

12 Most Successful Tips to Manage Presentation Nervousness by Claudyne Wilder

Does your heart work overtime and your memory go blank when you speak in front of people? You can change that with good habits and discipline. But it takes work. Your first task is to find ways to calm and energize yourself at the same time. You want to be a relaxed and enthusiastic presenter. Look through the list below and pick two tips you can begin to cultivate as habits right now. Guarantee your presentation success with diligent, consistent efforts!

- 1. Recognize your skill level and get the coaching you need.** The next time you have an important presentation for an internal meeting or key clients, consider what you really need to be successful and then seek out the appropriate coaching. Go over your talk with several colleagues and your boss, or take an intensive two-day presentation workshop that raises your skills to the next level. By recognizing and respecting your skill level, you'll set yourself up for success, not failure.
- 2. Don't create many extra notes to use when presenting.** If you have both a PowerPoint slide and notes to look at, you are going to spend less time focused on the audience and probably too much time giving a "data dump" presentation. Trying to read your extra notes will distract you from engaging the audience and getting their comments and feedback.
- 3. Don't over-prepare and under-rehearse.** Yes, it's critical to have the appropriate content, but don't work on content so much that you neglect rehearsal. You must leave sufficient time to rehearse—which may include practicing in front of a colleague or your boss to get their feedback before the actual presentation.
- 4. Rehearse out loud as if a real audience is listening to you.** A real rehearsal is not talking in your car, thinking about your presentation in the shower or reviewing it mentally while walking around. The most powerful and useful way to prepare is to stand up and go through the whole talk as if your audience is there with you. And time it! If you use PowerPoint, use the Slide Show > Rehearse Timings feature.
- 5. Visualize your success.** Many people do a visualization run-through after their out-loud real rehearsal. They watch themselves walk in front of the audience, take calm relaxing breaths, open the talk, speak calmly with pauses and close the talk. Here's a YouTube clip on visualization techniques: <http://bit.ly/zYm8j4>.
- 6. Exercise the day before or day of your presentation.** If you have a tendency to be on the anxious side, then exercise the day before or the morning of your talk. Exercise calms most people, relieving stress and anxiety as it increases energy. It also helps you sleep.
- 7. Get enough sleep.** Don't stay up half the night working on your presentation and think you will do a great delivery job the next day. You need your sleep to feel energized and engaged with your audience. If you're too wound up and have trouble sleeping, here are some solutions to try:
 - Exercise
 - Take a pill if you're really desperate
 - Learn to meditate
 - Consult a nutritionist to find out what's missing in your diet that doesn't let you sleep. For example, when I travel and eat protein every three to four hours, I sleep very well.

DELIVER PERSUASIVELY WITH CONFIDENCE

8. **Practice positive self-talk.** Be your own best coach before you start talking. Don't say to yourself, "You look tired today. You really don't know this content like some of the experts in the audience. You shouldn't be talking." Instead say to yourself, "You did an excellent real rehearsal last night. You practiced answering the tough questions with your boss and will be able to handle any that come. You have a wonderful opportunity today, so enjoy it."
9. **Breathe deeply and consciously.** "Practicing regular, mindful breathing can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress-related health problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders," says Dr. Andrew Weil. He suggests three breathing exercises at <http://bit.ly/sRROt>. According to Dr. Weil, one of these exercises is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system—just what you need if you have an attack of nerves during your presentation.
10. **Focus your attention on the audience.** Pay more attention to your audience when you are speaking and less to an ongoing critique of how you are doing. An outward focus will reduce the strength of that inner critic. Keep asking yourself, "What does the audience need to know right now? Shall I invite comments and questions now?"
11. **Be present, not perfect.** If you constantly try to say the perfect word in a perfect sentence, you may get an A for diligence but will get a D on audience connection. Give yourself permission to be sincere and enthusiastic. It's not about giving the presentation just as you practiced it. It's about being present in the moment and crafting the words for that audience right then and there.
12. **Recuperate constantly.** The test of a professional presenter is not to do everything perfectly. The test is to recuperate from any problem that comes up. If someone is rude or aggressively critical, the presenter handles the person and goes on. If there's a surprise comment, the presenter takes it in stride. Most audiences don't mind mistakes, but they don't easily forget your inability to recuperate from one. Your task is to recover from the unexpected glitch and go on being even more dynamic and confident than before.

Almost anyone can become a proficient, relaxed speaker. To get to that stage, you must start engaging in habits that will relax you, give you confidence and provide the foundation so you can feel, act and sound in charge when speaking. Start today. Which tip will you begin with?