

COURAGEOUS

artistry

HOW TO IMPROVE YOUR STAGE PRESENCE

DC BAR LUNCH and LEARN

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courageousartistry.com

About Me

Ingela Onstad, MM, MA, LMHC, BCC

Professional classical singer and former voice teacher

Licensed Mental Health Counselor in NM

Board-Certified Coach

High Performance Coach for Professionals in the Public Eye

Works with attorneys and other professionals who have a presentational aspect to their work

Why "Courageous Artistry"?



Goals For Today

What is Stage Presence and why should you care?

Identify factors that negatively affect our performance

Identify components of a successful performance

The biological role of anxiety

6 Step Strategy for Improvement

Tips for online presenting

Time for Q&A



What Are We Talking About When We Talk About Stage Presence?

- Having charisma
- Commanding the room
- Connecting with the audience
- Conveying gravitas
- Being magnetic
- Being engaging
- Posture and carriage (body language)
- Eye contact
- Being persuasive
- Great speaking voice
- Great energy and confidence
- You get to choose what your goals are!
- Write down one word or concept that appeals to you



In What Situation Does Stage Presence Matter For Attorneys?

- The courtroom
- Client negotiations
- Pitching to prospective clients
- Professional organizations
- Speaking at meetings
- Jury selection
- Job interviews
- In our personal lives
- Working with clients or colleagues
- In interactions with superiors (bosses, judges, etc.)



What Are The Factors That May Negatively Influence Our Ability to Deliver Effectively and Persuasively?

Take a moment to identify a few of your own struggles or worries.



Day-to-Day Issues, Such as:

- Time of day
- Daily or weekly schedule
- Current stress level
- Home life
- Office life
- Health (both mental and physical)
- Energy levels



Personal Characteristics

- Introverts or shy
- Being “in our heads” and not in our bodies
- Self-esteem issues
- Age
- Level of experience
- Gender
- Race or ethnicity
- Impostor syndrome
- Not being “born with it”
- Feeling “inauthentic”



What Are Some Components of Performance?

Verbal Communication
(Content)



Vs

Non-Verbal
Communication



Dr. Albert Mehrabian's 7-38-55 Rule



- The psychology professor Albert Mehrabian famously stated that in communication:
- 7% is our content
- 38% is our voice/vocal quality
- 55% is our facial expressions/body language



Non-Verbal Communication: 93%?



- Voice
- Body language
- Facial expression and eye contact
- Energy levels
- Focus
- Ability to manage anxiety
- Question to ponder: how much time do I spend devoted solely to content?



How To Improve Our Stage Presence



Step One

Personal Awareness and Assessment

- Identifying our personal struggles
- Asking for feedback from trusted sources
- Reviewing previous material (video recordings) if possible
- Utilizing outside professionals



Step Two

Situational Awareness and Assessment

- Identifying the size of venue and tailoring our “performance” to the size
- Online or in-person
- Knowing our audience
- Other challenges unique to the situation? (Ex: poor acoustics, noisy environment, outside distractions, unpredictability of others’ behavior)



Step Three

Managing Our Anxiety Through
Understanding And Developing Coping Skills



Understanding The Biology Of Anxiety



Autonomic Nervous System

Sympathetic Nervous Response/Fight - Flight – Freeze =

The **GAS PEDAL**

Parasympathetic Nervous Response/ Rest – and – Digest =

The **BRAKES**



ANXIETY = Fight, Flight, or Freeze Response

Our brains are constantly scanning our environment for threats.

Social interactions are another type of threat – it is important to our health and safety to be liked by others.

Symptoms of FFF: Cortisol, adrenaline, muscle tension, digestive issues, loss of blood flow to prefrontal cortex, sweating, shaking, racing heart, etc.

Poll: What do you notice most in your body when you are anxious?



Different Types of Anxiety

State Anxiety

Induced by a specific situation (i.e., a courtroom appearance, a speech)

Vs

Trait Anxiety

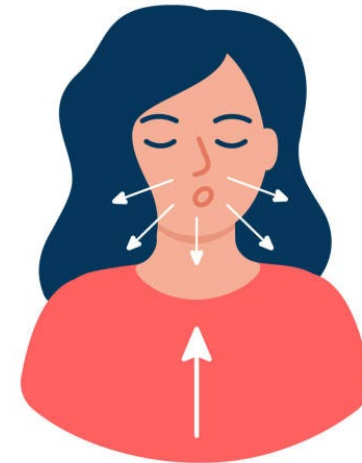
Occurs on a more regular basis across situations

