

Tips for coping with fear of public speaking

You can encounter fear of public speaking in many aspects of life. For example, giving a presentation in front of your peers can be very intimidating. It's not always about speaking in front of a crowd, however - a "simple" one-on-one conversation can also seem very scary. If you feel like your fear of speaking is affecting you in a negative way, the following strategies might help you overcome it.

Stay positive

- Negative thoughts about your own performance will exacerbate your fears. People that suffer from fear of public speaking tend to be very critical of their own performance and often take negative responses by listeners personally. If this is the case for you, you should ask yourself whether those responses could also have another reason. Identify the negative thoughts and replace them with more positive ones.

Whenever I forget something during my presentation,

- others will think I'm stupid.



Whenever I forget something during my presentation,

- I am giving my listeners the opportunity to ask further questions.

- I can just mention it later.

- most people won't even notice.

Whenever a listener starts yawning,

- that means that they are bored.



Whenever a listener starts yawning,

- that could mean they are bored, but

- maybe they are just overworked, couldn't sleep last night, ...

Practice makes perfect

- Learning to cope with your fear of public speaking is most effective when you don't try to avoid situations where you may have to speak in front of a crowd. Practice your presentation by imagining speaking to several people and saying your presentation out loud. This helps you to get used to the situation. In order to develop your speaking skills, you should seize every opportunity to practice. Telling others about your experiences, reading stories or singing along to songs can all help you build your skills.

Imagined success

- Imagine standing confidently in front of a crowd and tell yourself you are doing well. Use your imagination to successfully handle the situation. You will notice that the "real-life" situation will become much easier to deal with when you have already imagined coping with it successfully several times.

Act self-confident

- Remind yourself of a time when you felt really sure of yourself and try to emulate how you looked and held your posture at that specific time. Speak up and articulate your words. This will make you look self-confident.

Dealing with fear responses constructively

- Learn to recognize how your body responds when you are speaking in front of a crowd. Some people notice they start trembling, for example, and others get a dry mouth. Expect these responses. Accept that your body responds this way and try to deal with them constructively

instead of making them worse. Examples: If one of your problems is sweating heavily during presentations, you shouldn't dress too warmly. But if you have noticed your voice tends to go out after speaking for a while, having a bottle of water at hand and warming up your vocal cords before speaking (by speaking loudly) can really help.

Relaxation

- Learn how to relax properly by practicing breathing exercises or reading into progressive muscle relaxation. These exercises can help you to be less nervous in the long term and will reduce stress symptoms.

Focusing on the important things

- People that suffer from fear of public speaking tend to focus on negative thoughts and their body's response to the situation at hand. The problem with this is that it only makes the problem worse and leaves little energy for what they are supposed to be focusing on - the presentation! This is why you should try to direct your attention "outwards" while presenting: Concentrate on what you are supposed to be talking about and try to connect with your audience.