

## Tips for Handling Nervousness

Every presenter has dealt with being nervous (even television personalities like Melissa Joan Hart, and movie stars such as Kenneth Branagh admit to being nervous). The following are eight techniques that can help:

- **Be Prepared.** In coping with anxiety one of the best ways to deal with it is being prepared. The more you practice and are prepared for your audience the more confidence you will feel and the less nervousness you will show.
- **Know First Three Minutes.** Plan and memorize what you will be saying for the first three minutes of your presentation. Include what's important to your audience to gain their attention! This will increase your confidence and reduce stress.
- **Use Bulleted Notes.** As a quick reminder write three or four bulleted points (in bold colors) on a 3 X 5 or 4 X 6 card that you can refer to. Don't write out your presentation in longhand. If you do, you most certainly will end up reading it – and if you lose your place it will come across to the audience that you aren't sure what your talking about. That will increase your anxiety! Bulleted points on cards keep you on track and reduce your anxiety.
- **Arrive Early.** Everyone knows about Murphy's Law and that if something is going to go missing, broken or not work it will take place just when you are starting your presentation. To avoid that happening arrive early and make sure everything is set up and working; that materials (e.g. handouts) are there, and that you get a feel for the room and how you'll make your presentation. Give yourself an hour to do this and then when you see that everything is ready to go you'll feel more relaxed and comfortable.
- **Meet Audience Beforehand.** When you arrive early it gives you an opportunity to meet audience members. By getting to know them and finding out what's important to them does two things for you: first, provides additional, firsthand information you might be able to use in your presentation. Second, establishing rapport with audience members provides you with friendly faces during your presentation.
- **Be Energized.** Be motivated – or like Norman Vincent Peale suggested – act enthusiastic and you'll be enthusiastic! Moving around will also help reduce your anxiety (obviously circumstances will tell you how much!).
- **Breathe!** When you get nervous you have a tendency to take shorter breaths; which means less oxygen is getting to your brain which can result in your feeling dizzy – or worse passing out! So make sure you are aware of your breathing!
- **Consider Top Ten List.** If you look at lists of Americans' 10 Worst Fears speaking in front of a group often ranks number one. It can help you be less nervous to know you're doing something most people won't do!

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