

Fernley Republican Women  
Leadership – February 17, 2015  
By Anita Trone

People give many reasons for choosing not to take on a leadership position, but the most common reason that they fear of public speaking. So tonight, we are going to talk about public speaking. Most of the information I am going to talk about this evening came from the brochure, *“Top 7 Tips to Overcome the Fear of Public Speaking and Engage Your Audience,”* by Derek Stanzma. If you would like to read the entire document, I have posted it on our website under the “Leadership” tab, which is under the “About Us” tab.

Fear of public speaking is a gigantic fear that plagues many people. Some even fear it more than they fear death! It doesn't have to be that way. This is a condition we can all overcome, and no one has to live with this fear throughout his (or her) life.”

Most of us have a fear of public speaking. I can say that from my own experience, the more often you do it, the less scary it is. For me, and I think for most people, the fear never goes completely away. I have heard that many actors and actress have stage fright – sometimes severe stage fright, but they have learned to channel that energy into their performance. These seven tips will help you to do the same.

1. (Tip) Understand the problem: Make a list of the things about talking in public that scare you. I will make a mistake and I might forget everything that I practiced to say.
  - The audience doesn't like me.
  - The audience will get bored.
  - People will not understand what I am saying.
  - I am not skilled enough to deliver something impressive.
  
2. (Tip) Mind over matter: We all have preconceived notions about what we can do and what we can't. You have to understand that negative thoughts in your mind are only messing up your reality. What you believe often becomes real, because those beliefs have been imprinted in your mind, causing you to act according to them. So when you hear negative thoughts in your head like: “You can't do it,” or “You're bad at speaking,” or “Don't even try it!”
  - Talk to those voices! Tell them, “thank you for sharing” and then shove them into a dusty room, lock the room and throw away the key
  - Then, tell yourself that you can succeed. Believe in yourself and what you can do. Your thoughts WILL shape your actions.
  - Imagine yourself delivering a great speech or presentation.
  
3. (Tip) Practice, practice and practice. Preparation is important in every speech. The more comfortable you are with the material you are presenting, the easier it will be. Some of you will remember that in 2010, we had Sharron Angle as a guest speaker. We knew there would be a large crowd, so we moved the venue to the gym. As it turned out, there were about 200 in the audience and the media was in the back with cameras and note pads. Ordinarily, I just follow the agenda with a few extra notes, but for that event, I wrote out a complete script and practiced it many times. When it came time to run that meeting, I rarely looked at the script. I surprised myself, because I was not nervous at all. That was a breakthrough for me. I realized that if I could get through that

meeting, I could get through almost anything. Some of the other leaders in our group had breakthroughs that night, too. Does anyone want to share their story?

4. (Tip) Choose a topic that interests you. We are all here because we are interested in Republican politics, but there are a wide range of topics that fall into that category. So, choose a topic that you can speak about with great knowledge. For instance, if you plan to talk about a particular bill being addressed by the legislature, make sure you know that bill inside and out. Make sure you know the pro and con arguments no matter which side you are on. The more you know about the topic, the more comfortable you will be talking about it.
5. (Tip) Learn relaxation techniques – There are various techniques and methods that you can do to make yourself calmer and more relaxed.
  - Exercise before the event.
  - Avoid caffeine.
  - Get fresh air.
  - Deep breathing is a quick fix that releases tension in the body. Count to four when inhaling through your nose. Hold your breath for a count of two and then exhale through your mouth counting to eight. It should take you twice as long to exhale as inhale. Let's try it. Ready – inhale, 2, 3 4, hold 2, exhale, slowly, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Feel calmer?
6. (Tip) Visit the venue and be familiar with it. I have to admit that when suddenly this room is not available and we have to move to another part of the school, it unnerves me and I have to work through it. Being comfortable with your venue makes you calmer. Also, remember to get organized. You'll be less nervous if your presentation is well organized.
7. (Tip) Be the most confident person on the day of your speech. Follow these key strategies to avoid getting anxious when speaking in public.
  - Start strong – Instead of starting with a soft voice, start with a loud and clear voice.
  - Smile – Be friendly and smile! Tell a joke or funny. A couple of weeks ago, Karla Kent, a member of our club and my employer, won the “Business Leader of the Year” award at the Fallon Chamber of Commerce dinner. The Fallon Chamber is run by a woman named Natalie. That is important to the story. When Karla accepted her award, she said, “I'd like to thank the academy – oh - I mean, I'd like to thank the Chamber and Natalie.” Everyone chuckled and she was much more relaxed as she finished her acceptance speech. Jokes should be short, though. Don't take 20 minutes to get to the punch line.
  - Look at nobody – If you find the crowd overwhelming, don't look at anybody. Talk as though you are speaking to everyone.
  - Don't worry about mistakes – If you make a mistake, don't dwell on it. Just go on. It happens to everybody, even the best speakers, so stop worrying about mistakes.
  - Toastmasters have excellent training and there is a Fernley Toastmasters organization. If you feel you need additional help, I urge to take that training.

You can control your fear. Just be motivated, keep persevering and never, ever give up. Public speaking is a skill that you can master.

Questions?