidence and be known as an excellent public speaker!