

# HANDOUTS FOR PUBLIC SPEAKING

## RI 19<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT ASSEMBLY SESSION 1 – PE TRACK

### How to Relax for Your Talk

By Patricia Fripp CSP, CPAE

We've all heard that the fear of death is second only to the fear of public speaking. That may be true, but if you're looking for one of the cheapest and most effective methods of promoting your service or product, concentrate on the positive results of doing a presentation. Think of the contacts and prospective clients you'll be generating with just 20 minutes in front of an audience.

In case accentuating the positive isn't enough to keep the butterflies in your stomach in line, before you step up to the podium, take time to work through these exercises to help you channel all that nervousness into energy.

Physical Preparation: Warm up and relax your body and face.

- ❑ If you're wearing high heels, take them off. Now, stand on one leg and shake the other. When you put your foot back on the ground, it's going to feel lighter than the other one. Now, switch legs and shake. You want your energy to go through the floor and out of your head. This sounds quite cosmic; it isn't. It's a practical technique used by actors.
- ❑ Shake your hands...fast. Hold them above your head, bending at the wrist and elbow and then bring your hands back down. This will make your hand movements more natural.
- ❑ Warm up your face muscles by chewing in a highly exaggerated way. Do shoulder and neck rolls. Imagine that you're eye level with a clock. As you look at 12, pull as much of your face up to 12 as you can; now move it to 3, then down to 6 and finally over to 9.

All of these exercises serve to warm you up and relax you. Those exaggerated movements make it easier for your movements to flow more naturally. Now concentrate on the potential customers you'll be cultivating with your talk. Aren't you getting a warm feeling just thinking about that?

Go on--step up on the podium and profit from the experience.

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### Stage Fright Strategies

Stage fright Is Good and Makes You Better Looking Too! Before you learn how to speak in public, it is important to be ready to speak in public. Stage fright is a phenomenon that you must learn to control if you want to be good at public speaking. 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.

When making public performances, 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 or speaking in public. But, according to surveys, many people would rather die than speak in public. 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 in your public speaking efforts.

#### Symptoms of Stage fright are:

- Dry mouth.
- Tight throat.
- Sweaty hands.
- Cold hands.
- Shaky hands.
- Shaky knees.
- Trembling lips.
- Give me a hand (Oops, I couldn't resist).
- Nausea.
- Fast pulse.

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Any out-of-the-ordinary outward or inward feeling or manifestation of a feeling occurring before, or during, the beginning of a public speaking engagement (Wow! What a dry mouthful!).

Here are some easy to implement strategies for reducing your stage fright.

Not everyone reacts the same WAY 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 at public speaking.
- ❑ 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 public speaking coaching.
- ❑ Listen to music.
- ❑ Read a poem.
- ❑ Anticipate hard and easy questions.
- ❑ Organize your speaking notes.
- ❑ 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.

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**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 the public address system and everything else on your checklist. 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 speech (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 including the public address system, projectors etc.
- ❑ Don't drink alcohol or coffee or tea with caffeine.
- ❑ Concentrate on your speaking ideas.
- ❑ Hide speaking 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.

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- ❑ 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 speaking engagement 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.

When speaking in public use these steps to control stage fright so it doesn't control you.

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