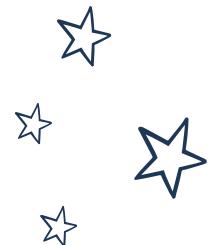


Speaking at meetings is critically important, but many people don't feel comfortable doing it.

The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health reports that fear of public speaking affects 73% of the U.S. population and the figure is probably similar around the world. To some people, participating in a meeting is a very uncomfortable thing to do. They might prefer to let the loudest people do all the talking and make all the decisions.



IF YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO IS NOT COMFORTABLE SPEAKING IN PUBLIC, HERE ARE SOME TIPS

1. Remind yourself

Knowing how to speak at meetings is not something we are born with. It's just like every other skill – the more you do it, the better you get. And remember, 73% of the people sitting around you are also nervous!

2. Prepare

It's perfectly acceptable to write notes for yourself. This will help you organize your thoughts and help remind you what you wanted to say.

3. Pause

Breathe, and Smile: Don't rush your words. Relax your body. SMILE – it will project confidence and make your audience more receptive to you and your ideas.

4. Listen actively

When you practice active listening by nodding your head and really paying attention, they will be more likely to listen to you when it's your turn to speak.

5. Claim your space

If others interrupt you, let them talk for a bit; then address them by their name, and pause for just a second, remembering to breath and smile. When you resume, state that you would like to return to what you were saying. Consider these examples:

- Thanks Paco." [Breathe. Smile.] "But returning to my earlier thought ..."
- "Good point Anna." Pause. Breath. Smile. "Though to continue with my previous comments ..."

IF YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO IS COMFORTABLE SPEAKING IN PUBLIC, HERE ARE SOME TIPS

1. It's your responsibility...

...to allow other meeting participants the chance to express themselves.

2. Ask more questions

3. Actively listen...

...by paying attention to what others are saying. But also, make sure to validate and acknowledge what others have said.

Pro Tips

Great meetings...

...are about generosity, support and warmth. So any opportunity you have to create those qualities – even in the tough moments of an interruption – can help make the meeting a success.

Practice positivity...

...even if you strongly disagree with someone. When you respond to something you disagree with, begin by saying something good about what you just heard. That will make the other person feel that you listened to them. You can still go on to disagree with them.