



Easing Public Speaking Anxiety

Public speaking is one of the most common fears in the world. For some, it is scarier than heights, spiders, and even death. If you experience trembling hands or a knot in your stomach when delivering a speech, you are not alone. This phenomenon is known as public speaking anxiety or stage fright. Public speaking is a highly beneficial and necessary skill, so luckily, there are ways to manage this response. Below are some tips for easing your public speaking anxiety.

Before Your Speech

Practice

While practicing your speech may seem obvious, this is the most important step. When practicing, identify potential problem areas. Examples include forgetting your next point, struggling to pronounce a word, or misremembering an important statistic. By working in these areas, you can build your muscle memory, allowing you to avoid mistakes or quickly recover after them. Each time you practice, the better your speech will flow. Still, beware of over-practicing, as you want your speech to feel conversational and not robotic.

Shift Your Focus

When practicing your speech, you may find yourself criticizing your performance or thinking of the worst “what-if” scenarios that could happen. It is important in these moments to shift your focus. There are a few ways of doing this, so try them out and see what works best for you:

- **Visualize Success:** When you find yourself beginning to visualize every way your speech can go wrong, try to replace those mental images with ones of you succeeding. This can help you to normalize the activity and recognize your abilities.
- **Focus on Your Purpose:** Instead of focusing on your fears, focus on how your speech will contribute something of value to your audience. Also, remember that your audience wants you to succeed, and they likely feel just as nervous as you if they are also about to speak.

During Your Speech

Leverage Eye Contact

If possible, try to find friendly faces among the audience to return to. This can help you feel grounded and reassured throughout your speech. Just make sure to disperse your eye contact so you are not staring a single person down!

Accept Mistakes

Unfortunately, no matter how much you practice mistakes can—and will—still happen. Remind yourself that it is totally okay, then push forward. Also, avoid apologizing for your mistakes. If you do not draw attention to them, your audience may never notice the mistakes.

Pace Yourself

As much as you might wish to rush through your speech, it is important to pace yourself. This ensures that not only do you meet your minimum time requirements, but that your audience can understand and process what you are saying. Keeping an even pace will also help you avoid mistakes made by rushing.

After Your Speech

Commend Yourself

After you finish your speech, pat yourself on the back; you have accomplished something that is not easy. Even if it is not directly after, take time to think about what went well during your speech and make sure you recognize your accomplishment. Treat yourself to build positive associations with the experience!

Give Yourself Grace

If you did make a mistake, no matter how big or small, try to view it as a learning opportunity. Once you can identify the cause, you can incorporate that into the way you prepare for your next speech. Thus, your skills will continue to grow.

Need more information or assistance?

Schedule an appointment with the [Excel Multiliteracy Center](#). We are here to provide one-on-one and group assistance to any and all UCCS students!