

## Preparing for an Oral Presentation

Most people experience nervousness when they have to speak in front of a group of people. Common symptoms are shaking, sweating, butterflies in the stomach, dry mouth, rapid heartbeat, and squeaky voice. While it is difficult to completely eliminate this nervousness, there are ways to deal with it. Most of your anxiety is not visible to the audience...you are the only one who knows how nervous you are.

### **Before the presentation**

- \*Prepare the presentation a few days before it is due
  - \*Know your topic. The more comfortable you are with the information, the more confidence you will have
  - \*Practice, practice, practice giving your presentation at least 7-10 times
    - in front of family or friends
    - audio or videotape your speech to evaluate yourself
    - watch yourself in the mirror
    - if you have a time limit, use a stopwatch to time your practice runs. Remember, most people speak faster when they are in front of an audience
  - \*Visualize yourself giving the presentation successfully
  - \*Have realistic expectations for yourself (ex. "If I lose my place, I can look at my notes to find where I am.")
  - \*Think positively (ex. "I have practiced my speech many times and I will do well.")
- The more confident you are with the presentation, the less anxiety you will feel.

### **On the day of the presentation**

- \*Tell yourself "I can do it" and "I'll be ok"
- \*Focus on your breathing...breathe in for 5 seconds, hold for 3 seconds, breathe out for 5 seconds
- \*Relax your muscles as much as possible
- \*Exercise-it can help reduce anxiety and stress
- \*Wear something you feel confident in

### **During the presentation**

- \*Increase the normal volume of your voice
- \*Make an effort to speak slower
- \*Stand tall while presenting
- \*Find friendly faces in the crowd...when you are feeling nervous, make eye contact with these people
- \*Know that it's ok to fumble your words, lose your place, forget what you were saying, or stutter (these are all normal!). You can always refer to your notes to get back on track

Adapted from Charles Sturt University and University of Pittsburgh