



Who Says You're a Poor Public Speaker?

Presentation skills – the very term suggests that we're not *naturally* capable of communicating our ideas well. So, are some of us born lacking these skills? Or do they become blocked by traumatic childhood spelling bees and dictatorial supervisors? Whatever the case might be for you, I hope you'll find the following not-so-typical tips helpful for bringing out your best when presenting.

What's already appealing about your style?

Share one of your stories with a close friend or family member who supports you, champions you. Make it a topic you feel strongly about – a vacation punctuated with absurd situations, the day your first child was born, an 'aha' moment. Now ask them what's most engaging about your speaking style and graciously accept the compliment; drink it in. Maybe you didn't know you have a disarming smile, an aura of authenticity, a reassuring, persuasive voice. Let that be an effortless source of power and confidence for your next presentation.

Disinfect your verbal virus

Who among us doesn't fill in spaces and silence with 'um's 'so...'s and 'er's? In a presentation, the impact of such verbal tics on an attentive audience can be exaggerated. Simply becoming aware of potentially distracting verbal filler is a great first step in eliminating it. Record your next lengthy telephone conversation and listen to it later to identify patterns.

I had a colleague who annoyingly prefaced nearly everything she said with the phrase 'to be honest...'. Whenever she didn't say it, I noticed and then wondered, is she now being dishonest?

Let go of the past

Human beings are terrific at building evidence to support our worst beliefs about ourselves. Most of us can all look back on our childhoods, or early work experiences, and recall times when we 'choked' in a performance setting – shaky voice, pounding heart or sweaty palms, inability to find your words, or an out of body experience that leaves you with no memory of speaking at all. The self-judgments we make about these troubling experiences stay stuck in the body until we actively release them.

To uncover what negative programs you might be subconsciously 'running', sit down with an intention to free write – no stopping, no censoring yourself – on everything you remember about yourself in performance situations. As you read back over it, note if your recall includes anything positive, or is entirely focused on what went wrong. Actively go back over each memory and acknowledge yourself for all that you did right. How might things have been different if you knew then what you know now? Better yet, self-apply some of the modern adaptations of ancient energy meridian techniques such as EFT, TAT and BSFF, to dissolve the painful aspects of those memories, and instill new, empowering beliefs.

Daydream to create the ideal outcome

It's easy to make a list of 101 things that could go wrong at your next presentation, but what would it look like to succeed? In the 1960's classic *Psycho-Cybernetics*, Maxwell Maltz described the brain as a cybernetic "servo-mechanism", designed to find a path to whatever self-images it is programmed with. Since then, studies have shown that actively picturing yourself being, doing or having what you want tricks the brain into believing that it has already happened. So, get really clear on exactly what you want to see, hear and feel when you next present – the more details the better. Repeat that visualization three times a day to fine-tune your positive intentions, build new neural pathways, and replace nervous anxiety with confidence and enthusiasm!