

Turn Anxiety into Useful Energy (and feel *way* less nervous!)

Feeling anxious is both normal and useful in the Public Speaking context. Just remember, the aroused state can actually be used to your advantage, providing you with the energy to deliver an interesting and dynamic presentation.



The best approach is not to expect to rid yourself of anxiety, but to “manage” the anxiety and channel it into an energetic presentation.

Here are some ideas for ways to manage that “anxiety” and use it as productive energy:

- **Breathe:** Big, deep belly breaths – three in a row. Slowly, with intention.
- **Exercise:** run, bike, take a brisk walk, or dance around your house or room. Burn that energy!
- **Relaxation Imagery:** imagine yourself at the ocean, quietly contemplating the breaking waves, or on a soft blanket in the center of a warm, maize colored field of wheat or beautiful flowers.
- **Positive visualization:** imagine yourself presenting your speech well. Imagine the audience nodding, smiling, and enjoying your presentation. Imagine their applause. Remember this when you are speaking.
- **Say nice things to yourself:** before, during and after your presentation, your self-talk will have a LOT to do with how you feel about your presentation, and your feelings on public speaking in general. Be honest with yourself—and be fair and encouraging.
- **Muscular relaxation:** tense and relax muscles systematically from your toes to your head. Notice the difference in your body between the tightened (anxiety provoking) state and the relaxed one. See if you can make them relax even more than you think you can!
- **Practice, practice, practice!** The most important technique for dealing with public speaking anxiety is preparation and practice. It is infinitely easier to go up and speak when you are certain you have done everything you can to ensure an effective and engaging presentation.
- **Practice your speech in the same room in which you will deliver the final speech:** knowing the “view” will help desensitize you to the situation. You will be less surprised by the new experience.
- **Take a moment to look at your audience before you begin speaking:** if possible, get acquainted with the new view of your audience while they are still setting up for your speech. Whether this is possible or not, take a moment when you first stand for your presentation to just look at your audience and become acquainted with them visually.
- **Smile!** When you smile, others smile back at you. You will find this comforting. Smiling also makes you feel good, physiologically, which always helps!
- **Use eye contact:** while presenting, speak to individuals in the audience. Stay with one person when you make a point, then move onto someone else for your next statement or point. This will make it feel more like a “conversation”. This is engaging to your audience as well.
- **Use your best style of speaking:** it can be very useful to watch and learn from great expert speakers. In the end, however, your best presentation comes from within *you* and is of *your natural style!* Don’t try to emulate speaker’s that have styles different than yours. There are many ways to be a great speaker.

Remember, your audience wants you to succeed! If you have prepared specific points, crafted illustrative and engaging examples, spent some time easing your anxiety, and, practiced, practiced, practiced, there is no reason why you can’t and won’t deliver a great speech!!

And have fun! If you do, it is very likely your audience will, too!