

Introduction

Picture this. It is five minutes before a big speech in front of all of your peers. You start sweating profusely and your hands start shaking. A million thoughts are running through your head. “What if I forget the words?” “What if I lose my place?.” Or even; “Did I practice enough?”

This scenario is one that the majority of speakers experience, no matter how long they have been participating in public speaking. In fact, according to a study performed by the National Journal of Mental health in 2017, speaking anxiety affects almost 73% of the population.

As an individual who has experienced intense speaking anxiety in the past, I am very excited to dive deep into this issue in today’s podcast and give you some tips on how to manage your speaking anxiety, and make public speaking an overall less painful process.

Body

Hi everyone my name is Gracie Kirkland and on today’s podcast, we have an extra special guest; my mom, Terri Kirkland.

Hello there!

In this podcast today, we will be discussing strategies for managing speaking anxiety, how to put these strategies into action, and some tips that one should develop in order to become a successful speaker or communicator.

So Terri; have you ever experienced speaking anxiety?

Sure I have! I remember I had to take a public speaking class in college that was a requirement for most students, so it was usually a really large class. Speaking in front of really big crowds was really intimidating for me. After our speeches, we would give feedback to each other, which made it a little uncomfortable too!

Are there any strategies that you used to combat these anxieties?

Well, I practiced a ton!! Practicing in front of friends or my roommate was also really helpful for me. And then, when actually presenting in class I would try to be one of the

first to present. For me, this helped because it allowed less time for my nervousness to ramp up and get the better of me

I completely get that. Nervousness and anxiety are aspects of speech giving that happen to everyone. Feeling nervous is inevitable, but how a speaker handles this nervousness is what sets them apart.

#Music break#

So, what are some things that we can do to channel this nervous energy in a positive manner?

Well being nervous isn't always necessarily a bad thing. You can actually kind of use it to your advantage. Nervousness and fear cause adrenaline to be released into your body, giving your speech energy and liveliness. When giving a speech, relax and let the adrenaline work in your favor.

But how can a speaker prevent their anxiety from affecting their speech in negative ways and not allow the audience that they are nervous?

The first step to making yourself more comfortable speaking in front of an audience is to practice. An extremely effective way to practice is to record yourself. This is my favorite way to practice because it is a pretty good indicator of how you will actually perform when actually giving the speech. I can see if I have any distracting movement such as swaying or gesturing and I can also see if I'm rushing in my speech.

Positive visualization is also a helpful strategy....for example, picture yourself succeeding in different public speaking situations.

That's true! Many people have a conditioned negative mindset when it comes to public speaking. The process of cognitive restructuring allows us to change our outlook on this, and as a result, decrease our anxieties.

#Music Break#

If I record myself and see that I have distracting mannerisms in my speech, how do I get rid of these?

When it comes to getting rid of distracting mannerisms or vocal fillers, practice is extremely important. Start small; realistically you will not be able to get rid of all of your distracting mannerisms/ vocal fillers at once. So, With each practice have a different goal in mind. If your goal is to reduce a certain vocal filler such as “um” or “like,” focus solely on that during your practice. You can even set yourself a limit for how many times you can use that verbal filler, and with each practice, try and make that number smaller.

Writing down cues on your notecards or outline can be extremely helpful as well. These cues can say things such as “look up at your audience, smile, or even, don’t say “like or “um.”

This is where skills training can become extremely helpfu! This is the process where as you learn and strengthen your skills, such as making eye contact, speech organization, and avoidance of vocal fillers, the act of public speaking will become a much less intimidating process!

And remember, speeches don’t need to be completely memorized!

That is correct! Speeches should be presented from a keyword outline, meaning that it should consist of only key words and phrases to keep your speech on track.

If you forget parts of your speech, simply pause, look down at your notes, and continue with your speech.

Never call attention to any mistakes you might make in your speech or any problems that arise. Remember, most audience members will not know if you mess up or are nervous!

#Music break#

So now that we have gone over ways to use nerves to our advantage during a speech and how to decrease speaking anxiety as a whole, let’s put it into action:

If you had a speech in a week, how would you go about preparing for it to best decrease speaking anxiety?

I would practice in front of my friend and I would record myself. I would also practice with notecards that have key words on them and I would try and fix any vocal fillers or distracting gestures I noticed in the recording.

And what skills that we talked about today would you apply when you were actually performing the speech?

I would try and use my nervousness to my advantage instead of letting it derail my speech. If I mess up or lose my place during the speech, I will pause and look at my notecards instead of stopping my speech or using vocal fillers to compensate.

Thank you all for listening to today's podcast. I hope you learned some tips and tricks that you will put into practice in the future that will help you to overall decrease your speaking anxiety, and feel more confident when giving a speech!