

## Speaking With Presence And Impact Part 2 : Dealing With Nerves & Being Present With Your Audience

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A change of mindset:

Nerves are normal – they are an indication that our nervous system works; and even the most experienced of presenters still feel, and deal with nerves surrounding important public speaking engagements. It is in reframing the way we think about these nerves, that we begin to control and even befriend them.

The first thing to know is that you *can* change your mindset: ask yourself: is this *perceived* threat of speaking in public (causing these physiological symptoms) *really* that life-threatening? ...Guaranteed the answer is “no”: so you can acknowledge to yourself that your natural “fight or flight” system is trying to watch out for your safety; but then firmly choose a more appropriate response.

### Channel your inner Hermione Granger:

Like Hermione in the famous Harry Potter books, do your homework!

Hermione was always in the library when she was uncertain about a situation; because she understood that the better prepared you are the more you can face anything.

Proper preparation eliminates 80% of all nerves

- Think about your audience and what they need to hear.
- Structure your speech, so you know it flows.
- Understand how long it is (and what you can cut out).
- Practice with any technology you are planning to use.
- Ensure you revise the materials and subject matter (rather than trying to learn a script), then even if things go south on the day; you will be confident enough in the key points of what you want to say, in order to deliver it without becoming obsessed by trying to remember your “lines”.

If something doesn't to plan on the day: “keep calm and carry on!”

Remember: no one else knows what you were going to say and often when things go wrong it's a much bigger deal to you, than to the people you are speaking to, who sometimes wouldn't have even noticed if you didn't draw attention to the fact!

### **Channel your inner Elsa (from Frozen):**

Just “let it go”!

If you were unfairly criticized in the past... or more likely: If you had a negative past-experience, where you gave yourself a hard time over your performance; then the important thing to learn is to *let go* of that negative past-experience.

It's worth noting, that often, people simply stop doing something (i.e. get over a phobia / change a habit) when they reach the point that they are so fed up of doing it or feeling like that, that they just decide to stop, and break the pattern.

You always have a choice: you can choose to listen to that inner-critic in your head & feel bad; or you can replace that negative voice in your head with positive self-talk that inspires empowering emotions.

Do not allow yourself to fall victim of replaying on repeat, the video in your head of what went wrong last time. It is extremely liberating to understand that it is entirely possible to decide to think differently about bad memories: Past mistakes are a learning opportunity. Learn from them, Let Them Go, and Move On!

### **Channel your inner Wonder Woman:**

In the recent Wonder Woman film, Antiope (Wonder Woman's aunt and general of the Amazons), knew what she was talking about when she said:

“You are stronger than you believe. You have greater powers than you know.”

Don't allow yourself to be hampered by “I can't”: Believe you can; and you will be able to “fake it till you make it”. Act like you belong in the room, at that table, in front of that camera: other people will take their cue from you.

Movement has a huge impact on the way we feel: Power Posing before the speech (standing in an open posture like Wonder Woman, hands on hips; feet hip-width apart) can help convince your subconscious mind that you are confident.

This idea comes from Amy Cuddy, a social psychologist, who did a lot of research looking at how our physiology affects our psychology. The idea isn't about trying to project power over others during your speech, but rather using your physiology to alter your psychology *before* the event to boost your self-confidence, increase testosterone, and decrease cortisol levels.

### **Channel your inner Jacqueline Jossa:**

Be brave: feel the fear and do it anyway!

Jossa, the Eastenders actress crowned queen of the jungle 2019, was terrified of spiders, yet somehow managed to find the ability to survive and succeed all the bush tucker trials that, inevitably, involved several of our 8-legged friends!

After being interviewed when she came out of the jungle, Jossa said that when she wanted to give up and cry: *“get me outta here”*, she thought about her kids, and it gave her the strength to carry on.

In your big public speaking moment: If you want to yell *“get me outta here”*, then revisit the reason why you’re giving the speech: reconnect with your goal, your higher purpose: and let that motivate you to keep going:

“Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal”. (Thomas Jefferson)

### **Channel your inner Yoda:**

Like this Jedi master: centre yourself, find your zen, breathe!

A lot of anxiety can be fixed in the moment by remembering to pause, breathe from your diaphragm, and find your calm centre: Stand or sit up straight, with feet flat on the floor – really feel the support of the floor underneath your feet, and that will ground you.

Deep breathes have the power to relax you and help divert your consciousness away from all the thoughts racing in your head. Learning to breathe properly from your stomach, is essential to control shallow breathing created from fight or flight. Check out Dr Andrew Weil MD on YouTube, who shares a trusted breathing technique for you to practice.

Before the day of your talk: you can channel Yoda’s ability to visualize the future, by vividly imagining success.

Sports psychologists talk about how they train the athletes’ mind before the race in order for them to rehearse winning – they run their best race in their mind’s eye first! It is possible to trick your brain into believing you have already performed well, just by running a movie in your imagination, of you succeeding at your planned public speaking event.

Remember - focus on what can go right; rather than on what might go wrong. You will have done the work in your initial prep stage about considering what might go wrong, and then dealing with it (e.g. learning how to use the tech), so once that is done; forget about it and focus your attention on the live event going well

## Channel your inner Alice in Wonderland:

Alice faced a lot of daunting characters in Lewis Carroll's book; but she approaches every new experience and every new person with an open mind:

Like Alice - Adopt a curious mindset, Stay alert!

Focus, and be present in the moment.

Alice really listens to what the other characters say: she often will repeat a sentence they have used and spend a moment trying to understand the meaning before moving on. How can we learn from this?:

- Listen... to what you are saying as you are delivering your speech: this will help minimize the filler words and eliminate the waffle.
- Listen ...to your audience's body language and reactions: staying outwardly focused allows you to be flexible and responsive to the audience and to think about the message you are delivering and engage with the participants in a conversational way .

To be more relaxed and conversational; practice the mindset that the audience are your friends.

"Picture yourself in a living room having a chat with your friends. You would be relaxed and comfortable talking to them, the same applies when public speaking" (Richard Branson)

Do you have friends in the audience? Identify where they are sitting and prompt them beforehand to smile at you when you look at them: don't forget to smile back! Focus on the happy, engaged, smiley people in the audience. Do not become obsessed over the 1% who do not look happy!

It also helps to remember that it's not all about you...

Consider that the people frowning, yawning, looking at their phones, might be wrestling with something privately at that moment: 99% of the time, it's nothing to do with you. Instead focus on what you can control. Always remember: the audience probably didn't even notice that you are nervous: you never look as nervous as you think you do.

If you suffer with nerves, it's likely that your brain just continues to tread that well-worn path out of habit, and you tell yourself that you dislike public speaking, so giving yourself a negative affirmation instead of consciously changing that habit.

Changing habits takes time, willpower and practice:

Employ one new strategy at a time and use every opportunity to speak in public to practice these new habits and change your mindset.