

Stage Fright

Stage fright, as the words imply, is the fear of appearing on a stage. It also refers to the fear of making a presentation in front of a group of people. Stage fright appears in a variety of situations. It can happen regardless of whether the person has memorized the material, rehearsed the presentation, or presented it without practice and preparation. It is not likely that a person will "get over" stage fright. However, with better understanding, stage fright is controllable.

The first step in lessening stage fright is to realize how common it is. Almost everyone has some degree of stage fright. It bothers some people much less than others, but it is still there. Extreme stage fright can cause physical reactions to occur. The stomach can become upset. We refer to this as "having butterflies in the stomach." Extra perspiration can occur. Some presenters tremble. Also, the mouth can become either very dry or very wet.

REMEMBER: ALMOST EVERYONE HAS STAGE FRIGHT. IF YOU HAVE IT, KEEP IN MIND THAT IT IS QUITE COMMON. YOU ARE NOT UNUSUAL OR DIFFERENT FOR HAVING IT.

As strange as it may seem, stage fright is actually beneficial. It is the body's way of giving us extra alertness and energy to face the task ahead. When humans face danger or a challenge, the body produces extra adrenaline. Adrenaline is a natural chemical that increases the energy needed to meet the challenge. Adrenaline stimulates circulation and relaxes muscles. It often takes a person time to relax after a time of danger, a public performance, or a sporting event. This is because the adrenaline produced to meet the challenge is still in the body's system.

REMEMBER: STAGE FRIGHT IS NATURE'S WAY OF HELPING FACE A CHALLENGE.

Presenters can do some things to help lessen the degree of stage fright they have. One thing that can help is to gain experience performing in front of a group. Often, with more experience, the stage fright lessens. Good preparation is another way of helping lessen the effects of stage fright. The more a speaker rehearses the presentation, the more confident and comfortable he or she will become. The better rehearsed the presentation is, the less chance that something can go wrong. Since there is less chance of a problem, there is less about which the speaker has to worry.

Another thing that helps lessen stage fright is to realize that it is natural, and not to worry about being nervous. It also helps for the speaker to know that in most situations the audience wants the speaker to be successful. The audience is not the enemy of the speaker: they are partners in communication.

When possible, physically relax before the presentation. Take a few deep breaths before going on. If you are out of the view of the audience, yawn a few times. Stretching and shaking the hands and arms loosely can also help with relaxation. The more you are able to relax, the less stage fright you will experience.

REMEMBER: THINGS CAN BE DONE TO LESSEN STAGE FRIGHT.

The effects of stage fright are always more noticeable to the speaker than the audience. Many times, the audience does not even notice the speaker's nervousness.