# 4. Being a confident public speaker

Let’s start with a quote from Jerry Seinfeld: “According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two? Does that seem right? To the average person that means that if they have to go to a funeral, they’d be better off in the casket than giving the eulogy.”

#### You are already successful

Don’t forget that you have come through a fairly rigorous application and interview process to get here. You have been selected to provide information to other people, therefore you should start by having a vision of yourself as successful.

Many people think that public speaking is easy for other people. However, Jerry Seinfeld tells us that many people fear public speaking, in fact they fear it more than death. So you are not alone.

While some people do find public speaking easy, for most people being seen as a confident public speaker means that they use some tried and true tricks to help them appear confident.

In this session we will let you know that you are not alone, and describe some of the tricks that people use so they look confident. You will be able know what to do so that you too will look and feel like a confident speaker.

We will tell you how to prepare for your presentation, what to prepare, how to present confidently and what to do when things don’t go to plan.

Activity

In small groups, think about a time you have done something adventurous, like freewheeling your wheelchair down a hill, skateboarding, bungy jumping or even just going somewhere for the first time. Then answer the following questions:

* How did you feel?
* How did your heart feel?
* What was your stomach doing?
* Did it stop you from doing the things you like?
* If you did go ahead, why?
* How did you prepare?

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Almost everyone feels nervous

If you speak to people who regularly give presentations, they will often tell you that they are nervous. They then go on to tell you that the trick is how to not look like you are nervous. They say that you should use your nerves to give you extra energy.

Let me tell you about some famous people who get nervous about public speaking

* Tiger Woods – golfer
* Bruce Willis – actor
* Julia Roberts - actor
* Nicholas Brendon – better known as Xander Harris in Buffy the Vampire Slayer
* Rowan Atkinson – Comedian and actor
* Sam Neill – actor
* Samuel L Jackson – Actor
* Winston Churchill – UK Prime Minister
* Aristotle – Greek Philosopher
* Sir Isaac Newton – Scientist

And one not very famous one - Tricia Malowney, Public Speaker

All of these people give, or gave, the impression that public speaking was easy for them. **All** of the famous people had a stutter when they were growing up and yet they overcame their nervousness to fool people into thinking they were confident.

So how did these people overcome their fears? I don’t think they did, I think they just jumped out of the plane, with a parachute. In other words, they knew that there were risks, but they didn’t go without having the equipment and knowledge to get them through.

All our nervous speakers all prepared, rehearsed and connected with their audience and took the risk and still went ahead.

#### Be yourself

You will have more confidence in yourself if you be yourself. Be proud of who you are. I always wear a skirt or a dress when I train, give public presentations or speeches so that people can see my calliper. There are a few of reasons for this.

1. I want everyone to see that I am proud to be an Australian with a disability.
2. I want other people with disabilities to see that we can speak for ourselves.
3. My calliper cost me $6,000 (pre NDIS) so why should I hide it away under trousers? It may not be a fashion statement, but it’s the most expensive thing I own besides my house and my car.

Speak the way you naturally do

Nobody is better at being you than you are. You have a natural way of speaking, you have a natural way of standing (or sitting), you have a natural way of connecting with other people. Take advantage of that and use it to build your confidence.

Many people come up to me after I have spoken and say “Oh I wish I could be like you and speak the way you do. Can you show me how to be like you?”

The short answer is why would you want to be like me when you are great at being you. I have no idea how I sound to others but I know that unless you are a professional impersonator, you are never going to sound like me.

While I appreciate the compliment, I just say what needs to be said, I don’t try and do anything fancy, although I do admit sometimes I try to be funny.

For example, some years agoI worked with a brilliant woman who was witty and charming, except when she was speaking publicly. Then she became boring and her audience nearly went to sleep, or just stopped listening to her. Her evaluation sheets all came back saying that she was not connecting to the audience.

It turned out that because she was so fixed on getting the information out, she thought she had to speak slowly and seriously. What was missing was her personality and charm. Her evaluations changed after she relaxed and started being herself.

