

DAILY REPORT

LAW INC.

You can short-circuit this self-centered self-talk if you remember that your speech is not about you or for you. It's about delivering a message to help your listeners.



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Self help from self affirmations

REFOCUSING YOUR ATTENTION on helping others instead of what they think of you will help your pitch

THERE ARE MANY GOOD tactics for beating the fear of public speaking.

Extensive rehearsal helps the most.

Physical exertion can reduce the adrenaline-driven jitters. Comedian Billy Crystal once said that he did push-ups to deal with stage fright.

Schmoozing with the audience before the presentation helps you relax.

I've used all of these. But here's a simple approach that most people overlook: Before your speech, say to yourself, "I'm going to go out there and help these people today."

I use that affirmation all the time when I'm nervous before a speech. It helps me a lot. My clients have found it helpful as well.

Public speaking anxiety is selfish

The affirmation works by requiring a shift in attitude. When you say, "I'm going to help these people," you interrupt the selfish self-talk that accompanies the fear of public speaking.

When you're waiting for your turn to speak and you're nervous, your internal dialogue is usually self-centered.

"What is everyone going to think of me?"

"Am I going to screw up?"

"Will I look stupid?"

Short-circuit the self-centered talk

You can short-circuit this self-centered self-talk if you remember that your speech is not about you or for you. It's about delivering a message to help your listeners. As the speaker, you're there to help your listeners increase revenues, lower costs, reduce risk or otherwise gain enlightenment.

The listeners are depending on you. And if you're selfishly focused on your nerves, you can't be there to help them.

Let's say that you're speaking to a group of German executives. They have come to hear you detail the key legal issues they should consider as they do business in the United States. If you're focused on issues like "What will they think of me?" you can't be fully there to help them.

Or let's say that you're giving a new business presentation for a chance to defend a class action lawsuit. If you believe in your skills, then you believe that you can truly help this company out of a troublesome situation. But if you're so wrapped up in your anxiety, then you won't be able to help them because your pitch will stink.

Don't ruin it for your audience

A writer once told me about how she was once waiting nervously in the backstage "green room" at CNN. She was going to be interviewed live about her new book. About 10 minutes before the interview, the news anchor checked in on the writer.

"How are you doing?" said the anchor.

"I'm a nervous wreck," said the writer.

After pausing a moment, the anchor got a determined look in her eye and said, "I need you get over that anxiety. I don't want you to ruin my show."

That was the anchor's harsh way of saying "Stop focusing on yourself and focus on the audience."

It was like a Cher slapping the love-struck Nicholas Cage in the movie "Moonstruck" and saying, "Snap out of it." Sometimes we need a little tough love.

You can administer tough love to yourself (albeit in a more diplomatic way) by saying "I'm going to do everything I can to help these people today." ☺