

Lesson Note – Overcoming Nervousness

Introduction

Getting nervous before a presentation is very common. We get nervous because we fear that we will make a mistake, and we think people will think badly of us if we make a mistake.

Here are four ways to overcome nervousness:

1. Focus on serving the audience
2. Use visualization beforehand
3. Do a power-pose for 2 minutes
4. Do breathing exercises

1: Focus on Serving the Audience

Why are you nervous? Because you are worried about YOUR image. If you forget about yourself, who's nervous? No one is nervous. How can you forget about yourself? Focus DEEPLY on your audience. Use all your energy to make sure that your time on stage in front of them is worth their time and attention. Your presentation can either leave an impact on them or be a waste of their time. Put all your energy to make sure it leaves a positive impact. When your energy is focused helping others rather than protecting your own image, you will naturally feel less nervous.

2: Use Visualization Beforehand

Visualization is the process of imagining a future event in great detail before it actually happens. Top athletes like David Beckham use it to prepare for competitions. Top CEOs like Steve Jobs use it to prepare for big presentations.

Scientific studies show that athletes who visualized themselves practicing basketball for 20 minutes showed almost as much improvement as athletes who actually practiced basketball for 20 minutes.

How can you use visualization to overcome nervousness? One week before your presentation, spend 5-10 minutes each day visualizing yourself giving the presentation with great detail. Imagine your body tall and straight, your voice confident and comfortable, your face smiling and having a good time. The key is to actually feel those emotions. Then, when you go to present on the real presentation day, you'll naturally behave as you did in your visualization. If it didn't go as you visualized, it is probably because you didn't feel those positive emotions in your visualization.

3: Do a Power Pose for 2 Minutes

A power pose is basically standing straight with your shoulders out and arms on the side of your hips, like Wonder Woman.



Harvard professor Amy Cuddy did research that showed when people do a power pose for two minutes, two things happen to their body:

1. Increased testosterone, which increases confidence
2. Decreased cortisol, which reduces stress

So before going into a stressful situation like a presentation or an interview, go somewhere private (like a bathroom) and do the Wonder Woman pose for 2 minutes.

4: Do Breathing Exercises

When we get nervous, we tend to start breathing in a shallow and fast way. Before a presentation, we can calm down by consciously focusing on breathing in a slow and deep way.

A very special breathing technique was developed by Wim Hof, who is a world-record setting athlete and also philosopher. The **Wim Hof breathing method** is basically taking 30 deep and fast breaths, then holding your breath for 1.5 minutes. You do this 4 times. During that time, you give your body positive stress. Afterwards, you should feel awake, focused, and calm.

Scientific studies have showed many benefits of the Wim Hof breathing method, including

- Reduced stress
- Increased energy
- Increased concentration
- Improved willpower
- Improved mental health
- Stronger immune system

The best part is that the technique is free for everyone and can be done easily at the comfort of your own home. You should watch the video and try it yourself before class.

Check Your Understanding Questions:

1. Why does focusing on the audience reduce nervousness?
2. How can you use visualization to reduce nervousness?
3. How does doing a power-pose reduce nervousness?
4. What is the Wim Hof breathing technique?
5. Which method do you want to try for your next presentation?