

Dealing with nerves

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Giving an important speech needn't be a white-knuckle ride. Here's how to overcome those big-occasion nerves.

A little while ago I was called on to make an impromptu speech at an important event. I realised everybody would be expecting a clever, witty speech, but as it been sprung on me last minute, I hadn't a clue what I was going to talk about.

I felt myself getting hot, my heart was racing and my cheeks were getting red. Worst of all, my mind went utterly blank.

This panicky feeling is something many people experience when they have to give an important speech or presentation. One thing I can say confidently is that it is very common – the nerveless individual is very rare - and most of us feel some degree of nervous anticipation.

But what can you do when the symptoms are overwhelming, causing your brain to scramble just when you need to be at your sharpest?

Being thoroughly well-prepared is a must. But nerves can strike even when you have dotted every 'i' and crossed every 't'. What do you do?

Firstly you need to understand that nerves are a physical response to a rush of adrenaline. Your heart races, your breathing becomes rapid and shallow, some people sweat or flush, while others go white or shake.

If you understand what is happening in your body, you can take back control. These are tried and tested techniques that have worked for others, and they will work for you:


- **Control your breathing.** Concentrate and breathe in to the count of four, hold for

two and out to the count of four. This will slow your racing metabolism.

- **Check your pulse as you breathe.** You will feel your heart rate coming down as you focus, restoring your sense of calm and control.
- **Imagine yourself somewhere happy.** It could be your favourite beach, or taking a walk with the children. This will take you somewhere that made you smile, away from the source of stress, so hold that picture in your mind's eye.
- **Step outside and get some air.** If you can do this, the change of scene will help calm you down and restore your focus.
- **Bach's Rescue Remedy** – take a few drops in a glass of water. Sipping this will also help a dry mouth.

Begin your calming routine ten minutes or so before you are due on. As you control your breathing, you will feel the nasty effects of nerves disappearing. Your heart will slow, you will feel back in touch with your surroundings and, most importantly, your mind will clear. One of my clients was convinced something terrible would happen; he would drop his notes, fall over or forget his words. Now he imagines when he held his first child...

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To talk about your specific requirements, please contact **Claire Gillingwater** on +44 (0) 7900 056 819 or +44 (0) 208 347 6754 or via Claire@dunnell-gillingwater.com

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AND ASSOCIATES

www.dunnell-gillingwater.com