

OVERCOMING LAST MINUTE PRESENTATION FEAR

On the docket to give a speech and dreading the thought with a hot, fiery passion? (Or a cold, clammy sweat?!) Adopt the wisdom of actors, top performers, and athletes, and get in the habit of doing a regular warm up before you get up in front of the room. You feel silly doing warm ups, you say? Then I must ask you, what do you think would happen if Michael Jordan went out on the court without warming up? Unthinkable, no? Then why should you be any different? Find a private space --- your office, your home before you leave in the morning, or an uninhabited hallway in your presenting venue --- and "just do it!" You'll be so glad you did!

Warm up your body first:

1. Jog vigorously in place for at least one full minute. BREATHE!
2. Raise your arms up overhead while you inhale through your nose, keeping your belly free.
3. Hold your breath for a count of 5.
4. Let the breath out on a count of 10 while vocalizing an audible "ah, from a high pitch down the musical scale to a low pitch.
5. Take another deep breath. Tense up your entire body - face, fists, gut --- and hold for 10 seconds.
6. Now release the breath as you let your body hang forward from the waist like a limp rag doll. Roll up your spine to a standing position.

Feel more relaxed now?

For your voice:

1. Drink lots of water. Avoid too much caffeine, alcohol, or other dehydrating liquids the day of your presentation. Believe it or not, that includes some herbal teas (check the ingredients and avoid teas with mint, menthol, or citrus), and lemon juice. These act as astringents, and destroy the healthy phlegm necessary for smooth vocal production. Water's your best bet.
2. Pretend like you're chewing a giant wad of bubble gum --- stretch your jaw, lips, tongue. Add a vocal sound --- any old sound --- don't make it pretty, you're just warming up!
3. Speak the following to get your diction clear and crisp. Over-exaggerate to warm up your mouth and the vocal articulators. They'll help you overcome mumbling --- one big reason people tune out speakers! Bee bee bee...
Baa baa baa...
Mee maa mee maa...
Tee Too Tee Too...
Raa Yay raa yay...
Make up your own!!

Now for your mind and soul:

1. Love your audience and love your message. Get the focus off of you, onto them, and watch the fear melt.
2. Most performance anxiety falls away once you make genuine eye contact with your audience. This makes it feel more like a dialogue, or an intimate conversation, and less like the spotlight's all on you.

3. Be super prepared. Practice your presentation until you're almost sick of it! Then do it again. Speakers who seem spontaneous and free are able to seem so because they have solid practice supporting them. Because they're not worried the content or basics of the presentation, they're free to interact spontaneously with their audience.