



TIP SHEET FOR ORAL PRESENTATION JITTERS

Do you start to feel anxious just at the thought of giving an oral presentation? Do you choose courses simply because they do not contain presentation assessment tasks?

Take comfort in the knowledge that you are not alone. Most students get anxious when they have to talk in front of others.

Here are a few tips that will help to reduce your anxiety to a more manageable level.

Before the presentation

- Give yourself plenty of time to prepare the content of your talk and make sure you know it well. The more confident you are with your material the less anxiety you will experience.
- Practise giving your presentation in front of supportive family and friends. The more practice, the more confidence. The more confidence, the less anxiety.
- Use your imagination. A few times per day for at least a week prior to the presentation, imagine that you are presenting your talk in a clear and confident manner. Visualise the interest that the other students show towards the content of your talk.

On the day of the presentation

- Accept your anxious thoughts and feelings. The more you worry about these feelings the worse they will become. Your heart may be thumping madly but it's good to know that it will stay in your chest. Anxiety may not feel good but it certainly is energising!
- Affirmations can help, such as 'I'll be OK', 'I can do it'.
- You can reduce the intensity of your anxiety by slowing down your breathing. Count slowly to five as you breathe in and then count to five as you exhale.
- Relax your muscles as much as possible.
- Arrive slightly early for your talk. Rather than focussing on your anxiety, distract yourself by chatting with fellow students before the class begins.
- Remind yourself that your main task is to deliver information, not to give a wonderful performance.

During your presentation

- Accept your anxious feelings however try not to focus on them. Concentrate on the content of the material you are presenting.
- Increase the normal volume of your voice.
- Make an effort to speak more slowly (anxiety can cause you to rush your words). This will also assist you to slow down your breathing.
- Maintain an upright sitting or standing posture (don't slouch). You can relax a bit by occasionally moving your body rather than standing or sitting too rigidly.
- Make eye contact with your fellow students. You'll realise that the vast majority are supportive. Remember that they too have been, or will be in the same situation.

- Give yourself permission to fumble your words, lose your place, 'go blank' and experience moments of confusion. These are all quite normal and they won't destroy your presentation.
- Avoid post mortems after your presentation as it is very easy to only focus on negatives and then blow them out of proportion. You can end up feeling a total failure irrespective of how well you may have performed. Why create such misery for yourself?

Every time you do a presentation you will be building your confidence, making it just a little bit easier next time.

Remember that everyone (even lecturers!) gets nervous before giving a presentation or talk, it is a natural reaction. This nervousness will not prevent you from getting through the presentation, it may even help you to stay alert and get through the task! Remember to tell yourself 'even though it may not feel like it, this presentation is only a snapshot in time of my entire life; I accept that I may not enjoy public speaking and I will get through this!'

Imagine your sense of achievement when you have confronted your fears and completed your presentation! Who knows where this may lead..... a career as a university lecturer, a news reader or even a politician?

Where can I get help from others?

If you would like more help make an appointment with the University Counselling Service – it is free and confidential.

Phone 4921 5801 or drop in (we are in the Hunter Building foyer near the Griffith Duncan Theatre) or email counselling@newcastle.edu.au.

What other resources are available?

Other ideas about developing, delivering and preparing your presentation are available on the Learning support site on the University webpage, click on resources and select "Giving great presentations".

Podcasts

https://academicskills.anu.edu.au/sites/default/files/skillsoup_tip_09.mp3

Websites

<http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/learning/oral>

http://sydney.edu.au/stuserv/documents/learning_centre/communicative.pdf

Books:

Brown, M. (2001). *Making presentations happen*. Allen & Unwin.

Smale, L. (1999). *How to take the panic out of public speaking*. Wrightbooks.

Westerfield, J. (2002). *I have to give a presentation, now what?!*. Silver Lining Books.

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