

Embrace the Spotlight

5 Quick and Easy Ways to Reduce Fear of Public Speaking

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Whether you enjoy and look forward to delivering a presentation, or fear and avoid giving talks in front of others, you can quickly and easily become a more successful communicator. Like it or not, most of us have to speak in public from time to time. It's often a mandatory aspect of our jobs. And while you may not like taking the microphone, you can get better at it.

Fear of public speaking remains the most widespread and persistent global phobia, equally prevalent across continents, socioeconomic strata, education levels, genders, race, and age. It stems from what's known in psychology circles as FNE, fear of negative evaluation.



When you step on stage or on camera to speak, and your talk fails to spark the audience's interest, FNE creeps in and your distaste for public speaking feels justified. But FNE is conquered when your talk delivers tangible value and meaning for your listeners. Their response and investment become obvious, fear begins to fade, and your perspectives on public speaking start to improve.

Here are five ways to defeat the fear of negative evaluation with your next public presentation.

1 | Trust Your Audience

If you are afraid to speak in public, it's likely your viewers are as well. And if you're the one on stage today, they may be the ones on stage tomorrow. Your viewers understand and appreciate what you're up against and how hard it is to deliver a good talk because they feel those exact same

nerves and insecurities themselves. That shared phobia creates commonality between you and your audience, which means you have something in common. It also means they're rooting for you to succeed just as they hope you'll be rooting for them when it's their turn in the spotlight. The next time you deliver a talk, remind yourself that they're just happy it's you up there instead of them.

2 | Be As Valuable To Your Viewer As Possible

Value creates confidence for you and for your listeners. The moment your audience hears value in your presentation, you put them at ease, earn their trust, and grab their attention. They lean in, and as you feel their engagement your confidence grows. The trick is to talk about them and their success more than about yourself and your success. Put and keep the focus on your audience. The more they sense your commitment to their interests, the more your credibility and likability increase. Maintain that value focus throughout your session, constantly proving you're in the spotlight for their benefit and glory rather than your own. The more value you demonstrate, the less fear you'll feel.

3 | Speak From the Heart, Not the Script

Scripts are great for getting ideas out of your head, onto the screen, and properly organized. But they also limit your ability to connect with passion and speak with motivation. The more memorized and scripted you allow yourself to be, the more restricted your performance, and the more FNE you'll experience as you present. Learn your content just enough to know what you want to say and how you want to say it, then set that script aside. Speak from the heart and from experience. You'll never remember every word, but you don't have to. Even more, you shouldn't. Because you know your topic, you know your job, and you know your slides will prompt you from beginning to end. Tell the story in your own words without the restrictions of a script and you'll be more relaxed, confident, and connected in your delivery. The fear will start to disappear.

4 | Story Over Statistics

Most talks consist entirely of information pulled from the company website, copied from Legal-approved documentation, and regurgitated from corporate performance or data reports. These are all sure ways to bore or undervalue an audience, ratcheting up your fear of public speaking. A number without a story or personal perspective to give that number meaning is quickly ignored or

forgotten. The audience loses interest, and you pay the price with jitters and nerves. Add yourself and your human experience into your content to make those jitters vanish. When you decrease the data and increase the story you relate with your audience as friends and colleagues rather than analysts and wallets. Your time with them becomes fun rather than stressful, and their trust and respect for you grow. Share your story along with your statistic and FNE fades away.

5 | Accept Your Leadership Role

You have to know why you're speaking in order to speak successfully, and what your audience wants and needs to hear in order for them to embrace what you plan to say. You were the one trusted to deliver this information behalf of your team – if you're not sure why, ask. Find out who recommended you, the reasons you were chosen, then accept and embrace them. And share those reasons with your audience. They want to know they're in the best possible hands, so offer them your view on why you are the perfect person to tell this story, and how excited you are to be the one making a positive difference in their lives. You'll put your audience and yourself at ease, earn their attention, and lower your public speaking fears.

Bottom Line

Try one of these fear-reducing strategies in your next public talk. If it doesn't work the first time, try it again. Once it does work, try adding another. Then another. Eventually these methods will become second nature and your fear of public speaking will abate. One day you may even embrace the spotlight as a relaxed, confident, successful communicator.

These perspectives and approaches may feel foreign, but give them a try. The sooner you do, the sooner you'll begin to add the trust, value, passion, story, and leadership that control or even conquer your FNE.

Learn more at www.SteveMulter.com and www.CorporateStorytelling.com

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