



How to Overcome the Fear of Public Speaking

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If you find yourself afraid of an upcoming speech, you're not alone. ***The fear of public speaking is one of the top fears out there***, but you can still do something about it.

You hear over and over again that practice makes perfect, and this also applies to public speaking. Any sort of public speaking - even when you speak out in your group of friends - can ease you into the public speaking role.

Here are some actions you can take to reduce your fear of public speaking:

- 1. Be prepared.** In most public speaking situations you can use notes. Make sure you organize your notes and break them down into an organized list where you ***highlight two or three key talking points***. If you can't use notes, simply make it a point to practice your speech until you feel comfortable saying it in front of others. You might still have some fear, but being well prepared can definitely combat this feeling.
- 2. Don't expect perfection.** It's important not to expect that your speech will be perfect. In fact, chances are ***your audience doesn't expect perfection*** either. They understand that everyone makes mistakes and they, themselves, may be afraid of public speaking! You might skip over a part of your talk or stutter a little, and these are all natural human mistakes.
- 3. Speak in small groups.** If you're uncomfortable speaking in front of a large group, then start small. Practice on small groups and ask for feedback afterwards. You can have a confidential feedback form, or you can just ask participants what they thought of your speech.

4. **Have a backup plan.** It's always advisable to have a back up plan in life situations and public speaking is not an exception. Think about what you might want to say if you get stuck. ***If your mind goes blank, take a deep breath and start your backup plan.*** Chances are you'll find yourself back on track before you know it.
5. **Relax.** It's important to get yourself into the right mindset before you have to speak. Consider starting a ritual that you find relaxing in order to keep your mind off of your fears. You could meditate or do a crossword puzzle, whatever it is, just choose an activity that helps you relax.

The Audience

The audience is the whole reason that you're afraid to make your speech, but it helps to know that they're on your side. ***Keep a positive attitude*** because chances are good that the audience wants you to succeed in your speech.

In the end, it's important to remember that ***even if you do mess up, it's not the end of the world.*** As long as you've prepared yourself well enough and have a back up plan in place, you'll be able to pick yourself back up if you trip up anywhere in your speech.

After your presentation, it's important to take notes and critique yourself on how it went. Write down your observations on what you did well in addition to areas of improvement.

As you continue to practice your public speaking skills, you'll get better and more comfortable in time. Just keep at it!