

Seven Ways to Handle Nervousness

LIST OF SEVEN WAYS

1. **Practice:** Practice doesn't make perfect, but doing a presentation out loud several times before the real thing will make you feel more confident, especially if you practice under conditions as close to the actual situation as possible. Do at least one dry run in front of an audience, even if the audience is just a friend.
2. **Concentrate on the Ideas:** Concentrate on the ideas you want to get across, not on your own nervousness. Even shy people speak up when it's something they care about. Think about your audience's needs, not your own.
3. **Make a Strong Start:** You'll be most nervous at the beginning of the talk, so start with an introduction that will be easy to remember and that will relax you as well as the audience.
4. **Visualize:** Rehearse for your first presentation by actually visualizing how it will go. Imagine what you'd like to say, how you'd like to say it, and a positive response from the audience. Many athletes use a similar approach by imagining an entire dive or jump, in detail, before they actually do it.
5. **Use Audiovisual Aids or Multimedia:** Particularly if you have lots of technical information to cover, it can be reassuring to have much of it already written on transparencies or PowerPoint slides. Even just an outline on the board can reassure you that you won't forget what you want to say. Be sure to look at your audience as much as possible, however, and not at your outline or PowerPoint slides.
6. **Assume a Confident Attitude:** To a large extent, you can control your own reaction to sweaty palms or a beating heart. Tell yourself you're "psyched," not nervous. Remember that to an audience, nervousness can seem like dynamism or energy. Your attitude will probably determine what the audience thinks.
7. **Breathe:** Right before your presentation, take a few moments to regulate and deepen your breathing. When it comes to public speaking, your breath is your main support. The moment you start to feel a case of nerves building up, take a deep breath. You will start to feel better immediately and your voice will convey your relaxation and confidence.