Life is full of things we can't control. Even if we do everything in our power to plan in advance, we can always count on something unexpected happening. When it comes to speaking in public, lack of control and unpredictability can be difficult to handle.

Imagine how great it would be if we could control everything we cared about! But wait a minute. That also means that we would never leave our comfort zones. Thus, we would waste our chances to grow, learn, and be creative. Leaving your comfort zone is what helps you become a better version of you and cope with your fears in a healthy way.

Anxiety Is in the Eyes of the Beholder

Perception of how much control we have over our life is an important contributor of anxiety. People prone to anxious reactions usually strive to have as much control as possible. When things are beyond their supervision, they tend to perceive the circumstances as extremely threatening, as if their worst nightmares are coming true.

Prepare for the Unexpected

This overwhelming need for control is particularly relevant when it comes to public speaking. Everything you do before standing up in front of the audience is geared towards gaining control over the situation. One of the goals of preparation is to predict possible outcomes and solutions. However, no matter how meticulous of a planner you may be, the actual event is often far different from what we have imagined.

A Strategy for Uncontrollable Events

Thinking that you have to control overall parameters of your public speech can be compared to a cognitive distortion. On the other hand, it’s totally normal to strive to control whatever you can, when dealing with something that gives you anxiety. Is there any middle ground between the urge to predict everything and complete lack of control?

Consider Everything

Luckily, there is. The first step you can take is to think about all the relevant aspects of your future public speech. Apart from the presentation itself and the techniques for overcoming fear, there is also your audience, the questions they may ask, the possibility that you might forget to say something important, and so on.

Rehearse Your Attitude

After that, assess how much control you have over all of these aspects. For example, you can’t control what someone may ask you during your speech, but you can prepare for the most likely questions, and you can choose to remain calm, whatever questions you may receive. Besides, you can rehearse the answers to a variety of likely and unlikely questions, if that would help you gain confidence. Nevertheless, keep in mind that this still doesn’t mean that everything is under your full control, and that is perfectly alright because it is unrealistic to expect to control all of life. We don’t mean to scare you, but rather to help you understand that having total control over everything is impossible.

Source URL: https://explorable.com/e/prepare-for-the-unexpected