

# Tame your fears of public speaking: expert tips



Speaking in public can be a nerve-wracking experience for many people.

It doesn't matter if it's a presentation in front of a few people or a major speech in a cavernous auditorium, the anxiety level is the same, writes Anita Bruzzese, author of *45 Things You Do That Drive Your Boss Crazy ... and How to Avoid Them*.

But you can learn to manage your nerves, says Darlene Price, a speaking coach and author of *Well Said! Presentations and Conversations That Get Results*.

"Fear is what drives nervousness," Price says.

"For extroverts, fear of embarrassing themselves in front of others is what drives their nervousness while for introverts it's that fear of not being perfect."

Price says that those who get nervous should look for strategies that better help them manage their fears.

Among her suggestions for conquering your fears:

- **Visualize it.** Close your eyes and see the space where you'll be speaking. See yourself walking out with a big smile on your face.

Visualize yourself saying the first few lines of the speech and looking out into the audience. "The brain doesn't know the difference between vividly imagined events or real events," she says.

"Get all your senses involved. Hear yourself speaking. See the people."

- **List 10 "I am" statements.** This is an exercise that Price finds effective for clients.

She has each one come up with a list of affirming statements, such as "I am confident," and "I am in touch with my audience." Price videotapes the person saying the statements over and over until he or she says them with confidence. She then plays back the exercise so clients can see themselves saying it with confidence.

- **Smile and breathe.** "While this sounds easy, it's not," Price says. "But if you're smiling, it releases

chemicals from the brain that calm the body.

“It also shows your audience you’re relaxed. It’s a much more powerful technique than it sounds.” Breathing deeply can relax you as it floods the brain with oxygen.

- **Memorize your opening.** It’s a good idea to memorize and rehearse the first minutes of a presentation so you’re not focused on slides or notes, your head is up and your eyes connect with your audience.
- **Toss something out to the audience.** “You want something that puts the attention on them and at the same time, relieves you a little bit while they’re thinking about themselves,” Price says.

— Adapted from “[How to tame your fears of public speaking](#),” Anita Bruzzese, *USA Today*.