Breathe! Tips on Giving an Outstanding Presentation

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Objectives

- Learn about common mistakes when giving a presentation
- Present practical tips to avoid those things from happening
- Discuss a few tips about the style and substance of giving an outstanding presentation
What is the worst thing that could happen when I give this talk?
The Worst Things That Can Happen

- You forgot what you were going to say, and you forgot your notes about what you were going to say.
- You cannot get your PowerPoint to work.
- Your worst enemy is in the group and you are afraid that he/she will make fun of you.
- You are afraid that the audience will be critical of your work.
- You lose your voice.
The Worst Things That Can Happen

- You ask if there are any questions and no one answers.
- You look for validation from the group and all you see is puzzlement.
- Members of the group roll their eyes when you make what you think is an important point.
- Someone challenges you, and you feel yourself begin to cry.
- You trip and fall.
How can I keep the worst things from happening?
Be Prepared
Be Prepared

- Select your topic and purpose.
- Research your audience and venue. (National meeting of specialists? Poster presentation with one individual or small groups?)
- Construct your
  - **Introduction**: Try to make an emotional connection with your audience, whether it’s a large group or one person (e.g., tell a story, show a dramatic image, ask why they’re there).
  - **Body**: Focus on three important points that logically lead to an outcome (e.g., Background, Methods, Results that lead to a Conclusion).
  - **Closing**: Return to your opening by summarizing; leave the audience with something to remember.
Be Prepared

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early and if possible, check out the venue the day before.
- Bring your PPT with you.
- Bring your own remote slide advance.
- Create an outline:
  - Use large font for readability, and
  - Put your outline and/or notes on a large note card or folded sheet of paper.
- When you arrive, check to make sure that the technology works (PPT, internet access). If possible, ask the IT person to run the check with you and to respond quickly if there are problems... so get contact information!
Be Prepared

- Chat with the audience as they arrive.
- Check room layout:
  - Clock? Bring your own watch.
  - Seating? Will they stand in a group? Are there chairs? If not, inquire about setting up chairs.
  - Laser pointer? Computer?
  - Who is in your group? Can you refer to them by name?
Be Prepared

- Speak loud enough for the entire group to hear, and check with them at the beginning to make sure that they can.
- Don’t apologize for yourself (e.g., Sorry that I’m late…Sorry, but I just threw this together….Sorry if you can’t read the slides).
- Monitor and stop verbal ticks (e.g., umm, uh) and distracting movements (e.g., toe tapping, coin rattling, hand wringing).
Be Prepared

- Be prepared for difficult questions:
  - Pause with a drink of water.
  - “I am glad that you asked that question, however I am not prepared to answer it right now…..”
  - “I appreciate your point, but we need to move on…..”
  - Redirect the question: “I am interested in hearing what you think about that topic” or “Let’s ask other members of the group what they think.”
Get Comfortable
Get Comfortable

- Breathe! Perform deep-breathing exercises beforehand to help you relax.
- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Move with purpose, usually at transition points.
- Use hand gestures to channel adrenalin.
- If you are nervous, don’t use the laser pointer.
- Maintain eye contact as much as possible.
Get Comfortable

- Take your job seriously, but don’t take yourself too seriously. In other words, relax.

- If you make a mistake, forgive yourself. No one is perfect.

- Use humor, but only if appropriate and if you can really pull it off.
Be Interesting
Be Interesting

- In other words, don’t be boring.

- Engage your audience:
  - Listen to their point of view.
  - Interact with audience members by asking questions and validating their answers ("Yes, I understand what you are saying...").
Be Committed
Be Committed

- Understand that you will need to give at least one talk in your career, so commit to being the best public speaker that you can be.

- Understand that you will be questioned and challenged, but
  - Don’t take it personally,
  - It could be an opportunity for you to do better next time.
If you are shy, emulate others.
Who is your role model for public speaking? Why?
A Few Tips About Posters and PPTs

- For PPT: Use only a few points (phrases, sentences).
- For both: Check spelling, grammar and punctuation for correctness.
- Try not to read the poster or PPT unless you are critically nervous.
- Give copies of the presentation in handout form before the presentation so audience members can take notes.
Please do not over-animate.
Remember that if you falter, you can do it again, and each time it gets better and better (and easier and easier).
Take-Home Message

- Practice
- Practice
- Practice
- And practice again
One-Minute Presentation

- What is your name?
- Why are you here?
- What did you learn today that will help you the most?
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- Sarah Kessler: “How to Improve Your Presentation Skills”
  [http://www.inc.com/guides/how-to-improve-your-presentation-skills.html](http://www.inc.com/guides/how-to-improve-your-presentation-skills.html)