

#CHECK IT OUT

5 simple ways to overcome the fear of public speaking

Even the most fluent speakers with a way of painting pictures with their words have difficulties speaking in front of a group of people, be it small or large. Formally and medically known as glossophobia, this common fear can go beyond just being nervous to talk to an audience; a racy heart and sweaty palms triggered by our fight-or-flight response.

Just as scary as it may be, it is just as easy to beat your fear of speaking in public by just practicing some simple steps and keeping in mind that imagining everyone in the audience is naked might not always help!

ACCEPTANCE

To get over the fear you have to first accept that fear is a natural response generated when speaking in public. When we talk to a group of people we are attracting all the attention to ourselves, thus making us vulnerable and subject to judgement.

Fear is a very natural reaction and our nervous system's protective mechanism and the best way to go about it is accepting. Accepting that it is okay to feel this way. There's no need to judge yourself when you experience this, but instead, simply learn how to manage this fear.

REFOCUS YOUR BRAIN RIGHT BEFORE YOU SPEAK

You are the most vulnerable right before you speak. Your mind going off in the back wondering 'What if I fail?' 'What if I make a fool of myself?' 'Everyone is judging me.' This is the exact moment you are to refocus your brain and bring it back to what you are going to open with.



Many go for a bite-size story, sharing the beginning of their journey, or even an interactive exchange with the audience. Telling and convincing your brain it is not about you but the presentations and what it stands to change, create and explore with the audience. Redirect your thoughts towards the presentation itself

FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU CAN CONTROL

This part is as simple as the header suggests; you must pay attention to the parts you can control. Such as being well prepared, knowing your audience, engaging with them, having confidence in

body language, and a variety of tones in speech delivery.

All of these require your full focus and are things you can control which is quite plenty to keep the brain right on track and running. A major part of a successful presentation in public is your literacy command and the pact you have with your audience. Public speaking, like all, is a skill that can be perfected.

DON'T TRY TO CALM DOWN

In a clever research, Harvard professor Alison Wood Brooks asked people to give a public speech which would be monitored by specialists to see how the fear of public

speaking affects their presentation. Clever in that sense, despite 90 per cent of the people said that the best strategy was to calm down in the face of public speaking. It showed that 'calming down' actually calmed one down to such a point where their speech in public had next to no effect on the public. The people who relaxed and spoke in front of a group of people were less persuasive and had no lasting effect on the crowd.

Instead of using 'I'm Calm' phrases like 'I'm Excited', 'I'm Ready' or even 'I was born for this!' gave people the boost that helped them deliver a much more compelling presentation. So, encouraging yourself is a much more strategic maneuver to direct both you and your mind to the ultimate goal.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

As I previously mentioned, public speaking is a skill that can be perfected through practicing in front of a mock audience, in your room with the lights off, or even in front of a mirror to observe how you are perceived are all age-old but very effective ways to fight off the fear of public speaking.

The more you practice one craft the better and better you keep getting at it. And to quote the words of Elbert Hubbard (American writer, publisher, artist, and philosopher), who said, "The only way to learn to speak is to speak and speak, and speak and speak, and speak and speak and speak."

By Humayra Morshed
Photo: Collected

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