

## CONQUERING STAGE FEAR TO BUILD A BETTER CAREER

Stuttering at interviews, forgetting opening lines of speech, even knees jerking fast, are common syndromes of stage fear. It can affect a person whenever he or she needs to deliver a performance or presentation under the gaze of others. And that means, every point of social interaction that determines your career can be crippled by stage fear. The good news is that with a little bit of practice and concentration, almost every person can overcome stage fear and become a more confident and better speaker. The first step to conquering stage fear is recognizing it and learning to live with it. If you recognize the nervous syndrome, the sudden rush of nervous energy, and learn to manage it, then instead of crippling you, it can give you a high that makes public speaking truly enjoyable. The best speakers never try to dampen the nervous rush of stage fear but learn to ride it and use the power to their own advantage. Reliving this moment and experiencing the emotional and nervous roller coaster is what creates the charm for many who love giving live performances. It is like adrenaline rush. With inexperienced people, anger and adrenaline rush can lock up their muscles and jaws, but veteran fighters use anger and adrenaline rush to their advantage and become more fluid in their movements. Stage fear is no different. If you can learn to carry off a single performance well, even with your knees shaking and your teeth chattering, I guarantee that you will love your next performance. And the more you give live performances the better you are going to become. With enough practice, the time will come when you will actually seek that nervous rush for the energy it gives you and the way it makes you feel alive. To get rid of stage fear and turn it into stage charm, first concentrate and focus on your audience and what your audience wants to see or hear, rather than focusing on how you are feeling and what will happen if you foul up. Stage fear usually overcomes those who are uncertain about the needs of the audience and lack proper homework. The steps to face a live performance are simple enough:

1. Be sure about the nature of your audience and their needs
2. Prepare proper material and learn it by heart
3. Add a structure to your presentation
4. Practice and prepare
5. Use breathing techniques and focus on the audience to calm yourself. A useful breathing technique is to count the seconds it takes you to breathe, hold the breath for the same number of seconds and exhale taking twice the time you took to inhale.

If you know the needs of your audience, have done your homework, and practiced deliveries in front of your mirror, the fumbling for words will reduce. Once you can get the speech to take off, then solid homework will sustain you to the end. Stage fear overwhelms those who are uncertain about demands of the audience and consequences of failure. One of my friends who lost his job kept failing interviews until one day he concluded that the consequence of the interview could not be worse than his present. He was jobless before the interview, and the maximum that can happen is that he will remain jobless after. There could be no radical change in situation except for the better. When he lost fear of the consequences, he lost his fear of facing the interview board. He got his job.

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