Another example is our ex-Premier Mr Steve Bracks. Does anyone else remember him mangling names (Ernie Eels instead of Ernie Els etc.)? Yet his ‘everyman’ way of speaking made him a very popular and trusted leader.

#### Tips to build confidence

Tell people what you need

I need to sit down when I speak unless I use a podium, as I cannot hold my notes and my crutches without dropping the notes or the crutches or both. No one seems to mind that this is what I am going to do. In fact, they appreciate that I tell them what I need. I also tell them (if I am having a bad day) that from time to time my voice might fade and that I might need to take a short water break.

Don’t forget to ask for parking if you need it.

If you use a communication tool, tell them that is what you are doing.

Speak to people, not at them

Try not to act like you are giving a speech to people, try to think of it as having a conversation with people, just as you would with your friends. You might have to be a bit energetic, but that’s ok.

How do you normally tell a story to your friends? Think about it. You don’t speak in a monotone way, you try and make the story interesting. It might be about something you have seen, or something you have bought. It doesn’t matter what the subject is, it is so much easier for you and the person you are speaking to if you vary your pitch.

Nothing beats a personal story

There is nothing more powerful than personal experience to help you to connect the information you are giving to people to the real world.

I am always telling my story, and how the NDIS will improve my life. I try to make it a bit funny by talking about I told my husband he has to give me three years notice before he dies or leaves me, because before the NDIS that was the waiting list to get onto the waiting list!

You don’t need to use my story, or any story, but if you want a story think of something in your own life. We all have stories about how the NDIS has either helped us (if we are in the launch sites) or what we hope it will do for us when it arrives in our area.

If you don’t have your own story, talk about a friend who has now got better community access, or better access to education, or has moved out of home, or has now got a job because of the NDIS. Just don’t give their names because privacy is important.

A fantastic example of how personal stories can be used to make a powerful point is Stella Young’s famous TED Talk ‘I am not your inspiration, thank you very much’. As a special treat we will show this now.

activity

Stella Young TED talk [10 mins]

<https://www.ted.com/talks/stella_young_i_m_not_your_inspiration_thank_you_very_much?language=en>

activity

Now it’s our turn to be ourselves – but we will take baby steps to start with. Let’s tell each other one thing that you really feel strongly about or something that makes you feel happy, or cross, and why. We will go around the room and everyone tell us one thing that you are passionate about or that makes you happy or that you really believe. But keep it to only one short sentence. We will come back to this subject this afternoon.

Write down your sentence on what you are passionate about.

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#### Be prepared

Scott Burkin who is a well-known speaker said, in relation to public speaking, that “By far the most important thing is thinking”. To my mind this means that you have to have thoughts about what you are doing and know why you are speaking and who you are speaking to.

All of the experts say the same thing, you must prepare, and then prepare, and then when you have done that make sure that you have prepared.

This doesn’t just mean prepare the presentation, it means preparing everything.

AFDO staff have been running workshops on the NDIS for quite some time now, and are presenting 3 hour sessions regularly, to different audiences each week.

I can tell you that an awful lot of preparation has gone into getting the presentations right, getting the timing right, and we all acknowledge the need to know your stuff and prepare, and prepare and prepare.

Therefore, it is appropriate that I start off by emphasising the need for you to prepare.

I really can’t say the word prepare often enough.

Here are some of the things you need to do to get yourself ready.

Know your subject

You have to know your subject. If you know what you are talking about, you will be more confident. This is a subject that you can be passionate about, because you can see the possibilities to change lives.

You are lucky because AFDO knows what the NDIS is all about, so you can be confident that what you have been given is accurate.

So you have the information provided to you by AFDO about the NDIS, so before you speak, you should read the handbook provided to you and think about what it all means, and what it means to other Australians with disability.

Know what you are going to say

It is much easier to speak confidently when you know what you are going to say.

AFDO has prepared a handbook for you which will guide you through what you will be saying. It has all the information for you set out in a way that is easy for you to follow. Carl will lead you through this tomorrow.

