

EXCLUSIVE TRAINING GUIDE

# How to Beat the Nerves When Speaking in Public



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**TRAINING**  
COMMUNICATION SKILLS  
THAT REMOVE LIMITS

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# 5 Reasons Why You Are Getting Nervous and How to **Stop the Nerves** Getting the Better of You!

Notice how it says, ***“stop the nerves getting the better of you”*** rather than glibly claiming ***“how to stop them”***?

That is because our philosophy at Open Dawes Training is that the real world is not about the absence of nerves, but about understanding them, putting them into perspective, and using the resulting adrenaline to your advantage.

Adrenaline gives us that well known “fight or flight” reaction, and this is about how we make it the “fight” reaction rather than running away from, and missing the advantages from taking, those opportunities to be heard and recognised.

If you wonder why having the “fight” response is beneficial once you have put yourself into more opportunities to share your knowledge, experiences, skills, and opinions, ask yourself a question; “who has nerves when presenting or speaking?”

The realisation during our training is that the answer is “everyone”. It is not a weakness or a roadblock, but the physiological reaction from within that makes us perform and sound or look like we care. What we need to do is make sure that those thoughts and chemical reactions are understood, kept in perspective, and embraced to our advantage!

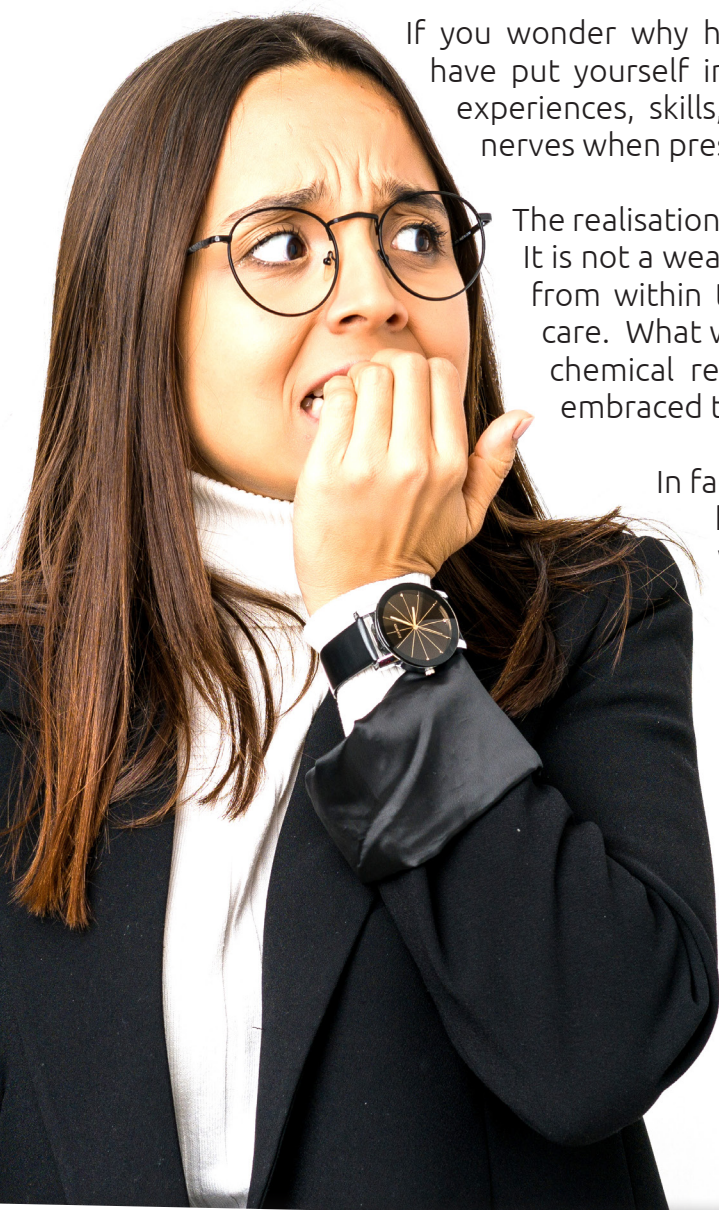
In fact, those who say that they do not get nervous at all have either turned the “nerves” into “excitement”, which means that the physiological reactions would all be the same if we wired them up, but the psychological reactions are flipped upside down. Or they may come across as though they really do not care or maybe even arrogant. Hence, I passionately believe that it is not about the absence of nerves.

**Whilst we work on 15 common reasons for getting nervous, here are our top 5, and how to keep them under your control.**

I hope this guide helps you.



Chris Dawes  
Founder - Open Dawes Training





## REASON NO.1

# Forgetting My Script

This is deliberately at number one because it is easily the most common source of nerves. The simple answer, before elaborating, is DON'T HAVE ONE.

