

UWE Wellbeing Service

Presentation Anxiety

It's perfectly normal, and sometimes helpful, to feel nervous before giving a speech or presenting work to others. However, for some people having to perform in front of others may feel so frightening that they get anxious just thinking about it. Some people go to great lengths to avoid giving presentations, even if it limits activities and disrupts their life.

Common experiences:

- Extreme fear of being watched or judged by others
- Fear that you'll act in ways that that will embarrass or humiliate yourself
- Physical sensations such as: trembling or shaking, shortness of breath
- Avoiding social situations to a degree that limits your activities or disrupts your life
- Staying quiet or hiding in the background in order to escape notice and embarrassment

While avoiding nerve-wracking situations may help in the short term, it prevents you from becoming more comfortable when giving presentations and learning how to cope.

Two common ideas in helping people manage presentation anxiety are: to reduce self-focus when in the situation and to confront the avoidance of giving presentations or speaking in front of groups.

Reducing self-focus Paying attention to what is happening around you rather than noticing your internal worries and how your body is feeling. By paying less attention to your anxious thoughts, your body's anxiety response will lessen.

Overcoming avoidance Start with a situation that is not too stressful, gradually work your way up to more challenging situations. This will build your confidence and coping skills. You rob yourself of developing and even some positive experiences if you repeatedly avoid presentations.

The resources listed below will help you develop ways of dealing with your anxiety so you can gradually feel more comfortable when speaking in front of others.

Websites

- **Get Self-help** provides information and templates to use on how to manage a range of problems, including social anxiety www.get.gg/socialanxiety.htm
- **Help Guide** - website which has guides to various mental health and wellbeing topics including social anxiety <http://tinyurl.com/zr3rdtw>
- **Moodjuice** provides self-help advice on a range of health topics including social anxiety <http://tinyurl.com/hfctnhq>

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Video links and podcasts

- **Ted Talk** by a Health Psychologist on how to make stress your friend: <http://tinyurl.com/qbnfp9f>
- **Susan Cain** (author of 'Quiet: The Power of Introverts') describes what we can learn from introverts, and how she went from being scared of public speaking to being a professional public speaker: <http://tinyurl.com/htnys9w>

Apps

- **SAM App** - an app developed by UWE Bristol to help you understand and manage anxiety: <http://sam-app.org.uk/>
- **Calm: Meditation and Relaxation** - a free, simple app presents seven guided steps to calm, running from 2-20 minutes and with a range of calming background sounds to choose from: <http://tinyurl.com/ob3xkrk>

UWE library

- Antony, M.M. (2004) **10 Simple Solutions to Shyness**: how to overcome shyness, social anxiety & fear of public speaking. [Available: Frenchay](#)
- Butler, G. (2009) **Overcoming Social Anxiety and Shyness**: A self-help guide using CBT. [Available: Alexandra Warehouse](#), Bower Ashton, Frenchay, Glenside
- Tallis, F. (2009) **How to Stop Worrying** A guide to making worry work for you, helping you to avoid stress and anxiety. Understand fear and face the possibilities of life calmly [Available: Alexandra Warehouse](#), Bower Ashton, Frenchay, Glenside
- Kennerley, H. (2006) Overcoming anxiety self-help programme based on CBT techniques [Available: Alexandra Warehouse](#)

Further reading

- Levin, P., Topping, G. (2006) **Perfect presentations** Open University Press
- Cain, S. (2013) **Quiet**: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking

Support at UWE

- **Peer Assisted Learning (PALS)** Support and advice on preparing and practicing your presentation skills: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/studysupport/peerassistedlearning.aspx>
- **UWE Study skills** – practical advice on how to prepare and deliver presentations: <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/students/studysupport/studyskills/groupworkandpresenting/presenting.aspx>