- It is possible to have both, or one without the other
- Symptoms: Excessive worry, irritability, sleep disturbance, poor concentration, restlessness, muscle tension, fatigue



Tips for Managing Anxiety

- Breathing for calming or for energizing
- In “fight or flight”:
Hissing breath (calming, 1:2 ratio of inhale to exhale)
- In “freeze or fatigue”:
Big inhale breath (energizing, 2:1 ratio of inhale to exhale)



More Tips for Managing Anxiety

- Power posing (TED Talk by Dr. Amy Cuddy)
- Visualizing positive outcomes: how do I want to feel?
- Grounding techniques: 5 senses meditation, legs up the wall yoga pose
- Having a growth mindset (Mindset by Dr. Carol Dweck)
- Medication: talk to a mental health professional
- Professional help



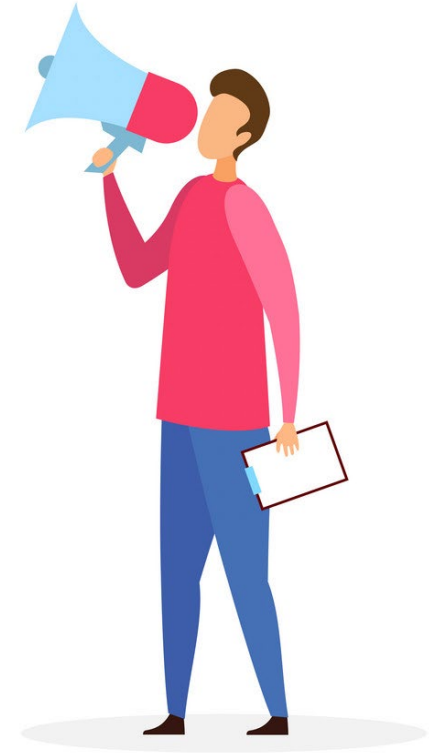
Step 4

The Voice: Understanding the Power of
our Instrument



The Voice = 38%

- Aspects that contribute to vocal perception:
 - Pitch/frequency
 - Tone quality
 - Volume
 - Inflection
 - Rate (140-160 wpm)
- Remember that the Voice communicates our emotional state



How to Improve Your Voice

- Many of us feel self-conscious about the sound of our voice due to our inability to truly perceive how we sound
- Everyone can improve their speaking voice. Here are a few simple exercises to improve your vocal sound:
 - Bubbles
 - Raspberries
 - Open-mouth sigh on a pitch
 - Humming or singing
- Simple vocal exercises can improve tone, pitch, and volume



Vocal Rate Basics

- 140-160 words per minute is ideal for listener comprehension, but when nervous or stressed, we often speed up to 180+ which lessens listener comprehension
- Vocal rate can be influenced by region or dialect
- A vocal rate that is too fast conveys a sense of fear or nervousness that our audience perceives
- A vocal rate that is too fast does not allow for steady respiration and thereby increases heart rate, etc., sending us into Fight/Flight/Freeze



Tips for Slowing Down Vocal Rate

- Practice your presentation in advance in front of a mirror or friend
- Practice taking a brief pause to breathe in between sentences
- Feel your belly to see if you can improve diaphragmatic breathing
- Try “Turtle Talk”: purposely speak as slowly as you can (best done alone!)
- Use pauses and silence to emphasize an important point
- Beware: if a client is very agitated or stressed, they will likely speak more quickly and we will instinctively speed up as well!!!



Step 5

The Body: Your Physical Presence



How to Improve What Our Body Communicates

- Take a moment right now to do a quick assessment:
 - How are you feeling in your body at this moment?
 - Do you notice areas of tension in your face or body?
 - What do you think your body currently conveys to another person?
- Take a moment to:
 - Roll your shoulders
 - Shrug
 - Massage your jaw or temples
 - Feel where your body makes contact with the floor or seat



Basics of Alignment and Facial Expression

- When anxious or stressed, we often “collapse” our posture
- To counteract this, practice:
 - Lifting from your “Marionette String” (located on the crown of your head)
 - Opening/broadening from the sternum area
- Pay attention to Entrances and Exits: our audience makes their first impression of us from the moment they see us, NOT from the moment we begin speaking
- Practice making your eyes more “alive” by imagining you are seeing something exciting or joyful
- Watch for tension in the temples, forehead, and jaw: these can be “tells” to our nervousness