I don't mean by that for you to put undue pressure on yourself by completely "freestyling", or making it all up as you go...

What I mean by that is to have confidence that you know the information that you are about to share, and simply create a list (with minimal words, and NOT sentences – or you will just read it) of the topics you want to cover to act as a guide of your intended order, and a reminder to refer back to if the order changes in the cold light of day.

This is what I call the "steak"; i.e. the core; and is just your support crutch to remember the areas you want to cover, and you then add the "sizzle" in how you then communicate and dress it all up. We cover in the core training how a presentation with only the "steak" or the "sizzle" will miss the mark, but in this context, you don't have to be worried about forgetting anything because you have your core content listed, and you go with the flow on how you share it.

In the core training course, we cover and distinguish between "script" and "content" in much more detail, but with either make sure you remember one very important point to help keep your nerves under control on this subject; you are the only one who knows your intended script/content!

No one else actually knows that you have forgotten something, done it in the "wrong" order, or maybe even "made a mistake"! So just roll with it, don't draw attention to it, and know that you have the reminder list to quickly look down at if you momentarily lose your way. The "sizzle" will be different every time anyway.

## REASON NO.2 ►



## REASON NO.2

# Past “Failures”

It is a completely understandable human reaction to allow past occurrences to have an effect on things in the future. I remember when I was new to driving and crashed (lightly, thankfully) my Mum’s car on an oil patch, on a bend, in drizzly rain. For some time after, whenever it was raining, I could swear I could feel the front end of the car washing out again even though it wasn’t!!

It was a mental association with the rain, and the amazing mind creating something from that link that felt completely real even though it wasn’t happening.

We have worked with many candidates who have struggled to stand up and speak again due to what they perceived as a “disaster” when they did it previously. This has included top-level executives and business owners, people who comfortably stand up to sing or act but have created this mental link to presenting, to people just starting out on their journeys. Having signed up to this and potentially our deeper assistance I suspect that you too have your own examples in your mind?

The trick is to make sure that past experiences provide lessons, but do not dictate whether you do/do not!

With the aforementioned car accident, I learnt that even light rain is slippery (well I was young...), oil patches provide at least a dark patch or possibly rainbow sheen and are even more slippery, speed limits are a maximum, not a suggestion, and that certain locations are more likely to have oil slicks deposited on them.

So it is a mistake that has never been repeated (he says hoping that he is not tempting fate as he writes this...).

In a more relevant example, I was booked to provide an after-dinner speech at a large national business event, but they insisted that they wanted it to be an educational piece rather than “entertainment” piece.



## REASON NO.2

**Past “Failures”** cont...

After their dinner and free-flowing wine etc. for the audience, and not done until 10 pm, it was a complete disaster trying to provide an educational talk in such circumstances! Whilst it makes me shudder to remember the details of the night, I learned that I will say no in the future if someone asks me to do such a thing in such circumstances or would suggest an alternative, but I didn't fully appreciate the possibilities until this experience. Just because they are offering to pay, does not mean that the “customer is always right”.

Examples from clients that we cover in more detail in the core training have been around learning how important preparation and equipment are to avoid things going “wrong”, but the key lessons are a: learn from them and move on, and b: you are the only one who remembers it in any negative way (if you let yourself). Everyone else will have either forgotten about it or empathised with you!

So, do not let it be the source of any great nerves as you know you have learnt from it and therefore won't repeat it! “The greatest mistake one can ever make is to be afraid of making one!”

## REASON NO.3 ▶



## REASON NO.3

# Fear of Appearing Nervous

I love this one because it really does epitomise us, humans, in my opinion. How funny is it that we actually get nervous about how we may appear nervous to our audience...?

There are two sides to this; 1: it is not as obvious as it feels, and 2: so what?

