

# THE ACCIDENTAL PUBLIC SPEAKER

## Moving Through the Anxiety to Deliver an Impactful Speech



**FUTURES**  
WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Numerous surveys indicate that nearly three out of four people generally fear public speaking, which often competes with death as our greatest fear.

## Here are 10 reasons why people dread public speaking\*:

- 1 Self-consciousness in front of large groups.** The larger the group, the greater the fear.
  - 2 Fear of appearing nervous.** People can't be credible if they're nervous, right? Wrong.
  - 3 You may be concerned that others are judging you.** Yep, they are all, in fact, staring at you. Now what?
  - 4 Past failures.** All skills require practice.
  - 5 Poor or insufficient preparation.** Research shows that preparation increases confidence across the board.
  - 6 Self-absorption.** It's not about you. It's all about the audience.
  - 7 Dissatisfaction with your abilities.** Again, all skills require practice.
  - 8 Discomfort with your own body.** Sorry, but - yes - they're still staring at you.
  - 9 Poor breathing habits.** Breathing can be practiced, too.
  - 10 Comparing yourself to others.** Yet you're who they came to hear.
- AND** **Worry that the audience won't pay attention.** Even the best speakers typically have less than a minute to hook their audience's attention.

\*As described by expert speech coach Gary Genard

# Public Speaking in Gender-Based Violence

These challenges are compounded for people who are called to speak about gender-based violence (GBV).



## SURVIVORS OF GBV

Survivors working in the GBV field risk re-traumatization. Furthermore, high prevalence rates suggest that there is at least one survivor in every audience, thereby necessitating specialized and trauma-informed preparation.

## LIMITED TIME



The GBV field faces increasing demands with diminishing resources, often limiting the time allotted to plan and prepare for engagements.

As fewer funds are available for staffing, GBV program staff are often called and inadequately trained to speak and do presentations outside their job description.

## NO TRAINING

Accidental Public Speakers will never eliminate all of their anxieties. But with intentionality and practice, you can deliver clear, engaging, and impactful presentations while maintaining your nerves and composure.

## Your Presentation Begins Before You Start Speaking

Studies show public speaking is 55% non-verbal, 38% vocal, and 7% words. MIT's Biological Engineering Communication Lab's tips for nonverbal communication track the same tips you'd find for any element of effective public speaking:

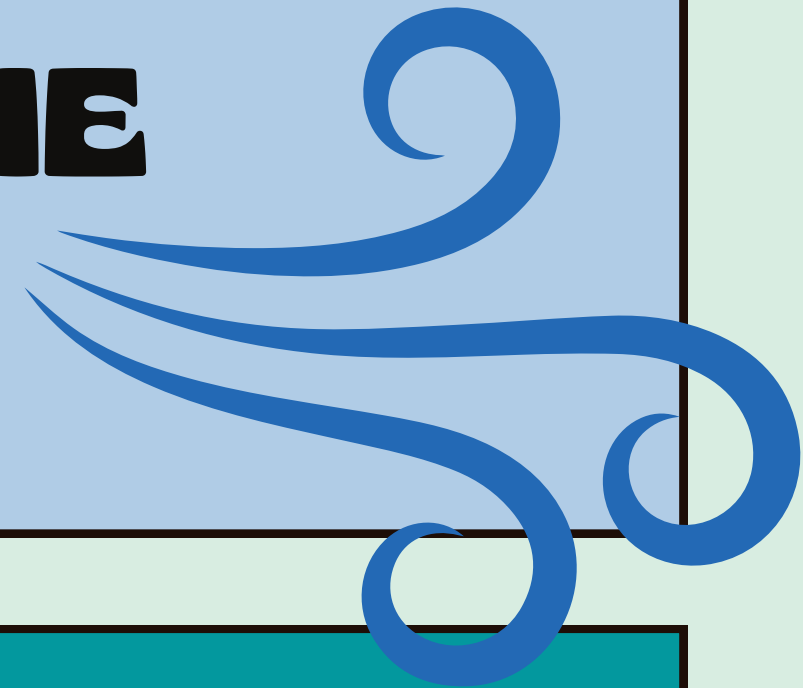
- **Identify your purpose.** Give your audience a reason to see you live either in person or virtually. Otherwise, an emailed slide deck or recording could have easily sufficed. If your purpose is to summarize, don't read a report or slide deck. If you're presenting on your lived experiences or expertise, be confident about what you know without relying too heavily on your notes.
- **Engage your audience.** They're looking at you, so look right back at them. Seize the power of storytelling. Ask your audience questions, even if their responses only require raised hands.
- **Use your body.** Are you a fidgeter? Then use your hands for good! Gesture when comparing two concepts. Point at your slide or show the audience your source material as you're landing an important message. Occasionally, step away from the podium or walk to another area, especially when starting a story or transitioning between points.