How to Improve What Our Body Communicates in Listening

- Active, engaged listening is a vital part of non-verbal communication
- When people feel heard they tend to feel calmer and more cared-for
- Watch out for the common trap of rehearsing what we will say next while someone else is speaking
- When we actively listen we process more verbal content



How to Improve What Our Body Communicates in Listening

- Body Language
 - Nodding
 - Eye contact
 - Relaxed body
 - Awareness of breath
- Verbal “go-ons” **(can be impacted by technology)*
 - “mmm”
 - “yes”
 - “I see”
- Verbally repeating back aspects of conversation



Step 6

How to Improve our Presence on Zoom



LIGHTING Quality



- When we are not adequately lit, our audience loses valuable aspects of our presence
- Avoid backlighting (bright light source in back of us)
- Use a Ring Light or desk lamp
- Avoid harsh overhead light or side lighting when possible
- Make sure camera lens is clean



SOUND Quality

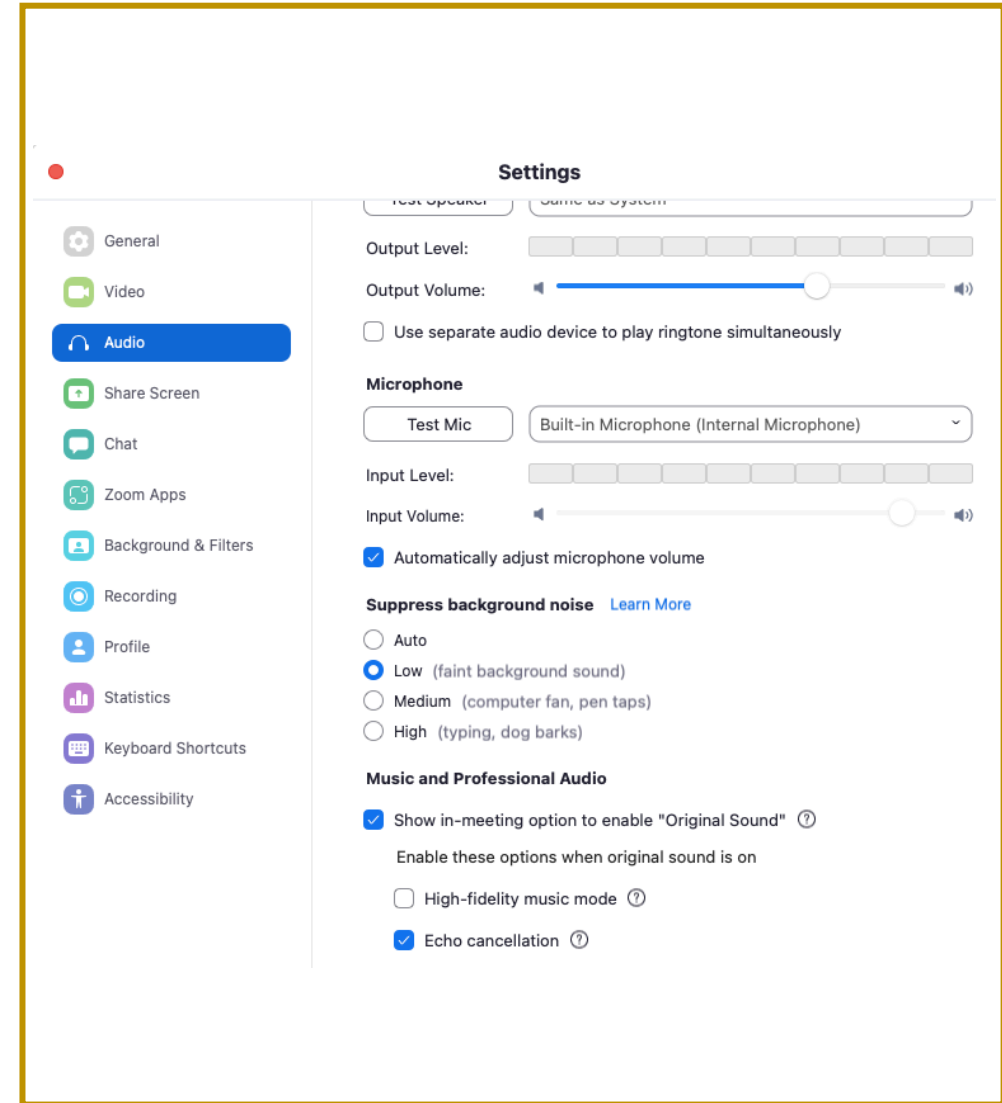


- Use earbuds or headset
- Pay attention to distance from computer mic
- Consider vocal volume (too loud or too soft?)
- Extra credit: purchase a USB condenser mic (\$-\$\$)