However, it may be that some people will want to just have an overview of the NDIS, whereas others might want a longer session.

You may need to adapt your speech to suit the audience.

Know when you are going to say it

The handbook sets the information that you want to give to people, but you need to work out the flow of your speech, so you know that you are going have a clear schedule to follow. You need to make sure that you have the sections right. Does the information flow easily from one section to the next?

Know what your audience wants to know about

Because there are many people who want to know about the NDIS, you need to know who your audience is. There is no point in just giving an overview to people who want to know about the detail, and there is no point in giving the nitty gritty detail to people who have never even heard of the NDIS.

For example, at Rotary or Probus groups, very few people have heard about the NDIS, and people think that surely everyone with a disability gets what they need in Australia. A group like this would need a really good background as to what the current situation is and the benefits of the NDIS to Australia generally.

However, when speaking to families, it is more likley that they will want to know what they need to do before the NDIS comes to their location. So information about the planning process and the need to understand about reasonable and necessary supports as well as ensuring that the person with a disability is at the centre of setting the goals and aspirations is needed

And of course, for a group of people with disability, it’s all of those things that the families want to know as well as how information about how other people have achieved what they want with their lives, without losing their services. Many want to know if it will still be ok to complain (yes it will be).

Practice

All the information you need is in the handbook, but it is really important to practice what you are going to say before you start your session.

There is nothing worse than having someone come in and speak to people when everyone knows that you haven’t done a run through, so you don’t know how long it is going to take, and you are not sure what is coming up, or you don’t know when your slides are due to change.

Different people have different ways of practicing.

One way is to present to your family, or to your friends. They may be a bit sick of it in the end, but they will support you because they also want you to get it right.

Another way is to use your smart phone to video record yourself when you do your rehearsal. I would suggest that you practice a couple of times without the camera, and then record it. If you use this method you can:

* Watch it without the sound, to see if you look relaxed, are you smiling, are you engaging with the audience?
* Watch it with just the sound; to see how you sound, are you stumbling? Is there a section you need to read through a couple more times?
* Watch both the sound and the video to see how it all looks

Practice hard words

We all have words we stumble over, and words we find we just can’t say well when we speak them in public. So say them out loud as often as you can.

Prepare your technology and props

Before you leave to go to your presentation, prepare a checklist. What are the things you need?

As part of your pack, do you have the correct technology? AFDO has provided you with a USB stick with the PowerPoint presentation on it, plus it will be available on the Disability Loop website. Will there be a computer and data projector at the venue for you to use? Will there be someone there to set this up for you?

Do you have your notes, your USB stick, a computer (if required), your glasses, a clock you can use to see that your presentation is on schedule, your communication tool, loaded with your speech, a hanky?

Know where you are going

Do you have the right address? Make sure that you look it up before you leave home. And make sure you take the address with you just in case.

Arrive early

It is a good idea to arrive at the venue at least half an hour before you are due to speak. This means you can be relaxed and don’t have to worry about the traffic, or the taxi not turning up on time.

Know your contact person

You will have usually been given the name of a contact person. Seek them out. They will be looking out for you.

Prepare your space

Once you are there, make sure you are happy with the set up. Is there enough room for you to circulate easily, can you reach the microphone, can you see and be seen? Do you have water? Water is a handy way to slow things down or try and remember what you are up to.

The space must meet your needs so that you are confident, but it must also meet the needs of everyone attending. This morning Carl talked about the need for accessibility. As with all AFDO events, the room must be accessible and that everyone is comfortable and able to communicate easily.

You need to ensure that everyone is comfortable and that they are able to participate in any discussion.

Make sure that they have the equipment you need, like microphones, white boards and the capacity to do PowerPoint presentations, so there are no surprises.

#### Ready to go?

So you’ve prepared your notes, the room is right, you are on time, the people are there, you know that you know what you want to say, so what’s next?

