

# Keep Those Butterflies Flying in Formation

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Does this sound familiar? You finally land that all important client meeting. The stakes are high. If you can close the business, you will make a lot of money and save the day. You prepare well in advance and have great slides, but yet when the day arrives, and you get up to speak, suddenly your brain goes dead. You can't talk or think. Your mouth feels frozen shut, and you can hardly breathe. If this has happened to you, you are not alone. It happens to many presenters. By learning how to eliminate nervous energy, you can feel confident and comfortable, even in the most difficult situations.

For starters, it is natural to be nervous when the outcome of a meeting is important or when the pressure is on you. The easiest way to gain composure is to do deep breathing. Unfortunately, when people are anxious, they breathe very shallowly. It takes concentration to breathe from the diaphragm when you are nervous. However, it is worth the effort. Diaphragmatic breathing eliminates the adrenaline that is flowing in the blood stream and allows the muscles to relax. Before arriving at an important meeting, take in a slow, deep breath for a count of five, hold it for a count of two, and release it for a count of five through an open mouth. Repeat this process five or six times. It will make all the difference.

In addition to doing deep breathing, try massaging the muscles in your face, particularly around the cheeks and mouth. Then, play with the expressions on your face. Practice alternating a frown with a look of surprise. You will feel blood flowing to your face and the muscles relaxing.

Once you have warmed up the muscles in your face, it is a great idea to do some shoulder rolls and some head rolls. First, slowly look to the ceiling

and then to the floor. Then, slowly try to bend your head to your right shoulder and then to your left. This will relax the muscles that have tensed in the upper back.

It is always a good idea to get to the appointment early to set up equipment. Because things can go wrong any time technology is involved, do not forget to have hard copies of your slides. Another reason for getting to the meeting early is to get the feel of the room and to pick an advantageous place to sit. In choosing where to sit, think about where people will have the greatest visibility of you and where you can see the greatest number of people. Obviously, reading the audience's body language while presenting will help you to adjust or clarify your remarks.

If you are there early and have set up equipment, when people arrive, you can focus your attention totally on your clients. The relaxed banter with your clients often reveals important information that you can refer to once you are talking.

Your hosts will offer you something to drink. Instead of coffee or juice, take water. Caffeine, carbonated beverages and juices will have a negative effect on your voice. They may cause a nervous voice to sound strident. To maximize your voice, drink as much water as possible before your presentation.

While it is important not to read to your listeners, do not try to memorize your remarks. You will come across as stilted and unreal. Do not use your slides as your notes. These should be aids for your listeners. Anytime you need to look at your notes, feel comfortable doing so. People want you to be accurate. **Impact Communication's Presentation Planner** is a great tool for planning and delivering content since it is based on concepts versus full thoughts. (For more information on our **Presentation Planner**, contact our office at 847.438.4480).

Once you get up to speak, let energy out by smiling, gesturing and looking people in the eye. While it sounds ridiculous to mention these things, people who are anxious have a tendency to hold energy in, making them look uncomfortable and unreal to

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their audience. The more animated you are, the more relaxed you will feel and the more relaxed your audience will become.

Finally, make sure you have the right attitude. Picture that you will be outstanding and that your audience will see you in a very positive light. Picture that your presentation will outshine any presentations made by your competitors. Under no circumstances allow your own negativity to drag you down.

Being nervous for an important meeting or event is normal. However, you can use that nervous energy to your advantage and be perceived as a dynamic speaker. Make sure to take the time to get yourself in the “zone” by following the tips we have suggested.

*Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, [www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com](http://www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com).*