

Giving a Presentation



Introduction

It's true that public speaking is not for everyone. In fact on the fear-factor scale most people rate the fear of speaking in front of a group above the fear of dying.

Although the prospect of speaking to an audience of people you don't know may be a bit frightened, some of them may also be a bit nervous. So that may help you feel a bit better.

In order to become people you do know, and therefore make things a bit easier, you need to put your audience at ease. This will also help them to get more out of the session.

For example, you could tell them that there will not be a test at the end of your chat.

You may have been told to imagine your audience sitting there naked. Well that doesn't work for most people.

However here are a number of ways to 'break the ice'. Tell a suitable joke. (Perhaps you could ask that, for the comfort of others, mobiles phones should be switched off, to silent or vibrate, while hearing aids and pacemakers should remain switched on.)

Comment on an eye health issue recently in the news. Or you could relate an interesting fact. But don't go on about how terrible your life is, what bad things happened to you this week or where you would rather be instead of here. (Believe it or not that isn't of interest to most people and it'll gain you little sympathy).

Conducting a successful information session is like making a cake.

There are the essential components - the ingredients and equipment needed to make a cake (this would be the content of the LEHP presentation, handouts and equipment)

Then there are addition components - fruit and additives, icing and decorations to make the cake more appealing (this would be the way the content is presented and how the audience reacts, to make for an enjoyable and memorable experience)

Secrets to Good Presenting

It's quite simple really:

- Do your research - Read the supplied materials and research anything that seems of interest, you don't immediately understand, or needs more explanation. Read the materials over again until you are familiar with the content. (Just like making a cake you need to read and understand the recipe).
- Do a run through - Talk to the mirror (or your dog or cat), talk to yourself in the shower, or sit outside where you can't be embarrassed by being overheard.
- Be prepared - Confirm your visit a week or so ahead (It's really embarrassing turning up when no-one is expecting you, or even worse arriving a week after you were expected) Before leaving for a venue check that you have the correct notes (with all the pages numbered), adequate materials and handouts for the size of audience, your electronic presentation and equipment and check that it is all in working order.
- Have a back-up plan - Take a copy of your notes and electronic presentation in another medium like a memory stick or on paper. (Something I learned while living in Alice Springs, where the power used to go off at any time, for no particular reason and for any amount of time).
- Be on time - Arrive at the venue with plenty of time to set-up and test everything, just in case you need to use your back-up plan. Be sure to observe Workplace Health and Safety requirements.
- Wear appropriate attire for the venue or event and if possible obtain a LEHP shirt or name tag.
- Allow enough time after the session to stay and speak privately with individuals and groups or partake of any refreshments provided, rather than rushing off.
- Understand and motivate your audience - Work out what they are interested in or what situation they may be in. What are their past experiences, present and future concerns? Let them know that they or members of their family may be affected by vision issues, particularly the children.
- Use real-life or personal examples to make an impact - Like your family's eye-health stories or examples from your reading.

- Relate to the audience - Make sure that everyone can see and hear you at the beginning of the session. Use terms they may be familiar with and personal words like you, our, us and me (rather than generalised 'they', 'them' or 'people'). If you know someone's name use it when talking to them. Give examples that your audience can relate to (Good eyesight is necessary for a good education and to get a good job. Playing sport may be hard if you can't see a ball coming.) 'Share' information, rather than 'telling' it.
- Use humour where appropriate - Not all jokes are funny (be careful - sarcasm, discrimination and mocking are not humour). Amusing observation and relationship situation stories are better (for example; a woman asked her husband to take her somewhere expensive for their anniversary, so he took her to the local Petrol Station).
- Encourage audience participation - They may do a lot of the work for you, by sharing their experiences and knowledge. (Sometimes your problem may be keeping the proceedings on track, if the audience starts to take over) Show respect, empathy and sensitivity in response to any information provided by attendees.
- You may also invite the participants to take notes. (People remember more when they write things down).
- If you ask questions, keep them simple and clear, covering one point and related to what has been presented.
- Keep 'on message' - The importance of vision screening, the conditions we may discover are treatable and don't be surprised when we find issues. That is why we are screening.
- Don't worry if you can't answer a question - Throw it back to the audience, refer to a source that may have the answer or offer to find the answer and get it back to the person or group. (Don't try to answer technical medical questions or diagnose someone's personal symptoms or issues).
- What if something goes wrong? - Call a break (while you get back on track), ask a question, give the group a topic to discuss or tell a story to help relate the content, while you work out what's next.
- Give the audience something to take away - Brochures, bookmark, a FREE Eye Test offer, new or rediscovered knowledge. (Any salesman will tell you that once you get the brochure in a person's hands, half the sales job is done and not many refuse a 'FREE offer'.) You can really have an impact on an audience when they realise that they already have knowledge and that they can put it to use.
- Leave the audience with some sort of direction – Have a go at operating all the screening stations, promote the program with friends, family or the local community and look at recruiting other members for the screening team.
- Evaluate the session - (Just like with any cooking, there is always the clean-up) When you get back home consider what went right, what went wrong, anything you missed or anything that perhaps should be removed from future sessions. Make any changes to your notes while it is fresh in your mind. Contact another LEHP representative if you want any advice or wish to pass on your thoughts.



In conclusion, the key ingredients to conducting a successful information session are:

Being prepared - timing, materials, equipment, knowledge and backup plan.

A meaningful and memorable delivery - relating the materials to the specific audience.

Staying 'on message' - giving the audience something to take away and act on.

An effective evaluation processes - re-working the delivery to keep it fresh.

Additional ingredients include:

Audience involvement - using activities and asking for personal stories.

Keeping it 'real' - using real life examples from your experiences and reading.

Use appropriate humour.

Personal attention - allowing time to answer questions and using people's names.

Direction - Advise where to find additional resources (web sites, texts, videos).

Now you have the recipe for a successful presentation.