# Embrace the Present with Mindfulness

You're prepared. You've arrived at the location or fired up Zoom. The only thing that matters now is... right now.

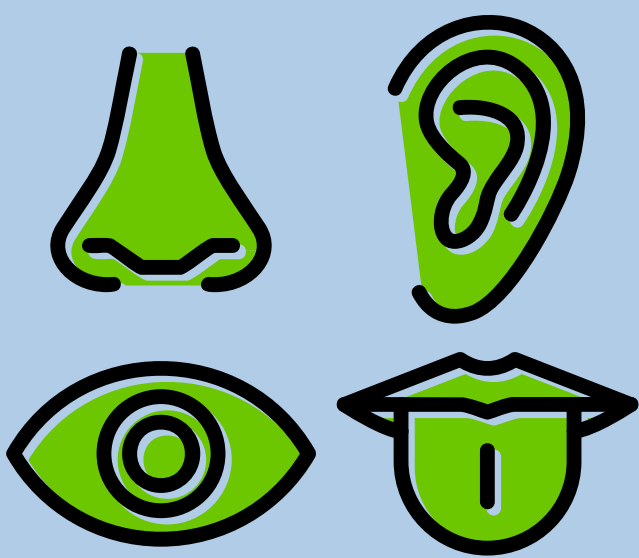
## BREATHE



01

Breathe. There is no official or perfect way to breathe. One way or another, all you have to do is call your attention to your breath and think about inhaling and exhaling.

## Connect with your senses



02

Is your heart beating fast? Are your hands clammy?

Breathe, listen, and feel. What do you smell? What can you hear? Find something to do with your hands. And - when you're ready - take another good look at your audience.

