



Manitoba 4-H Council Inc.

General Communication Tips

Just Relax

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Sometimes the most difficult part of public speaking and visual presentations is finding the courage to get up and perform in front of an audience. Your nervousness can be controlled. These methods of calming your nerves include positive self-talk, dressing for confidence, focusing, meditation, relaxing and breathing. Yes breathing, it really helps! Give each of these a try and find out which ones work best for you.

Positive Self Talk

“Whether you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re probably right”
– Henry Ford

Self-talk is what you say to yourself inside your head. It can make a big difference to how and what you do. Your thoughts are directly connected with the functions of your body. When you think anxious, upsetting, failing thoughts, your breathing will become rapid and shallow. You are not able to think rationally or clearly. And you are not able to express yourself in a rational and clear manner. Thus, if your inner dialect is saying that you are calm, confident and are going to have a great presentation, you will be calm, confident and have a great presentation. Use your speech writing skills of motivating and convincing on yourself, and any nervousness you may have felt will be long gone.

Dressing for Confidence

By wearing comfortable clothing, that you feel confident in and comfortable shoes you will gain poise and courage.

Focusing

Focusing is a technique you can use in many scary situations. It is a method of taking your mind away from your immediate fears.

Select a small personal object that you feel a connection with. It might be a piece of jewelry or a small rock you pick up on a trip.

Focus all your attention on the object as you inhale and exhale slowly and deeply for one or two minutes.

While doing this exercise, try not to let any thoughts or feelings enter your mind. If they do, just return your attention back to the object.

At the end of this exercise you will feel more peaceful and calmer. Any tension or nervousness that you were feeling upon starting the exercise will be diminished.



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Meditation

Meditation works much like focusing, but without the aid of an object.

- Sit or lie in a comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and breathe deeply. Let your breathing be slow and relaxed.
- Focus all your attention on your breathing. Notice the feeling of the air in your nostrils, on the back of your throat. Note the movement of your chest and abdomen. Become aware of how it feels to exhale.
- Block out all other thoughts, feelings and sensations. If your attention wanders, take a deep breath and bring it back to the sensation of breathing.
- Allow only peaceful, calming and positive thoughts to enter your mind. Leave all the events and distraction of the day outside of your meditation.
- Continue this exercise until you feel relaxed.

Relaxing

Often physical and mental relaxation can be accomplished through the same stretches that you do before gym class. Stretch your arms and legs in the same way as you would before you play sports but allow yourself to hold the stretch for 5 slow in and out breaths. You will notice that by relaxing your muscles, you can relax your mind.

Here is a method called “Quick relaxation”

- Sit or lie comfortably.
- Tighten the muscles in your toes by spreading them as much as you can. Hold for 5 deep breaths. Relax and enjoy the sensation of release from tension. Flex the muscles in your feet for 5 breaths. Then relax.
- Slowly move through the body – lower legs, upper legs, abdominal, back, arms, hands, fingers, neck, face – Contracting and relaxing all the muscles as you go.
- Then tighten all the muscles of the body at once; hold for 5 breaths and release.
- Allow your bottom or your back to “sink” into the floor. Lay with your eyes closed; relax for 5 breaths before getting up.



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Breathing

It always helps to breathe. Being conscious of your breathing, you can calm your nerves in a matter of minutes. If you can control your breathing, you will have an easier time controlling your thoughts.

- Sit back in your seat with good posture, keep your spine long.
- Make your hands comfortable with your palms resting on your knees or your hands folded in your lap.
- Close your eyes.
- Take a deep breath in through your nose. Pause for a second and then exhale through your nose or your mouth.

Repeat.

The relaxation techniques of positive self-talk, dressing for confidence, focusing, meditation, relaxing and breathing will help you feel calm, comfortable and confident in the public speaking environment. Try them, find which ones work best for you, and then use them whenever you feel nervous and anxious. This can increase your poise and expression and help you to enjoy public speaking even more!