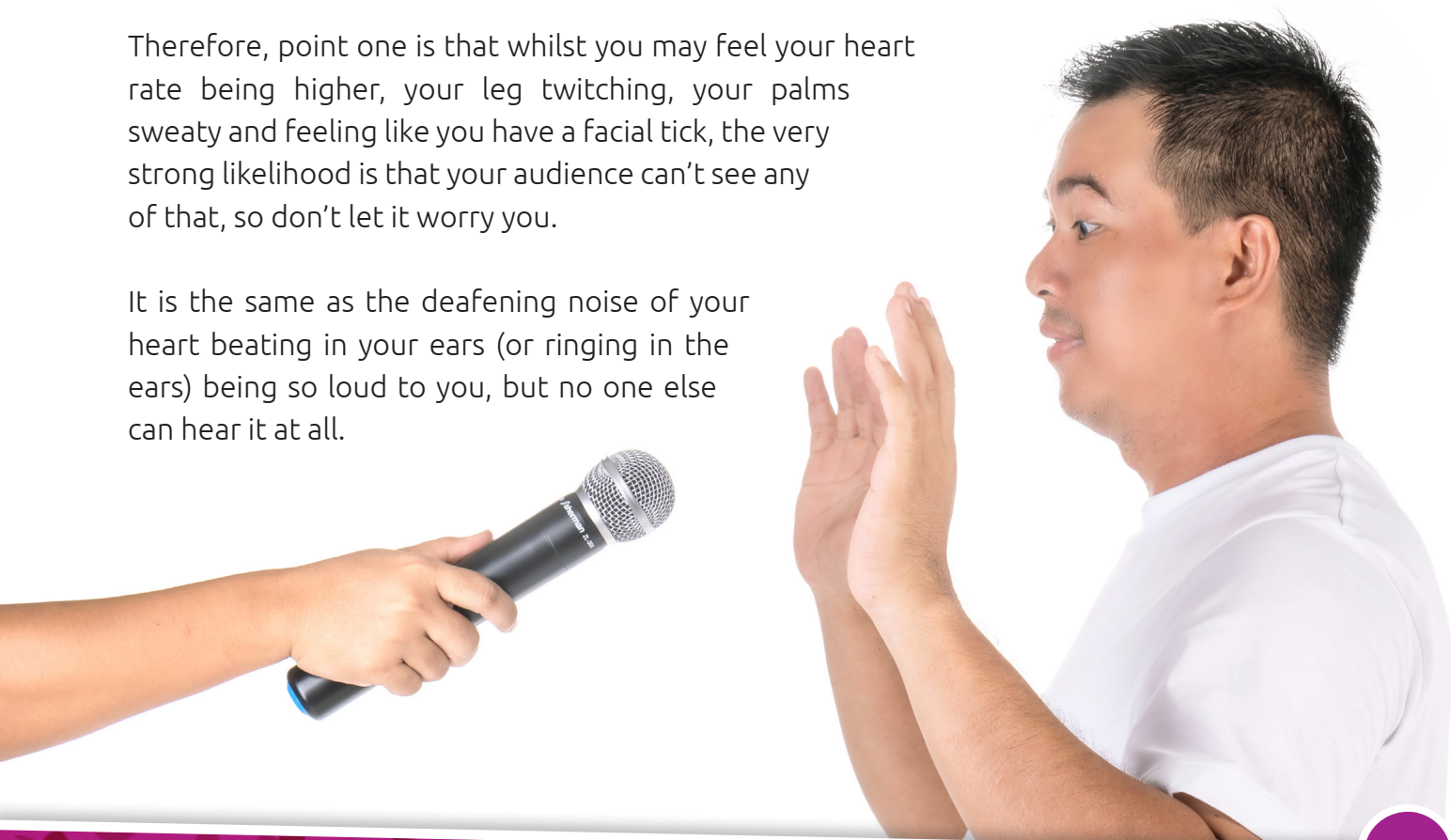
If you recall earlier, I asked the question, “who gets nervous”, and the answer was “everyone”. Yet does everyone appear nervous when they are speaking?

I still get nervous when I am presenting live events, on TV/radio, or commentating, and thrive on that adrenaline and challenge. Yet I have lost count of how many times people genuinely would not believe that I was nervous at all! It is, of course, a compliment, but as a sufferer of Generalised Anxiety, I do often wish they knew and appreciated that it is still a challenge I am proud that I rise to and achieve.

My favourite orator is Barrack Obama (not interested in politics, just as a speaker and personality), and he seems incredibly calm and collected; dare I even say a “cool cat”? Yet he gets nervous too, but we wouldn’t know it.

Therefore, point one is that whilst you may feel your heart rate being higher, your leg twitching, your palms sweaty and feeling like you have a facial tick, the very strong likelihood is that your audience can’t see any of that, so don’t let it worry you.

It is the same as the deafening noise of your heart beating in your ears (or ringing in the ears) being so loud to you, but no one else can hear it at all.



## REASON NO.3

**Fear of Appearing Nervous** cont...

However, the second point of “so what” refers to why you would see it as a negative thing should anyone sense that you are nervous. What do we really think the response is going to be?

If you are in the audience and the presenter, or person speaking up in the meeting, is clearly nervous, what are your thoughts and feeling towards them? I am going to be bold enough to venture a guess that none of your responses to that question are negative?

We will invariably have one or a combination of empathy and support. We would be rooting for them to keep going, wanting to put them at ease, whilst also silently relieved that it is them up there rather than us.

So, when you are the one worried about appearing nervous, just relax in the knowledge that if it ever happened to be apparent that you were, that the audience is rooting for you and supporting you! So, smile at them, and feel the smiles come back from them. You’ve got this!

## REASON NO.4 ►



## REASON NO.4

# Poor Breathing Habits

This is very often an interesting “cause/effect” conundrum. The nerves make our breathing erratic and too shallow, but not having control over our breathing can also make us feel out of control and excessively nervous. A vicious circle that can easily be broken and have a huge effect on your self-perceived levels of nerves.

