

## **Path2Personal Development Series**

### **Overcoming the Fear of Public Speaking**

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#### **Six Fears of Public Speaking:**

##### **'What if I forget?'**

Think of what you are speaking about as a 'story' not as a speech or presentation. Start by having a conversation in your head and then write down your story. Practice having a conversation about your topic - no one knows what you were planning to say, so if you forget something, no one will know the difference.

##### **'What if I mess up?'**

Don't dwell on the possibility of messing up - strive for perfection, but realize that you can't be perfect every time. If you mess up, most people won't realize it anyway; or own it and move on. Making a mistake is not a negative; it can make you more human and your audience will identify with that.

##### **'What if I am boring?'**

Practice out loud, in front of a mirror - you will be able to see what you look like and what gestures you use. Use stuffed animals as your audience; practice making eye contact. If you see that you are losing them, briefly mention what you will be talking about next; this should get them back on track knowing what's coming up. Example: 'After we talk about ... we will be able to learn why...' Don't focus on one person and make them feel uncomfortable; make eye contact with many in the audience.

##### **'What should I wear?'**

We always want to look our best, but choose comfort over style. If you are aware of what you are wearing, change it. Don't wear something that is uncomfortable and that you will be fidgeting with during your 'story telling.'

### **'What if they don't understand me?'**

Slow down - this is the most important thing to do. Don't use fillers such as 'like' and 'umm' - allow more space between words. Record yourself speaking and play it back to hear what you sound like.

### **'What about a Power Point presentation?'**

Practice telling your story without the Power Point. Don't use it until you know your story inside and out - and don't use it as a crutch. Pass out hand-outs at the end; this allows your audience to concentrate on what you are saying and they won't be distracted by the papers.

### **Additional Advice:**

The more you say YES to public speaking opportunities, the more comfortable you will get. It's all about practice. You must decide to get better and the best way to get better is to speak in public more often.

Engage in normal conversation with your audience before the presentation. You will feel more comfortable speaking to people you are already acquainted with.

Practice, practice, practice. This is very important. Plan out your story in your mind, write it down, create an outline, transfer to note cards and pretty soon, the notecards will just become a security blanket. You always know more about your subject than your audience - knowing your story in conversation format will make you feel much more comfortable.