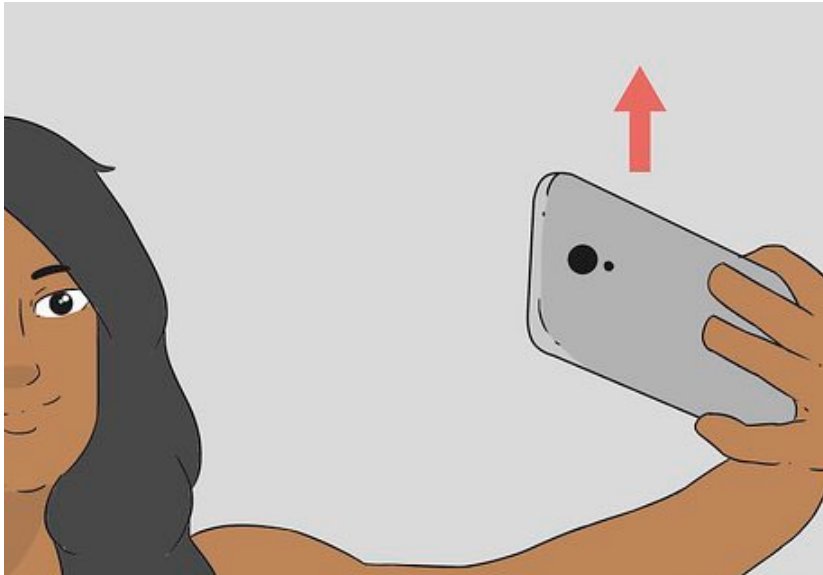


SOUND Cont.

- Adjust background noise:
- Go to “mute” button
- Click on “carrot” next to mute button
- Click on “Audio Settings”
- Look for “Suppress Background Noise”
- Choose appropriate level for your environment



ANGLES



- Make sure that camera level is close to eye level, not too far above or below
- Use a stack of books or box under your monitor/laptop/tablet if angle is too low
- Tilt the camera or screen down if angle is too high



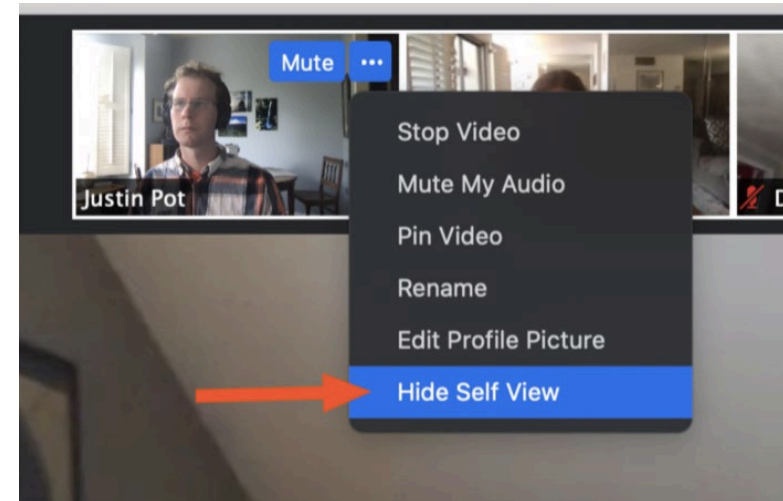
Distance from Camera Lens

- Around one arm's length from monitor or camera is usually best
- Try to have yourself in the picture from the collarbones/chest up
- If you are too far or too close, your audience loses valuable eye contact and facial expressions



Hide your “Self-View”- No “mirrors”

- Zoom automatically shows us a “mirror” image of ourselves, which is distracting and unnatural
- Once you are confident about your lighting, angles, etc., hide your “self-view” so that you are not constantly seeing yourself
- Do this by clicking on the 3 dots on the top right of your image



Size of picture/Gallery View/Eye Contact

- When speaking 1:1 with clients, hide your self-view which will automatically switch to their picture being enlarged
- Use your mouse to “drag” the person’s view as close as possible to where your camera is located on your device in order to maintain as much “eye contact” as possible
- Use a sticky-note posted by your camera as a reminder of where your gaze should be
- In larger meetings, try to choose “active speaker” view to avoid the “Brady Bunch” effect



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