

# PUBLIC SPEAKING WORKSHOP

## WARM-UP

Only you know your own body so I would advise to always do these exercises within the limits of what you are capable of doing physically. Warming-up should be a pleasant experience so take care and be where is comfortable for you.

### *Body*

- Walking in the space

Walk around the room, nice and relaxed and easy. Notice your breath. Notice how you're feeling today. Are you tense, relaxed, tired, happy?

Pick a number (probably between 1 and 10). Breathe in and out on that number of steps. So, for example if you picked the number 4, over 4 steps you should breathe in until you're completely full, then breathe out completely over the next 4 steps. Do this a couple of times and then pick a new number, eg. push yourself to breathe completely in on just 2 steps or breathe completely out over 10 steps.

Now walk a few steps on the outside of your feet. Then the inside of your feet. Then your toes. Then your heels. Pick a number again and walk that number of steps on the inside then outside then heels and then toes.

- Body warm-up from top to bottom

The head - give yourself a head massage. Then gently pull your hair to wake up your scalp. Squidge your face with your hands, pay particular attention to your cheeks and lips which will be doing a lot of work during your presentation. With the tips of your fingers, gently pummel your face. With the heels of your hands, gently massage the muscles in your jaw hinges.

The neck - be gentle with your neck but give it a stretch. Drop the chin to the chest and feel the stretch along the back of your neck. Then put your left ear closer to your left shoulder. Bring the left arm over to your right ear and very gently pull the neck closer to the shoulder to feel a stretch along the side of your neck. Do the same on the other side.

The shoulders - bring your shoulder up near your ears. Imagine a pin is being pulled that just allows your shoulders to drop down to a relaxed position. While presenting you want your shoulders to be nice and relaxed and without tension. Do a shoulder shake - put your arms out at a 45 degree angle and move from side to side, shaking your shoulders. Have your mouth open with a sound coming out while you do this.

The ribs - take a wide stance and bend your left knee, keep the right leg straight and take the right arm up and over your head. You should feel a stretch along your right side. This is stretching your rib muscles. Do the same on the other side.

The spine - this is a roll-down through the spine. With feet a bit wider than hip-width apart, let the chin drop to the chest, the shoulders then drop, the hips go back, the knees bend and the head hangs with arms dropped down. Stay here for three breaths and on the final exhalation, come back up again in the opposite direction. This is a nice 'oil and grease' for your spine.

The hips - take a wide stance, put your hands on your hips and make big circles with your hips. Go back the other way. Do a butt shake - bend your knees, bring your arms into a boxing position close to your body. Then shake your body, moving your fists up and down slightly. As with the shoulder shake, do this with your mouth open and with sound.

The ankles - balancing on one leg, take a ballerina position with your off-ground foot and make

circles with your ankle while your toe stays on the same place on the ground. Go back the other direction. Switch feet.

If time is short or space is not available, try and get your body warm if you can. Walk around the block or up some stairs. Just something not to get you sweating but to get your heart rate up a little bit. Feel free to draw on other stretches and warm-ups you've done in the past that help to get you warm. Warming up can also take your focus off any anxiety about the presentation for a few minutes.

## Voice

- Breath - breathing is incredibly important when presenting but it can be the first thing that we forget to do when under pressure. What you want is for the jaw to swing open and the breath to come in to your body and straight down to the belly, feeling expansion all around your middle. The air is what the words will travel out of your body on when you speak. Practice this deep breathing for a bit. Try imagining walking into your own surprise party and gasping at the sight of it - this should allow your jaw to really drop open and the air to rush into your body.

It can be useful to sit down backwards on a chair so you can lean forward on the back of it, making sure to keep the spine straight.

Try doing this while adding words. The jaw drops open and your body fills with air, then you use that air to speak a sentence or part of a sentence from your presentation. When you get to the end of that, drop the jaw open and refill again, then speak the next sentence. A common thing is to fill with air, expel a lot of it immediately and then begin talking - try using all the air at your disposal.

Doggy-pants - this is for exercising the ribs so they can swing open and allow the air to travel down to your belly. Interlace your fingers and put them behind your head. Keep the shoulders down and relaxed. Open your mouth, stick your tongue out and pant like a dog. You should feel the ribs quickly go in and out. Repeat this as a happy dog and an angry dog.

- Vocal folds - the best warm-up for the voice is a gentle hum. Try humming on your normal speaking pitch. Then hum a bit higher and then a bit lower. You can do this for several minutes and it should get the vocal folds working nicely - just keep it really gentle and soft, there's no need to push for volume.

Then gently slide up and down along the higher and lower pitches.

- Articulators

The tongue - play 'North, South, East, West' with your tongue. Put it up, down, left and right as you imagine the different commands (ie. North, South, East and West) in your head. Then clean your teeth with your tongue, imagining that there is toothpaste on it and you're cleaning all over your teeth.

The lips - take a breath and with your lips gently close together, use the air coming out of your mouth to make your lips vibrate (what's known as a 'lip burble'). You can do this with or without sound. If you use sound you can slide up and down in pitch while doing a lip burble. Try the tongue twister "We will wait for Winnie and Willie Williams" a few times.

The soft palate - this is at the back of your mouth above the back of your tongue. Take a breath, make an 'ahhhh' sound and then make an 'nggggg' sound by lifting the back of your tongue up to your soft palate.

Diction (other tongue twisters):

Gah-dah-gah-dee, gah-dah-gah-dah (this gets the tongue moving between the hard and soft palette)

Plague bearing prairie dogs

Floppy fluffy puppies

Rubber baby-buggy bouncers

I love New York, New York's unique, you need unique New York

Othelius Thistlethwaite the unsuccessful thistle sifter, sifted three thousand thistles through his thumb

My mother makes me mash my M&Ms on a Monday morning

### *Meditation*

- The finger pulse - put your right thumb at the base of your little finger, just where the webbing starts. Push very gently and you should be able to feel a little pulse. Count to five pulses and then move to the next finger until you have counted to five pulses on each fingers on that hand. If you don't find a pulse, don't worry, just count to five on each finger.

Try to simply concentrate on counting the numbers and not thinking about anything else. If other thoughts do creep in, simply go back to the counting.

This exercise may not be for everyone, but is a very simple meditation that may help you to calm your mind a little before you present.

### SOME USEFUL TIPS

- Practice, practice, practice in front of people as much as possible.
- Film yourself and watch it back - don't be too hard on yourself, just objectively notice your habits and note what works well and what doesn't.
- If you can, see the room that you're going to present in and if possible, practice in there. Think about where is the best place for you to stand so that everyone can see you and, if you have one, your slide presentation. Think about being open to your audience.
- Your research *is* interesting but if you don't look like you believe that then the audience may not connect with it.
- Your opening is an opportunity to grab our attention. It doesn't have to be showy or sensationalist, but it doesn't only have to be 'good morning, my name is ..... and my presentation is .....
- Your ending should be punchy. Again, it doesn't have to include ground-breaking findings or conclusions but if it peters out it can fail to do justice to all your good work beforehand. It should be strong and decisive.