

[Visualization]

Public Speaking

Invitation

Psychologists and performance experts say that “process visualization” — mentally walking through all the steps of your presentation — is the best way to feel prepared, grounded, and to turn nervous energy into fuel when you are anxious about public speaking.

Try this in the days before and up to 15 minutes before your talk.

Start the practice:

Find a comfortable seat and let your hands rest heavily in your lap. Breathing in, lengthen up through your spine as your shoulders drop downward. Breathing out, feel any tension release from your face, your neck, your arms. Do this one more time.

Apply:

With your eyes closed, imagine yourself preparing for your talk—researching, writing, practicing, putting notes on index cards. Visualize all the steps you’ve taken to get ready for this event ... how well informed you are, how prepared, and even how excited and nervous you may feel. Just breathe in, and breathe out.

Now see yourself beginning your presentation: coming to the podium or taking over the meeting, looking into the faces of your audience. Notice any nervous energy here, a tightness in your throat or your stomach. Breathe into those places, knowing that it’s totally normal to feel this way and that this energy will keep you alert and help you through your talk.

Treat:

See yourself going through each section of your presentation—glancing at your notes, pacing your speech. See the faces of the people listening—some will seem engaged, some may look bored. It’s all OK; just know that those who need the information will get it.

You might even imagine a moment where you draw a blank or lose your place. Just take a deep breath, knowing that *you can fix this*. Take your time, maybe even share what’s going on, and then, find your way back.

End:

Now imagine that you’ve reached the end of your talk, and feel the wave of satisfaction and completion. The audience is smiling and applauding. Allow yourself to steep in this energy: You did it. You did everything you set out to do. See yourself stepping away, feeling satisfied, happy, and relaxed.