

Public Speaking?



*Yes
You Can!*

Tips, tricks, & advice for giving
a good talk on homeopathy
(or any important topic)

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WHEN I WAS A STUDENT IN NATUROPATHIC MEDICAL SCHOOL IN the early '80s, one of my teachers declared: "To be a practitioner in the world of natural medicine you also have to be someone who can stand up in front of a group and give a talk." The reason? So few people understood who we were and what we did, that you had to advocate for the profession and help spread the word.

Although since then we've made great strides in informing the public about what we do, my teacher's words still ring true: anyone who practices or loves natural medicine (including homeopathy!) needs to be able to stand up and advocate for it. And because homeopathy is especially unique, we always have the opportunity to share what we do and inform people about this beautiful medicine.

"Just the idea of it freaks me out..."

Yet standing up in front of people and giving a talk is one of the most universal fears. Patients, students, and colleagues regularly describe to me their feelings of anxiety and being totally overwhelmed—all the way to full-blown panic attacks—at having to make a presentation.

That said, I think most of us can do a

good enough job giving a talk, even if the idea of it might terrify! Though I am not personally prone to performance anxiety, over years of public speaking and coaching others, I've gathered plenty of tips, tricks, and advice on how to both best prepare for a talk and reduce anxiety before and during the event. So if you're the anxious sort, read on!

You can do it!

With a little preparation, any of us can give a good presentation. Here are my basic recommendations:

1. Prepare well, know your material, and keep it simple. Do not try to teach or lecture if you do not feel you know

your material; it will show. Only offer what you know well.

2. Do not procrastinate in your preparations—that leads to use of caffeine, sleep deprivation, and lack of mental clarity.
3. Do your whole talk in front of a friend or colleague some days beforehand. Ask for *and integrate* feedback.
4. Visualize yourself giving the talk in a calm, clear, organized way.
5. Get a good night's sleep before your talk.
6. Have a high protein breakfast—eggs or meat or dairy—along with complex carbohydrates. Stay away from refined sugars and refined carbohydrates, which bring the blood sugar way up followed by a blood sugar crash.

7. Use no caffeine (coffee, caffeinated tea, chocolate) 24 hours before the talk.
8. Take a good half-hour walk or some kind of aerobic exercise the morning of the talk.

18. Read the book, *I Can See You Naked*, by Ron Hoff. I absorbed much information from this easy-to-read volume about how to give a really great talk.

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9. Do five minutes of deep breathing or alternate nostril breathing in the time right before your talk. You can go into a bathroom stall to do this if you need privacy!
10. Make sure any technology you intend to use works ahead of time. Practice your PowerPoint, and bring the right version of your talk on a backup thumb drive.
11. Remember, a little nervousness is a good thing; it shows you care.
12. Some people take a 50mg B-Complex vitamin the morning of a talk to help with jitters.
13. Focus on the audience, and take your mind off yourself! Remember, most audiences *want* to like you, *want* you to succeed, and are interested in what you have to say. You probably know more about your topic than the people in the audience—that's why they asked you to talk!
14. Your talk will be easier if your audience is friendly and feels engaged. *So*—if you're good at telling a joke, start with a (relevant) joke. If you're *not* good at telling a joke, use a story or personal anecdote instead—it humanizes you and grabs attention. *Never* use self-deprecation to start a lecture.
15. Try moving around instead of being planted in one place; this helps engage the audience. But do not pace—or allow your head to become an “oscillating fan”!
16. Remember, it will be over soon, and in the process you will have offered something beneficial to your audience.
17. Volunteer to give more talks—the more you do, the less stressful and anxiety-producing they will become.

Remedies can ease anxiety

Of course, homeopathic remedies can also help reduce a person's performance anxiety. To select an appropriate remedy, I try to understand how the person's anxiety is part of their life. When I perceive their stage fright or public speaking anxiety or phobia as just one example of an *overall* tendency for anxiety, I always will opt for giving a constitutional remedy that addresses the whole person—all their major symptoms and general characteristics—rather than focusing more narrowly on just performance anxiety. For instance, people whose constitutional type fits a remedy such as *Arsenicum album* or *Phosphorus* will usually get anxious and worry in many situations, so it might be typical for them to *also* be anxious before giving a talk. In such cases, I find it's best to give the broader-acting constitutional remedy because it will bring down the person's overall anxiety level and help them on many levels.

