

5 Insider Tips for Improving Your Confidence as a Public Speaker

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It's estimated that as much as 77% of the population experiences some level of anxiety in relation to public speaking. For some people, this can even manifest as glossophobia, a type of social phobia that is specifically related to public speaking.

Regardless of the severity of your anxiety regarding public speaking, there is no denying that a lack of confidence can negatively affect your presentation abilities. With many careers requiring some level of public speaking, finding ways to improve your confidence can go a long way in improving how you present yourself and how you are perceived by others.

Here are five insider tips for boosting your confidence as a public speaker:

Related: [How to Become a Confident Public Speaker](#)

1. Practice makes perfect

"Practice makes perfect" may be a cliché, but there's no denying that becoming more familiar with your presentation can greatly increase your confidence. You can rehearse your speech out loud at home or even while driving to work to improve the natural flow of your speaking.

Of course, practice will be even more effective if you

practice every aspect of your presentation – from how you will use visual aids to the body language you will portray as you stand and speak. Some people even film themselves while practicing so they can identify issues with their facial expressions, tone and body language that make them appear nervous or unprepared.

Some speakers weave personal stories into their talk because it's unique content that, in a way, you've already practiced. First, you learned the story by experiencing it, and then you've "practiced" it by replaying it in your mind. Using stories can reduce the pressure speakers feel to "perform." As Dr. Chiagozie Fawole, founder of SavvyDocs says in a recent blog post, "You are the expert on your story. No one can argue about a deal you did, an experience you had, or something that was uniquely yours." She continues, "Tell stories that show the point you are making. When you tie a point you're making to a story you experienced, you get the message across, more people remember it, and you can feel relaxed telling it."

Remember, if you look confident while speaking, your audience isn't going to know that you're nervous. Even relatively simple aspects of body language, like smiling or making eye contact with audience members, can help convey confidence. Be sure to practice these as part of your preparations.

2. Manage your nerves

It's perfectly normal to feel nervous before speaking, no matter how much you've practiced. Some level of nervousness can actually be beneficial, helping you appear excited and making it easier to focus on your presentation. But if you let your nerves get the best of you, you can end up losing focus and having a harder time conveying your message.

Before your speech, consider practicing controlled breathing or another mindfulness exercise to help you maximize your focus and reduce some of that nervous tension. Exercising

earlier in the day can also help reduce stress by releasing endorphins and improving mood.

On the day of your presentation, be mindful of what you put into your body. Alcohol, caffeine, sugary drinks and processed foods contain substances that can add to your stress and anxiety. On the other hand, foods with omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium and other nutrients can actually lower stress.

Related: Does Public Speaking Make You Nervous? Here Are 10 Secrets to Help You Pull It Off Like a Pro.

3. Pause and speak slowly

Nervousness and anxiety have been found to cause people to talk too fast, causing their speech to become jumbled or mumbled. While speaking quickly may help you get your public speaking event “over with” sooner, it may come at the expense of being able to give a truly effective presentation.

If you’re nervous, make a conscious effort to slow down your speech. Even if it feels too slow to you, this will often result in a better experience for your listeners. One way to handle nerves and maintain a good speaking speed is to pause and breathe at strategic points during your presentation. Taking a deep breath can help you mentally reset and focus.

Pauses at the end of key sections of your presentation or after asking a question will give your audience time to reflect on what you’ve said. This can also help you get out of the habit of using “filler words” like “um” or “ah” that we often say when we’re nervous.

4. Focus on the positive

The time after you give your presentation is over should be used for self-reflection. While you will likely make mistakes,

this shouldn't be the focus of your thoughts. This could cause you to lose confidence, making you even more nervous for the next time you need to speak in public.

Instead, try to acknowledge and focus on what you did well. Write down a list of what went right during your presentation. If someone offers you a compliment, make a note of that as well. Making a list of the positives, while still allowing for some reflection on what you can do better next time, will be a much better motivator for preparing for your next public speaking opportunity.

5. Don't be afraid to get professional help

Glossophobia is a serious social phobia that can cause problems in work or other settings, even resulting in physical symptoms such as difficulty breathing or nausea. For individuals with severe levels of this social phobia, some level of professional intervention may become necessary.

This phobia is often addressed through cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), sometimes in conjunction with medication. CBT primarily focuses on positive self-talk and confronting your fear in a safe environment with help from a licensed professional. Participation in speaking groups can also provide a safe space to improve your skills and overcome your fears.

Related: 5 Tips to Feel More Confident With Public Speaking

Even if you still feel a little nervous when you need to speak in public, implementing these tips can go a long way in improving your self-confidence and your ability to effectively convey your message. And as you continually project confidence, your internal confidence will grow.

Whether you need to make a pitch to an investor or give a

presentation to board members, improving your public speaking skills will become an asset throughout your career.

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