Act confident

It is really helpful to know that people don’t know that your palms are sweating, that your heart is thumping and that you feel sick to your stomach. If you sit or stand there with a smile on your face, people will think that you are fine, and will think, “Oh, ok this will be good”, mind you a smile is not enough, you have actually speak. But don’t be cocky – people don’t want to listen to a smart alec.

https://youtu.be/qGaOlfmX8rQ?list=RDqGaOlfmX8rQ

activity

In small groups, think about the songs that will make you feel good about doing a talk. It doesn’t have to be my type of song. It really has to be about feeling strong and happy with yourself.

Get to know people

It is a great idea to make a point of introducing yourself to as many people as you can in the room before you start speaking. Of course, that is difficult if there are 200 people in the room, but you will be talking to less than that, and it does two things.

1. It makes you look like you are confident and not nervous, and
2. It helps you to connect to people, so they will want you to succeed.

Breathe

Take a deep breath before you start, and say to yourself relax – mind you, don’t make it too deep so that people see it or you hyperventilate and end up fainting, just breathe deeply and regularly.

Remember people want to be there

The NDIS is a mystery to so many people. People with disability and their families have said that they don’t have enough information, they don’t know where to go to find information and they don’t know who to ask.

The evidence for this can be seen in the Gap Analysis that was undertaken by AFDO. The Gap Analysis also shows that the rest of the community know even less.

The NDIS is a subject that many people are interested in, and it will be great to have people with disability speaking about this subject because it shows that you have knowledge and the power to give the people the information that they want.

Focus on the Audience

If you have already spoken to people, try and focus on them as you speak, one at a time, without swivelling your head of course, so that they can tell that you are really keen on giving them the information. It is much easier when people think you are talking to them.

Give your presentation, you know what you are doing – so go ahead, follow the plan, smile, breathe, jump out of that plane, and you can because you have a parachute. Your parachute is your preparation.

#### Time Management

Experts on presentations say that you should simply tell people what you are going to say, give them the information and then tell them what you just said.

While that sounds easy, it is one way of making sure that we include the important information we want to provide.

How Long Should I Talk?

Many people are worried about how they will know how long they should speak for. And often it depends on who is asking you to speak. Time for speeches varies greatly; it could be 10 mins and no time for questions to an hour as well as question time.

* How much time has been allocated to you, including
* How much time you should allow for questions

Then you need to make sure that you stay to that time frame.

You don’t want to speak too quickly or provide too little information so that it finishes too soon, or have too much information so that you haven’t said what you really wanted to say before time is up.

Finding Time Balance

Once you have an idea of how long you have to talk, you need to think about your audience. What is it they want to know, which bits should I make sure I include so that I make sure they get the vital information they need? What can I leave out?

Dr Dennis Cummins says that most novice speakers spend too much time on the introduction and the conclusion and not enough time on the content. His suggestion is to spend 10% of your time on the introduction, and about 5-10 % on your conclusion and the rest of the time on your presentation.

For example, if your presentation is 20 minutes, 2 minutes would be spent on the introduction, 1-2 minutes on the conclusion and 16-17 minutes would be the information you really want to get across.

If you had an hour that included 10 minutes for questions, then you would base your calculations on speaking for 50 minutes. This would mean 5 minutes for the introduction, 2-5 minutes for the conclusion, which leaves 40–43 minutes for the vital information.

How do I know how long my speech will take?

Everyone is different, but the average person speaks at around the rate of 100 words per minute. So a ten-minute speech should be roughly 1,000 words long.

However, it is better to plan to speak for less than the alloted time. This allows for introduction time and questions. Plus, it is always best to finish a little early, rather than a little late. Presentations often start late, and sometimes you come on after someone who has not kept to time, but the session still needs to finish on time.

Therefore, even though you might think that a one-hour speech should be 6,000 words long, you will find that usually 4,000 words are more than enough.

A good idea is to time yourself when you practice your speech. This helps you to work out which bits take longer, especially if there are words that you might stumble over.

If you use an electronic communication device, you should also use that to time how long it takes to speak.

Breaks

If you are speaking for a longer period, take breaks as needed. A ten-minute break at an appropriate time will help your listeners digest what you have said.

