

Stage Fright Strategies

In order to avoid reinventing the wheel, we have found an excellent article regarding stage fright strategies. We encourage you to visit the Great Speaking Center to view the other resources they have made available.

Courtesy of: The Great Speaking Center
<http://www.antion.com/articles/stagefright.htm>

Before you learn how to deliver your lines, it is important to be ready to deliver your lines. Stage fright is a phenomenon that you must learn to control. Actually, stage fright isn't the most accurate term for the nervousness that occurs when considering a speaking engagement. In fact, most of the fear occurs before you step on-stage. Once you're up there, it usually goes away. Try to think of stage fright in a positive way. Fear is your friend. It makes your reflexes sharper. It heightens your energy, adds a sparkle to your eye, and color to your cheeks. When you are nervous about speaking you are more conscious of your posture and breathing. With all those good side effects you will actually look healthier and more physically attractive.

Many of the top performers in the world get stage fright so you are in good company. Stage fright may come and go or diminish, but it usually does not vanish permanently. You must concentrate on getting the feeling out in the open, into perspective and under control.

Remember Nobody ever died from stage fright. But, according to surveys, many people would rather die than give a speech. If that applies to you, try out some of the strategies in this section to help get yourself under control. Realize that you may never overcome stage fright, but you can learn to control it, and use it to your advantage.

Symptoms Of Stage Fright

- Dry mouth.
- Tight throat.
- Sweaty hands.
- Cold hands.
- Shaky hands.
- Nausea.
- Fast pulse.
- Shaky knees.
- Trembling lips.
- Any out-of-the-ordinary outward or inward feeling or manifestation of a feeling occurring before, or during, the beginning of a presentation.

Here are some easy to implement strategies for reducing your stage fright. Not everyone reacts the same and there is no universal fix. Don't try to use all these fixes at once. Pick out items from this list and try them out until you find the right combination for you.

Visualization strategies that can be used anytime

- Concentrate on how good you are.
- Pretend you are just chatting with a group of friends.
- Close your eyes and imagine the audience listening, laughing, and applauding.

- Remember happy moments from your past.
- Think about your love for and desire to help the audience.
- Picture the audience in their underwear.

Strategies In Advance Of Program

- Be extremely well prepared.
- Join or start a Toastmasters club for extra practice
- Get individual or group presentation skills coaching.
- Listen to music.
- Read a poem.
- Anticipate hard and easy questions.
- Organize.
- Absolutely memorize your opening statement so you can recite it on autopilot if you have to.
- Practice, practice, practice. Especially practice bits so you can spit out a few minutes of your program no matter how nervous you are.
- Get in shape. I don't know why it helps stage fright, but it does.

Strategies Just Before The Program

Remember stage fright usually goes away after you start. The tricky time is before you start.

- Be in the room at least an hour early if possible to triple check everything. You can also schmooze with participants arriving early.
- Notice and think about things around you.
- Concentrate on searching for current and immediate things that are happening at the event that you can mention during your talk (especially in the opening).
- Get into conversation with people near you. Be very intent on what they are saying.
- Yawn to relax your throat.
- Doodle.
- Draw sketches of a new car you would like to have.
- Look at your notes.
- Put pictures of your kids/grandkids, dog, etc., in your notes.
- Build a cushion of time in the day so you are not rushed but not too much time. You don't want to have extra time to worry.
- If your legs are trembling, lean on a table, sit down, or shift your legs.
- Take a quick walk.
- Take quick drinks of tepid water.
- Double check your A/V equipment.
- Don't drink alcohol or coffee or tea with caffeine.
- Concentrate on your ideas.
- Hide notes around the stage area so you know you have a backup if you happen to draw a blank.

- Concentrate on your audience.
- Listen to music.
- Read a poem.
- Do isometrics that tighten and release muscles.
- Shake hands and smile with attendees before the program.
- Say something to someone to make sure your voice is ready to go.
- Go somewhere private and warm up your voice, muscles, etc.
- Use eye contact.
- Go to a mirror and check out how you look.
- Breathe deeply, evenly, and slowly for several minutes.
- Don't eat if you don't want to and never take tranquilizers or other such drugs. You may think you will do better, but you will probably do worse and not know it.

Strategies when the program begins

- If legs are trembling, lean on lectern /table or shift legs or move.
- Try not to hold the microphone by hand in the first minute.
- Don't hold notes. The audience can see them shake. Use three-by-five cards instead.
- Take quick drinks of tepid water.
- Use eye contact. It will make you feel less isolated.
- Look at the friendliest faces in the audience.
- Joke about your nervousness. "What's the right wine to go with fingernails?"
- Remember nervousness doesn't show one-tenth as much as it feels.

Before each presentation make a short list of the items you think will make you feel better. Don't be afraid to experiment with different combinations. You never know which ones will work best until you try. Rewrite them on a separate sheet and keep the sheet with you at all times so you can refer to it quickly when the need arises.

Use these steps to control stage fright so it doesn't control you.