



Unit 2

Positive Self-Talk

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Implement techniques to reduce nervousness and fear
- ✓ Understand your strengths as a presenter and how to appeal to different types of people

Unit 2

Positive Self-Talk

Our Thoughts

To make powerful, impressive, and lasting presentations, we have to start inside. What kinds of things are you telling yourself? There is a factor that affects our ability to speak with or to others 100 per cent of the time:

OUR THOUGHTS! Our thoughts create feelings, our feelings lead us to choices and action, and the action we take (or do not take) produces our results.

If you see all your faults and recite them to yourself when you look in the mirror, your self-esteem takes a regular beating. If you look in the mirror and say to yourself, "I like my hair today," or "I have a friendly looking face," your self-esteem grows a little bit and you become more confident of your ability to do things such as speaking in public.

Listen to your inner voice and the self-talk you give yourself. If you can hear the negative messages, start replacing them with new, objective, positive self-statements. You can build your self-esteem and be much more confident when you are talking to others. You can put the emphasis on them rather than on you.

The Steps to Feeling Good

Emotion	Describe the Events that Triggered this Emotion	What Kind of Thoughts Lead to this Emotion?	How to Replace the Negative Thoughts
Sadness or depression	<i>Example: Events that involve a loss: a romantic rejection, the death of a loved one, job or money problems, aging, poor health, the failure to reach a personal goal.</i>	<i>Example: You may tell yourself you can never be happy without the thing you have lost, or that person whom you loved so much. You may feel a loss of self-esteem because you tell yourself you are inferior or unlovable.</i>	<i>Example: Identify that this is only one aspect of your life. Identify ways that you can minimize the sense of loss.</i>
Guilt or shame			
Frustration			
Anger			
Anxiety, worry, fear, panic			
Loneliness			

Hopelessness or discouragement			
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Thinking Positively

How would you change these self-messages to be more positive?

I am so stupid. I am always making mistakes!

Why do I have trouble remembering things? I am always forgetting where I put my car keys!

I wish I could be more like_____. He never does dumb things like that!

People do not listen to me. I am just not important enough for people to pay attention when I speak.

People will laugh at me. Somebody probably already has a better idea.

Rapport

Building Rapport

We develop rapport with people so that we can communicate openly and with trust. If our presentations are intended to persuade and convince someone to do something, we have to establish trust with our audience, and that is not a quick or easy task. Equally, if you are presenting to people you do not know well, you will not trust them either.

A sense of belonging and connectedness is a deep need we all have. One way to make these connections is to have an introduction that explains who you are, what you do, and why you are doing the presentation.

Depending on the nature of the presentation, you will also benefit from some self disclosure in that introduction: a nugget that aims to connect to something in common with your audience. Whether you are presenting to a crowd of 100 or there are just three people in the boss's office, that introduction says a lot.

Think about what details you would include in an introduction about yourself before a presentation. Information that should be included: name, current position in the company, credentials that are pertinent to the presentation, anecdote or vignette that helps connect you to the group.

Maximizing Meetings

Four Areas of Opportunity

Meetings are a central part of communication and cooperation within any organization. Do not think of them as drudgery. Recognize them as opportunities to develop skills and develop your reputation, as well as a chance to stay on top of essential organizational information.

Anticipate.

If you receive an agenda ahead of time, take a few minutes to look it over. If you see areas where you may have an opportunity to take the lead or to provide information to others, use that opportunity. If there is no agenda, ask for one.

Prepare.

Do your homework. If you plan to speak on an issue, know what you are talking about. Keep your comments positive and speak with enthusiasm. The direct, relaxed approach works best. Get quickly to your point and stay with it. If you are raising an issue of complaint or concern, it will be better received if you also include reasonable solutions. As well, busy people usually do not want to listen to lengthy explanations or tirades. However, clarity and conciseness takes preparation.

Participate.

When should you speak up?

- When you know you can clarify a point
- When you can supplement pertinent information or furnish convincing statistics
- When you can correct an error
- When you wish to ask a question
- When you can give credit that is due
- When you have a good idea or an original suggestion
- When someone else has taken your idea and presents it as their own

Be brave! A great way to get more confident at speaking in front of others is to volunteer to chair meetings. Let your boss know that you want to improve and that you are up to the challenge!

Concentrate on Your Message

What does the audience need to hear? Focusing on your message and your audience instead of your nervousness will help to boost your confidence. Put the power in your message instead of holding onto it and giving yourself a case of nerves to deal with.



Fifteen Ways to Master a Meeting

Know everybody's name.

Know what everybody does so you will not step on anybody's toes.

Be careful about personal comments.

Do not create subconscious barriers to communication (i.e. crossing your arms).

Sit erect and square your shoulders. Look alert and lean forward slightly.



Discuss but do not argue.

The head of the table is a seat considered to have some power or authority. The three other important positions are those to the right or left of the head of the table, and, unless it is too far away, the position directly opposite.

Another good position is a corner position, because you can make eye contact with more people.

If you are seated and an important person enters the room, stand up to shake hands. A woman should rise to her feet as readily as any man. The important thing is showing respect for the person who has just entered the room.



If you are holding the meeting, reserve the most impressive, appropriately appointed conference room, when the meeting warrants it.

If it is your meeting, lead it!

If it is your meeting, have an agenda and let people know why they are attending the meeting.

Start and end on time.

If it is someone else's meeting, take responsibility and participate.

Demonstrate high energy and involvement.

Learning Names

In order to be remembered as an effective presenter, it helps if you become very good at remembering names. A lot of people say they are terrible with names. That usually means they have not taken the time to master the art of learning people's names.

What techniques do you use to remember names?

