

BOOK BONUS 4

Action Steps for Alleviating Presentation Anxiety



The ability to deliver a presentation with confidence is an important skill to have, yet standing up in front of an audience is something that many people feel anxious about. Anxiety is what we feel when we are worried, tense or afraid about things that either could happen or will happen in the future. Since much of the anxiety surrounding presenting is future-oriented, overcoming presentation anxiety will involve taking specific action steps at several stages preceding your presentation.

The Weeks Leading Up to Your Presentation...

Tackling anxiety surrounding an upcoming presentation will start with taking steps in the weeks leading up to the presentation. There are many things you can do to get yourself prepared for the big day and alleviate some of your fears in the process.

- Make a schedule for preparing / break down the tasks that need to be done so that they are more manageable. For instance, this could involve researching your topic, writing out a script, preparing handouts or power point slides etc.
- Find ways to get excited about your topic. Excitement is a major antidote to the fear surrounding your presentation.
- Use visual aids (graphs, PowerPoint, or a handout) as a way to keep eyes off of you, particularly if you are nervous about being the centre of attention.
- Have a look at the venue and room in advance – test any IT equipment in advance.

- Arrange for a few friends to attend the presentation if it would make you feel more comfortable to have familiar faces in the audience.
- When you find yourself worrying about the presentation, remember that it's not happening today.

The Day Before Your Presentation...

It's natural to be consumed by thoughts of your impending presentation as the big day draws nearer. The eve of a presentation can be particularly challenging for people, so give the following steps a try.

- Prepare up to a certain point and then take the rest of the evening off.
- Spend time selecting an outfit that makes you feel your best.
- Do something physical (like going to the gym, jogging or a brisk walk) to get any nervous energy out of your system.
- See a film to occupy your mind and distract you – a comedy or inspirational documentary would be ideal.
- Keep reminding yourself that the presentation is not happening right now – whenever you find yourself worrying, try and replace the worry with an image of yourself feeling comfortable and confident as you present.

Immediately Before Your Presentation...

On the morning of your presentation, it will be important to spend some time preparing yourself physically and mentally for the day ahead. The action steps below will help keep you calm and centred.

- Have a nourishing breakfast and avoid stimulants.
- Get to the venue early, leaving yourself plenty of time for unexpected delays.
- Find a quiet space before / focus on your breathing and do some grounding exercises.
- Listen to inspiring, upbeat music.
- Spend a few minutes shaking nervous energy out of you and stretching.
- Keep taking slow, deep breaths to counter any fight or flight symptoms you may experience.

During Your Presentation...

The action steps you take during your presentation will involve tapping into your excitement for your topic, paying attention to your posture, breathing and consciously slowing down. There are also tips and tricks you can draw upon to break the ice and develop more of a connection to your audience.

- Recall your excitement for the topic before you begin.
- Stand tall and pay attention to your posture throughout the presentation.
- Keep a bottle of water nearby.
- Connect to your audience (try starting with a question as a way to connect with the audience and feel more at ease).
- Hold an object (pen or PowerPoint clicker) to keep your hands busy.
- Find ways to slow down – take pauses for emphasis / ask rhetorical questions / sip water.
- Consider playing a brief YouTube clip to give yourself a break from speaking.
- Take deep breaths throughout to slow down your heart rate.

After Your Presentation...

Because negative experiences can breed further anxiety, it is important to continue taking specific steps even after your presentation.

- Challenge yourself to reflect on all of the things that went well.
- Write down a list to build positive momentum.
- Ask yourself in what ways this experience was positive for you. What do you think you did particularly well?
- Remind yourself that presenting is a skill that can be improved over time. If you find yourself being self-critical, reframe the criticism by writing down anything you've learned from the experience and what changes you might make during your next presentation.
- Celebrate the fact that you successfully presented by treating yourself.
- To further build confidence for future presentations, consider enrolling in your local chapter of [Toastmasters International](#).