

OVERCOME STAGE-FRIGHT

Emerson once said, “*Fear defeats more people than any other single thing in the world*”.

Stage fright can be controlled.

Anxiety is a very natural emotion arising from stress.

One method of doing this is to note down the fears that one faces while speaking in public and be aware of it. Fears can be classified in four broad categories:

- Fear of audience
- Fear related to material or content
- Fear relating to the use or handling of presentation resources
- Fear about one’s own ability

Fear of audience

Fear of an audience happens due to the speakers’ perception the audience:

- The audience knows more than I do
- Will I get my point across to the audience
- The audience may be already aware of what I have to say to them
- They may ask question for which I do not have the answers
- Their observance may make me uncomfortable

A few suggestions to overcome these are:

Know Your Audience

It is important that you know what your audience is. Keeping in mind what they need and want to hear. It will always help to do a check on who will be there, how many will be present and what is it that they expect to hear from you.

To get the attention of your audience talk to them about what is relevant to them.

See your audience as your friend

The perception of your audience as a friend or a competitor will make a difference to the way you talk to them. Building a rapport with them will help you remove the barriers that initially exist between the audience and a speaker.

Realise that your audience is there to hear you succeed and not fail.

Remember , you are the expert here

If you find yourself speaking to people on a topic, you are obviously an expert in the area. If you have prepared well than you definitely know more than your audience.

Concentrate on what you are saying, not on how you are saying it.

By concentrating on the ideas, the importance, the relevance of what you're telling your audience you'll further control and reduce your nervousness.

A certain amount of stage fright is useful

It prepares you to meet the challenge. Nervousness is nature's way of helping a speaker be alert, sharp and up to doing a good job.

With experience stage fright is almost always reduced

Even after one speech you will realized that your greatest fear – fear of failure just doesn't come true.

Predetermine your mind to success. Lose yourself in your subject

Keep your attention off negative stimuli that may upset you.

Act confident

Unless you are prepared, all the acting in the world will avail but little.

Practice does make perfect

If you are not a regular speaker then you need to practice before you speak in public. This will also help you time your speech and work on it to either cut it or make it more interesting.

Mode of delivery

Decide how you're going to give your give your presentation.

- a) Worst is a memorized speech.
- b) Scripted presentation - reading out a written speech.
- c) Extemporaneous presentation – delivered by referring to speech cards. This is best. You are not stuck to keeping your mind busy putting memorized words. You will be able to participate with the audience and be more personable and sincere.

Remember the following:

1. Go over your presentation at least 5 to 6 times (or even more times – the more the better).
2. Practice to remember ideas not words.
3. Practice mentally rather than aloud.
4. Practice from your actual note cards not a script.
5. Push yourself up to entire presentation for each practice.
6. Don't over practice.
7. Do not practice gestures unless you're sure that will help you.
8. Don't practice in front of a mirror unless you are sure it will help.
9. Tape record one or two practices.
10. View or listen to yourself objectively.

Fear related to material or content

The only way to overcome matter or content related is to have a control over your material. The more you plan and structure your content, the better and surer you will be of your presentation.

Fear relating to the use or handling of presentation resources

Presentation resource is the term used to denote all that is used by the speaker to support his/her message. This includes the audio/video aids such as the overhead projector (OHP), the board, the projector, the computer and the hand outs given to the audience. A few apprehensions that speakers get regarding this are:

- There could be unscheduled power cut.
- The equipment may not run properly
- The whole “set up” may be unfamiliar

Have a back up plan in place just in case.

Fear about one's own ability

This is a fear that just about everyone will have.

Following are a few tips that can help you overcome fear.

- Breathe deeply
- Focus on relaxing and releasing tension – a simple way to do this is to first tighten your muscles and then relax them. You can start from your toes and move gradually upwards to your feet, legs, stomach, hands and neck.