For those people who are not generally anxious except when it comes to public speaking—whether that's giving a talk about homeopathy, making an 11th grade social studies presentation, or giving a sales pitch in front of a group of peers—I have used the small handful of remedies below to good effect. I advise the person to take a dose of the indicated remedy a few hours before the talk and again right beforehand; a 30c potency usually suffices. (Of course any of the remedies below could also be a person's constitutional remedy!)

- *Gelsemium*. This may be the best-known remedy to calm the anxiety felt anticipating such an event. The person may feel weak and dizzy; they can feel like they are almost paralyzed because their



limbs can grow so heavy and awkward. They often experience trembling and weakness when faced with having to perform. They may have the unusual symptom of frequent urination as well.

- **Argentum nitricum.** I use this remedy when nervousness makes the person rather hyper—pacing, walking fast, and almost hysterical with worrying. They will often have a digestive system upset, such as gas or belching along with loose stools.

- **Lycopodium.** I use this remedy for the patient who suffers greatly from anxiety before a talk, though it might not show to an onlooker. Such a person compensates by seeming extra confident and capable, though on the inside they may feel quite the opposite. Leading up to a talk or lecture, they may well suffer typical *Lycopodium* symptoms of gas and bloating alongside excessive irritability.

- **Silica.** People who need this remedy can get very nervous before giving a talk as an expression of their underlying weakness, which manifests in both the physical and more cognitive spheres. Homeopath J.T. Kent described this as “lacking stamina... a state of weakness, embarrassment, dread, yielding... a state where [the person] dreads to appear in public.” They will generally over-prepare for the event and drive themselves to exhaustion in the process.

The rest of the story

After I graduated from naturopathic school, I moved to Omaha, Nebraska for a few years. Back in 1986, almost no one in that region knew much about natural medicine, let alone homeopathy. I had gone there to help work on legislation to license naturopathic doctors in the state, so there were ample opportunities to talk about my work. I do not know what motivated me, what propelled me, what put the fire in my belly to get out there to speak to individuals or groups and invite myself into meetings of organizations that were looking for speakers. I spoke at the state legislature in



7 Pointers for Giving a Homeopathy Talk

Here are the main points I try to cover when making a presentation on homeopathy:

- 1 Homeopathy is a gentle, effective medicine.
- 2 Treatment with homeopathy is individualized to the patient.
- 3 Most homeopathic remedies are made from plant and mineral substances.
- 4 The homeopath is interested in all the details of how a patient experiences their ailment in the context of the whole person.
- 5 I usually then give a clear example, perhaps using homeopathy in the treatment of middle ear infections, of four uniquely different ways a child might present with an earache and the homeopathic remedy that would be indicated in each case.
- 6 If I still have the audience's interest, I might broach the topic of constitutional prescribing by presenting two short cases of patients with chronic ailments; I describe how I gathered information from the patient to select a remedy and what sort of results we had from treatment.
- 7 Always end your talk five minutes early—do not run over! And leave ample time for questions and answers.

Lincoln, Mothers of Twins Club meetings, Kiwanis Club meetings, continuing education classes for nurses, high school biology classes, La Leche League meetings, church

groups, and many similar events. To get people in the door, I would give part of my talk on something that I knew would catch the eye or interest of the intended group; then a big part of the talk would be quite general, explaining what is homeopathy or naturopathic medicine. By spreading the word and answering the many questions people had, my practice grew, and word of mouth kept that going.

I got good at telling an audience what I was going to tell them, telling it, and then telling them that I told them; that is, I would start with a preview, offer my content, and end with a brief review. Pretty soon I found myself being referred to as an “expert”—funny description of someone right out of school, but I went with it. In the end, I became one of those people who often stands up in front of a group and gives a talk or presents a lecture. I like the “good” nervous I feel, where I get into the zone, so to speak. I know I have prepared well, I know I know my material, I know I like people and want to connect... so after a few minutes, the nervous feelings go away and I can share my work, my ideas, and my thoughts, hopefully to positive effect!

Make homeopathy a household word!

Now that I teach so frequently in the context of the naturopathic profession, I, too, encourage my students to get comfortable giving talks and often include practice sessions on just that. I strongly urge people of all ages to give talks in whatever setting makes sense for them—to help naturopathic medicine and homeopathy become household words.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amy Rothenberg, ND, practices in Enfield CT www.nhcmed.com. Her book *A Cappella Singer Who Lost Her Voice & Other Stories from Natural Medicine* is available at www.amyrothenberg.com. She teaches through the New England School of Homeopathy (www.nesh.com) and at the University of Bridgeport School of Naturopathic Medicine. New Two-Year Courses began in Seattle in January 2013 & will begin in Boston, winter 2013.

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