If I conjure up an image of someone trying to get their nerves under control, it is them taking a deep breath in, then pursing their lips and deeply exhaling as their body slumps down into a greater state of relaxation. If you do it right now, feel how your heart rate slows and you feel even more relaxed no matter what your state of relaxation beforehand. Hence smartwatches and phones etc. tend to have a breath app, and meditation starts with taking deep breaths.

In the core training, we cover starting presentations or the first time you get yourself involved in a meeting/conversation and include how taking those deep breaths is the best way to centre and regain control of yourself. But it is also vital to retain control of your breathing throughout, or you will restart the “nerves snowball” again.

When you consider that our nerves only tend to exist for the first couple/few minutes of us speaking, and we accept that plenty of oxygen helps keep our racing heart under control, then it stands to reason that we need to make sure that we keep breathing throughout.

A common mistake is to hold our breath until we get through chunks of what we have to say, and are then surprised that our heart rate rises (which we will perceive as increased nerves), and we speed up what we are saying so that we can get to the end of our sentence(s) as quickly as possible before we run out of breath, *joining sentences together with no punctuation more than we would do normally to race through it and get to the sweet nectar of urgently needed oxygen... GAAAASSSSP \*desperately inhales\**



## REASON NO.4

**Poor Breathing Habits** cont...

The highlights version of the advice we provide is to slow down, take pauses, and keep breathing normally. If you start losing your way or stumbling over your words, you will probably find that you are short of breath as well. This is not caused by nerves but tends to mean that you are no longer in control of your breathing, not taking pauses, and speaking too quickly so that you can get to the end and gasp for air! So take a pause (allows your audience to digest the information, and maybe adds dramatic emphasis at the same time), take a relaxing deep breath, and then get back on track and a more considered pace, with your breathing now more regular again.

This will become a more natural practice for you, but in the first instances, note if you feel like you are nervous again, stumbling/making mistakes, forgetting where you were going next, and running out of breath, then know it is easy to get back in control of all of these things by regaining control of your breathing habits.

## REASON NO.5 ►



## REASON NO.5

# Too Many/Too Few People

You will notice that this point is both sides of the coin, and that shows both the irony of the situation and that either side can be thought. In the full list of how to beat nerves, we also include other examples like this, such as people you know/strangers listening and audience interaction/lack of.

For every one person who thinks of one side of the coin being hard, there is someone else who has an issue with the other side. Therefore, the trick is to learn what the thought processes are of those in the opposite camp to you and learn how to implement those thoughts to keep the situation you find yourself in perspective.

Don't forget that you may not even agree with some of the mind tricks you employ, or they may not be factually correct, but this is about things to think to overcome your mental blocks. To give some examples that have been experienced or heard for either side of this example, consider the following:

- **Too many people in the audience/meeting/group**
  - You are playing the odds game to your advantage, i.e. more chance of at least one person:
    - laughing at your joke,
    - nodding their head in agreement to your point,
    - relating to the information you are sharing,
    - interacting with you,
    - smiling back at you, etc.
  - More chance of an atmosphere
  - Able to “lose yourself in the numbers” rather than no escape from being the sole focus
  - Audience members can feed off each other
  - More experiences from audience members to feed off

## REASON NO.5

**Too Many/Too Few People** cont...

- **Too few people in the audience/meeting/group**
  - Able to be a focused 'conversation' with the select number of people present
  - Less chance to be interrupted
  - Easier to manage
  - Audience members can't hide or feel being disruptive (whether intentional or not) is an option
  - If there is minimal interaction with the small audience (especially with examples such as "Professional Buyers"), then you can focus on your content/delivery
  - Less chance of negative encouragement between fellow audience members.

So you can see from these examples that you can create whatever argument or thought process that is necessary to pacify the situation. Sadly human nature is to focus on the negatives, but you need to train yourself to keep reminding yourself of the counter-arguments to those negatives until they become second nature. It is 100% possible! Just compare those who have convinced themselves of both sides of the coin of sky diving...

## Conclusion

In addition to these five sample sources of nerves and how to beat them, our full list of advice is triple this, and hopefully, shows you that some of them are redundant, ironic, or not actually nerves, whilst the remaining ones can be put into perspective, tricked into oblivion, or at worst identified as completely bearable when left on their own with the rest of them quashed. A small snowball can be thrown, and with great accuracy (well, most of the time...), but keep rolling it and adding more snow and it even becomes too hard to move let alone throw! Even knowing that should give you more confidence in itself!

***"Nerves are excitement turned inside out! Now is your chance to turn them back again and let your voice be heard!"***

Chris Dawes – Founder of Open Dawes Training Ltd