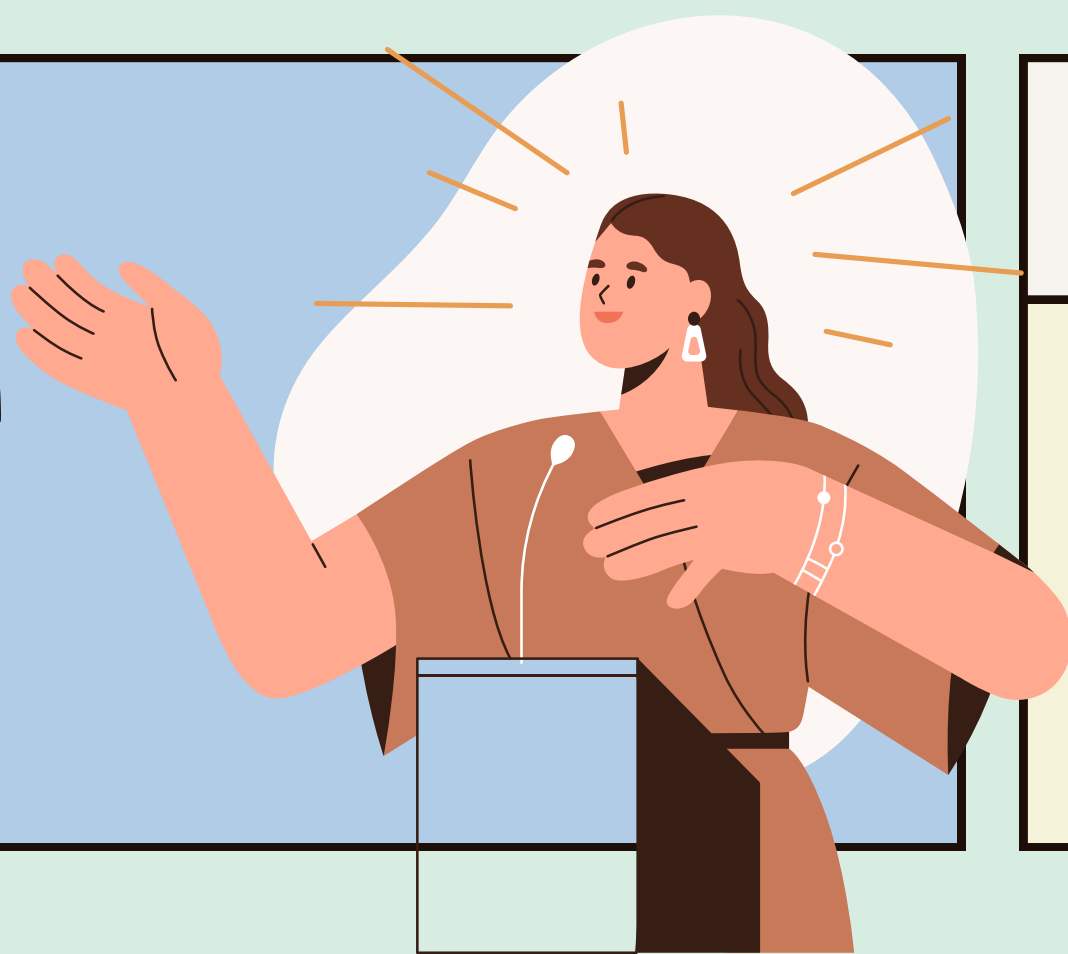
## Make a Choice

03

Think about how great you're doing to do.

There is a reason why you were trusted to speak. No one will know how well or poorly you're doing unless you tell them. Choose to be great!

## Stay in Motion



04

Unlock your knees. Stand while doing a virtual presentation, if able. Step away from the podium. Prepare in advance so you only need to glance at your slides as a reminder.

# Center the Needs of Your Audience

Preparation is about more than accumulating and practicing what you know. Taking time to assess your audience's needs (which sometimes requires insisting on having sufficient time allotted to evaluate needs) and responding to audience feedback is crucial for effective and transformational engagements.



## CONDUCT A NEEDS ASSESSMENT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER

Adult learners bring a lifetime of experiences to every learning event, whether a one-hour webinar or a two-day workshop. Break through their preconceptions by finding out in advance what they need and want to know and fine-tuning your presentation. Conduct a pre-event focus group with a representative sample of attendees. Or—at a minimum—ask specific questions of the people who invited you about your audience's size, backgrounds, knowledge areas, barriers, concerns, etc.

## DON'T BE AFRAID TO CALL AN AUDIBLE

Does your audience look bored? Ask a question or let them have a stretch break! Are you trying to make a complicated point that's clearly not landing? Switch to a quick story or analogy! Have you sufficiently made your points but there is still time left? Let them go early! Are you conducting a multiple-session or multi-day presentation? At the end of a segment, pass out index cards so your audience can provide immediate feedback on what's going well and what can be improved!

Think back to all of the times when you've been in the audience. Think about the speakers you remember and those you've forgotten. Who do you remember? Did they present something that mattered to you? How did they make you feel? Were they both vulnerable and confident at the same time?

**What you have to say matters. You have the power to impact others. And only you know how nervous you really are. So you've got this... one breath at a time.**



[www.futureswithoutviolence.org/ILED](http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/ILED)

