

Presentation Skills Center

308 Park Library

Communication Apprehension (aka Speech Anxiety)

Experiencing some sort of speech anxiety is common. Common causes of speech anxiety include:

Worrisome thoughts:	Fearful thoughts of negative evaluation and failure and the feeling that you won't be able to meet expectations
Performance orientation:	Assuming that the audience expects your speech/presentation to be perfectly written and delivered
Perceived lack of skills:	The feeling that you possess inadequate speaking skills or that you lack sufficient knowledge on your topic.
Involuntary bodily responses:	Physical "out of control" reactions (e.g. trembling hands, sweating, rapid heartbeat, wavering voice, shortness of breath) can increase our already anxious feelings about the presentation.
Situational elements of the occasion:	Fear of the unknown of the occasion, of being the center of attention and audience characteristics (e.g. size, formality).

To reduce anxiety, during the weeks leading up to your presentation:

Prepare:	Work on your speech well in advance and support your ideas with ample research.
Seek interpersonal support:	Engage with a social group of friends, family, or classmates with whom you can talk about your anxiety and share positive affirmations.
Seek skills training:	Enroll in a Public Speaking class, work with the Presentation Skills Center, or read articles or handouts to enhance your speech preparation and delivery skills.
Think positive thoughts:	Replace fears of a potential failed presentation with images of successful communication to counter perpetuating a negative self-concept.
Exercise:	Following an exercise routine helps your body deal with stressful situations and assists with providing peace of mind during anxious times. Get plenty of rest before you speak.

The day before/day of your presentation:

Practice:	Practice your presentation start to finish in a similar setting to the event and re-view your performance via video or a friend's observation to ensure it is ready for performance.
Take deep abdominal breaths:	Take 3-4 deep breathes and help your mind and body relax.
Mental rehearsal:	Imagine yourself giving a successful presentation from start to finish.
Think positive thoughts:	Replace fears of a potential failed presentation with images of successful communication to counter perpetuating a negative self-concept.
Conceal anxiety:	Rest your manuscript on a lectern or hold notecards with both hands to hide shaky hands; use more air and speak with a slightly elevated volume to conceal a shaky or cracking voice.