

Don't Worry About Being Suave, Glib, Or Funny.

By George McKenzie

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Don't Worry About Being Suave, Glib, Or Funny.
Just Be Yourself.

A Guide To Coping With Stage Fright

Article by George McKenzie

Suppose you've been trying get on a radio talk show for months, and the producer finally calls back and extends an invitation.

This is a great opportunity! But all of a sudden, you feel like a King Kong-sized gorilla has just super-glued both hairy feet to the back of your neck.

Oh, you know your stuff. That's not the problem.

The problem is stagefright.

Unfortunately, there's no sure cure for halophobia, which is the medical name for stage fright.

However, there are some fairly simple techniques you can use to reduce the stress that comes with it. Even better, once you've learned these techniques, you'll find them helpful whether you're addressing an audience of one, a hundred, a thousand, or a million.

1. Comfort yourself in the knowledge that even veteran speakers get stage fright I emceed a dinner several years ago in which the late Tom Landry, coach of the Dallas Cowboys, gave the keynote address. From my seat next to him at the podium, I could see his palms sweating and his hands trembling slightly as he read from notes he'd written on index cards.

Keep in mind, Tom Landry not only faced had to cope with the likes of Ray Nitschke and Mean Joe Green on Sunday afternoons, but he piloted a bomber World War II. If someone who has done what Tom Landry has done can get stagefright, should any of the rest of us feel ashamed?

2. Understand that some nervousness is actually good
Once you gain a little confidence, the same adrenalin that causes anxiety can energize you with enthusiasm--an essential element of almost any successful interview.
3. Visualize success. See yourself feeling comfortable and confident during your interview. Imagine everyone congratulating you and praising your performance afterward. The more positive pictures you send to your subconscious mind, the more relaxed your conscious mind will feel when you're doing it for real.
4. Avoid thinking about bad speaking experiences in the past
The more you remember those negative images, the more likely they are to repeat themselves.
5. Remember some important basics. Arrive early, and avoid cold drinks, especially ice water, just before you speak.

And finally--as many times I've I've been on TV (27 years, about 20,000 newscasts, sportscasts or other miscellaneous appearances), I still get nervous whenever someone's interviewing me instead of the other way around.

When that happens, I try to remember what my wife told me a couple of years ago.

"Sweetheart," she said. "Don't worry about going in there and trying to be suave or glib or funny. Just be yourself."

Good advice for anyone. It might not get the monkey completely off your back, but he'll begin to feel a little more like Bonzo than King Kong.

George McKenzie has almost thirty years experience in radio and TV. His work has appeared on ABC, NBC, CBS, ESPN and CNN, and he currently hosts several radio talk shows in San Antonio, Texas.

George is the founder and CEO of The Academy Of Marketing And Advertising,
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