

Self help matters.

Helping you to find your solutions

Public Speaking Anxiety

Public Speaking

Anxiety

Pretty much every course at University will feature some 'speaking in public'.

A wavering voice, blotchy red face, sweaty palms – these pictures of ourselves increase our fears of public speaking. How we think we will look or come across matters. Sure, we want to speak with conviction and authority, yet this form of “performance anxiety” or negative self-critical thinking often threatens to paralyse us.

Our fears are usually over-exaggerated – a misdirected or misunderstood perception of the reality.

Top Tips

Practise. You'll feel more confident if you practise your delivery. Know your key messages and your points of emphasis.

Breathing. Before you begin, take a few deep breaths and regulate your breathing. Breathe in through your nose, hold for a few moments, then exhale through your mouth.

Stage nerves. These are potentially good! Even the greatest theatre performers can become very nervous before going on stage but they are able to channel this energy in a positive direction.

Interact. Connect with your audience with leading questions or hypothetical statements. Ask a question to break the ice. If nervous, you could always plant a question with a trusted colleague in the audience, preparing them in advance.

Anecdotes. Introduce some stories to illustrate your points. It's often easier to reflect on an anecdote that may or may not be "on script", as it brings in a human dimension.

Perfectionism. Avoid trying to be perfect. No one's perfect. Appreciate how you can improve from feedback and experience.

Sandwich. Explain what you're going to talk about, say it, then conclude with a summary of what you've just said.

Presentation aids. Avoid reading long chunks of material; keep written material to a minimum so you're using it as a cue to "explain" rather than "lecture". Writing headings or cues on index cards can help. If appropriate, use music, audio, podcasts, drawings, images, photos, drawings etc.

Communicate. If you shift your perception from "talking to" to "communicating with", then it becomes a shared, communal and consensual relationship with the audience.

Three points. The audience is only going to remember three main points. Nail them.

What if. Public speaking anxiety is often associated with negative thinking: "What if I fluff my lines", "What if I stall", "What if I don't make sense?" *But* what if you *don't* fluff your lines, what if you *don't* stall, and what if you *do* make sense?! Develop a positive visual image of yourself delivering a great presentation.

Stand firm. Avoid dancing from foot to foot. Keep yourself steady. By all means move about, but when this accentuates what you're saying rather than distracting from it.

Pause. Add in moments of quiet. People hear silences. A pause can create a dramatic effect.

Scan. Your audience will feel connected when you look at them. Scan the room to involve them.

Panic attacks. Nine times out of 10 it won't happen, but it's the fear or threat that triggers the uncertainty.

Smile. Feel the positive vibes, embrace this opportunity, go out and give it your best shot, enjoy the experience and smile. It might be your best-ever speech!

Resources

MOODZONE

Boost your mood, cope with stress, anxiety or depression or simply improve your overall emotional wellbeing.



Opening Hours: Online

www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/low-mood-stress-anxiety.aspx

LIVING LIFE TO THE FULL

Want to know how to feel happier, more confident & worry less right now? Would you like to learn new ways of dealing with what life throws at you?



Opening Hours: Online

www.livinglifetothefull.com

THE MIX

Provides free, confidential support for young people under 25 via online, social and mobile.



Opening Hours: Online

www.themix.org.uk

MINDFULNESS FOR STUDENTS

Helping you to stay calm, focused & better manage the pressures of student life.



Opening Hours: Online

<http://mindfulnessforstudents.co.uk/>

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN SERVICES & SUPPORT

A range of support resources for everyone at University



www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/support

BIG WHITE WALL

Online community of people who are anxious, feeling low or not coping who support and help by sharing what's troubling them. This is a free, online, moderated service and confidential.



Opening Hours: Online

www.bigwhitewall.com

If you are experiencing a crisis - please contact any of the following

- **Emergency Services** - telephone 999 (Free) 24 hours
- **Samaritans** - telephone 116 123 (Free) 24 hours
- **Breathing Space** - telephone 0800 83 8587 (Free) Mon-Thu 6pm-2am, Fri-Sun 6pm-6am
- **Nightline** - telephone 01224 272829 (local rate) term-time only, between 20.00-08.00
- **NHS 24** - telephone 111 (Free) 24 hours

For other support resources, please see - www.abdn.ac.uk/counselling