#### Time for questions

Question time can be one of the most important ways of keeping your audience involved.

There are a couple of ways to handle the issue of questions. You can either have questions throughout the session, or you can save them for the end.

You set the rules

Let people know from the beginning what you want to do.

The simplest way is to have all the questions at the end. That way many questions that people may have will be answered along the way.

You are always in control, and if you feel that you don’t know the answer, ensure that you tell people either how to find further information or offer to seek the answer for them (if appropriate).

There are referral pathways, and we will discuss this in more detail later in the workshop.

If you are going to have questions throughout, you need to be prepared to not lose control of the room and make sure you still keep to time.

Question time tips

* Tell the audience what the question time limit is
* Don’t interrupt the speaker
* Rephrase the question if you don’t understand it. Perhaps say, “did you mean…?”
* Repeat the question if the room is large and there is no microphone or if someone asks you to
* Use positive phrases and don’t embarrass the person who asked the question, say things like I’m not sure I understand, don’t say that doesn’t make sense.
* Give everyone a chance to ask questions, and make sure you be respectful and say things like this person has been waiting for a while when someone wants to ask more than one question and it is time to move on.
* Defuse loaded questions.
* Give all audience members a chance to ask questions.
* Acknowledge the person who asked the question but respond to the whole audience.
* Try to keep the answers short, and about your presentation. If it is off topic, suggest they go to Disability Loop or a session that covers what they need.
* Let them know you will get back to them if necessary.
* Tell people you will be happy to talk further in the break, if you want to and have the time.

#### Tips for when things don’t go to plan

With the best planning there is always the possibility that something will go wrong, that you will lose your place, that you will forget to change the slides.

People will see how nervous I am

Well that can be an advantage sometimes. Most people will be sympathetic if you exhibit your vulnerabilities, just don’t overdo it and pretend to be nervous. Remember that most people don’t know how nervous you are. So while you might feel nervous, people won’t often seen that you are nervous.

What if I forget where I am up to?

It is not the end of the world. I have done it many times. You just have to breathe, you have your plan, just take a moment to check your notes, or your handbook or look at your PowerPoint. Look like you are pondering or considering the issue. Ask the audience if there are any questions to give you time to think.

Have a laugh, say, where was I? My goodness I was so engrossed in this point I forgot where I was for a moment.

What if people look bored?

Remember that you are not a boring person. You would not get to this stage if you were boring. You are here because you were selected to be here.

What if people laugh at me?

Hopefully they will laugh because you have said something funny, you have added little anecdotes. Saying somrthing like “presenter fail” helps people laugh with you, not at you.

I won’t be able to answer all the questions

This is a legitimate fear, but remember that you will have the AFDO information available to you, and you will also be given information later in the training to find out how to help people find further information. Remember, it is better to say you don’t know the answer, rather than pretending you do and making something up that might be wrong.

What if the technology doesn’t work?

This may happen, and if it does, that is why we have notes. Just say that the technology isn’t available and move on. If it happens before you get started, just don’t tell anyone. The audience probably won’t even notice.

What if I Freeze?

Well we all fear that, and if it happens, just remember to breathe and take your time and look at your notes or the handbook.The handbook will guide you through the information you are providing.

Remember that we all make mistakes

Evryone stumbles on words, drops their notes, forgets their place, or has been unable to answer the questions at some time or other. It is more important that the information gets through to the people who want it rather than be a perfect presentation.

#### Conclusion

Looking as though you are confident is an art, and it is comforting to know that most people really don’t like going out in front of people that they don’t know to give a talk, or make a speech, or give a presentation. And it is even more comforting to know that even famous people are nervous.

activity

In small groups, think about this session, and write down the most important things you have learned about being a confident speaker, and the tips you would use to help you look and feel more confident. Think about why they make you feel confident.

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Enjoy the experience

Think of public speaking as bungie jumping, or jumping out of an airplane with a parachute, or going on a roller coaster, or freewheeling your wheelchair down a hill.

**It might be bumpy but the feeling when it is over will be fantastic.**