

Tips for Public Speaking



Some research surveys have shown that a majority of people report that the fear public speaking is greater than their fear of death. But you can overcome “the jitters” with some simple tips!

Organizing your Story

It is a good idea to start with a written outline, then expand it with concise statements. If you stick to the “script”, it will minimize the tendency to go off on tangents. No one could ever tell their WHOLE story, so keep it focused on your goal:

What are the main points of the story?

Why is this story important?

How will you change the story based on audience and time allowed?

Sharing personal experiences

Only use personal stories that highlight the important points you are trying to make (e.g. understanding mental illness, the recovery journey).

Decide ahead of time how much or how little you wish to disclose and understand the potential consequences (positive and negative).

If you include the personal experiences of others, be sure to protect their anonymity.

Practice, practice, practice!

- First try it alone (or perhaps in front of your dog - they are notoriously non-judgmental).
- Speak at a normal (or even slightly slower) pace when you're speaking publicly.
- Then try the speech in front of a mirror.
- Present to a small group of supportive peers. (Have someone else time you)
- Revise as needed and practice some more.

Giving and taking feedback

- Self critique and critique from others should remain constructive but not superficial. It doesn't help to be derogatory or humiliating but it also doesn't help to say “That was great!” when it wasn't. Be specific and offer alternatives.
- Be willing to take constructive feedback, not only on content but also on style and mannerisms. For example, there can be many nervous expressions that a speaker might not be aware of such as putting their hands in their pockets, nodding their head excessively, or using filler words like um and ah too often.