Body Language

Body Language Signals

A significant amount of someone's message is conveyed through their facial expressions and body language. What do you know about body language? What does the other person's body language say to you? Poker players try to mask their body language and hide any signals that will tell their competitors what kind of hand they have. Psychologists teach their students how to read subtle signals that can show on your face when

you try to hide the truth, mask a surprise, or you are nervous. Our best piece of advice is to **make your face look friendly**. Smile, or at the very least be aware of whether your face is tense and angry looking. If so, purposely relax your facial muscles and turn your lips up at the corners. You look more approachable that way. While we have probably all heard that **crossing your arms** makes others feel you are not listening to them, or that you have a closed mind, we know that is not always true. Sometimes you cross your arms because you are cold, you cannot think of anything to do with your hands, or you spilled soup on your tie. Whatever the reason, it tends to send a negative message to others. If you often cross your arms, try to break that habit.

One of the most important things you can do with body language is **learn how to identify cues from people that indicate you are making them uncomfortable**. If you sensitize yourself to these simple cues, over time, people will have the experience of feeling more relaxed, at ease, and open with you. In any case, they are quite simple, but most people do not pay enough attention to them. The most common signs that someone is becoming uncomfortable are:

- Rocking
- Leg swinging
- Tapping

These are the first sign of tension and indicate that the person feels intruded upon or nervous. If it escalates, these signals are often followed by:

- Intermittent closing of the eyes
- Slight tucking of the chin into the chest
- Shoulder hunching

Basically, learn to watch for these signals, and then adjust your approach when you see them. Sometimes just taking one step back gives people the space they need. Asking questions instead of talking (thereby getting the other person to talk to you instead) can be all it takes to ease the tension and re-engage someone.

Sticky Situations

Dealing with Tough Situations

One of the reasons we are nervous is because we concentrate on us (the speaker) rather than other people (our audience). Putting the emphasis on the other person can help us forget about our own nervousness. What else can we do to put others at ease?

Sometimes we are the one responsible for a difficult situation. **How can we face the music ourselves?** We can learn how to apologize with grace and let other people know we regret what we said/did. Perhaps you got impatient, snapped at someone, or spoke rudely. An apology is in order.

One way to turn things around is to learn to **laugh at yourself**. It is not hard but it does take practice. If this is not something you will be still fretting about a year from now, it is not worth fretting about at all. Besides, we learn our most valuable lessons from our mistakes.

Dressing Up

In order to stop thinking about ourselves and start thinking about others, it helps if we are **totally comfortable with how we look**. You do not need a closet crammed full of clothes. You just need a few outfits that fit nicely and that look good. Details like sleeves that are too long, shoes that need polish, or fingernails that should be cleaned can ruin an otherwise great outfit.

Go through your closet. Look critically at what you wear.

- Do these clothes suit you?
- Do they feel comfortable on you?
- Do they fit?

If you answer yes to all three questions, great! Take care of these clothes. If you answered no, give them away to charity and buy clothes you can forget about once you put them on.

Here are some more **tips for looking professional**:

- Dress the way you want to be perceived. Look like you care about what you are doing.
- Dress comfortably and be proud of who you are.
- Always appear as neat and clean as possible: hair that is washed and styled, fingernails that are clean and neatly trimmed, and shoes that are clean and polished.
- Choose clothes carefully and make sure they fit properly. You will not feel good and you will not look good if your clothes are too tight or too loose.
- You do not have to appear too fashion conscious nor spend a lot of money trying to keep up with trends.
- Know the colors and styles that suit you, and stick to them.

I Can Just Send an E-mail, Right?

Advantages of an Oral Presentation

Are you ever tempted to skip a meeting or conversation with a hope that you can replace the contact with a note instead? It is so easy to send an e-mail, or call early in the morning and leave a nice long message, especially if you would rather not make a presentation. But wait! Did you know that **oral presentations are generally more persuasive than written ones?**

Researchers have tested the way the brain responds to stimulation through language, visual images, and music. They have found that the spoken word engages both the right (creative, intuitive) and left (analytical, logical) sides of the brain.

Written material appeals more specifically to the analytical side of a person's brain. This means that, since most people make decisions based on both rational and intuitive criteria, you are more likely to gain acceptance for your proposal through an oral presentation. This method appeals to both sides of the brain, as opposed to a written report, which appeals to only one side.

Besides, **part of persuading involves getting to know people.** Since you are here to improve your presentation skills, let's focus on building those relationships by getting there in person rather than taking the easier route.

Given the sterile nature of asking for something you want in written form, when you meet with people in person you can add some **energy, enthusiasm, and passion.** You can add more information if they have questions, check their body language, and work with it. Rarely can the enthusiasm communicated in a phone call or a meeting be duplicated in a letter, e-mail, or memo.

Oratory Exercise

Here is a great way to work through some nervousness that you feel about presentations. If you take something that you have written – or something that you like that is written by someone else – and exaggerate it, play with it, and roll it around with great drama, you will actually get rid of some anxiety about delivering it because of that experience.

Take a passage from something that you are not too familiar with, and read it aloud. Then read it again, this time putting emphasis on different words, using sweeping, over-the-top hand gestures. Pretend that you are a great orator, perhaps a Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King, or Lou Gehrig when he left baseball. Add a component of drama that we have never seen in you before.

Then read the passage a few more times, this time as if you were in a play and reciting for a crowd with grandeur and a sense of real drama.

Further Reading:

- ✓ Carnegie, Dale. *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. Pocket Books, 1998 (Reprint).
- ✓ —. *Public Speaking for Success*. Tarcher, 2006.
- ✓ —. *The Quick and Easy Way to Effective Speaking*. Pocket Books, 1990.
- ✓ Carnegie, Dale, and Joseph Berg Esenwein. *The Art of Public Speaking*. CreateSpace , 2011.