

Appendix H: Public Speaking Tip Sheet

The best speakers are those who believe in what they are saying and whose sincerity and dedication to their topic are apparent. Before you choose your speakers, consider your audience. What messenger will they best respond to? Would it be physicians or nurses? Older adults? People with chronic health problems such as asthma or diabetes? Someone from the health department or a respected local community health worker? No matter whom you choose the speaker needs to convey expertise, experience, interest, and commitment to the importance of influenza vaccination.

These tips can help you prepare your spokespeople to present a confident and compelling speech.

Content. Share information about yourself up front. This personalizes you to the audience and makes listeners feel that they know you. This also is the opportunity to share your own experiences with influenza vaccination initiatives.

Eye Contact. The only way you will know if your audience is getting the message is through eye contact. Look for eyes and heads nodding with you.

Facial Expressions. Your facial expressions can tell the story of how much you care about the issues you are talking about. Allow your passion for the issue to show, as this gives off energy, and energy makes you convincing.

Gestures. Some of what people retain from speeches is through body language. Gestures reinforce and highlight your story and give you energy in your delivery.

Voice. Try not to speak in a monotone. Avoid “language helpers” such as “ums,” “ahs,” and “you knows.” Never try to camouflage a regional dialect. All you have to do is tell people where you are from and they will expect you to sound the way you do.

Pauses/Silence. There are four good times to pause: when you move from one subject to another, when you want the message to sink in, when you want or need to collect your thoughts, and when you receive laughter or applause.

Avoid Distractions. Do not fiddle with your hair, shuffle your feet, sway back and forth, jingle change in your pockets, play with your eyeglasses, or otherwise do something that will take away from what you are saying.

Practice. Practice, practice, practice. If possible, spend time alone just prior to your speech; take some deep breaths and think about your central theme.

Being Nervous Is Normal. Try and “reframe” your fear into excitement and enthusiasm. Remember that you are the expert and people have come to hear you talk about what you know.

Is Your Presentation Culturally Competent? When presenting to audiences from different cultural backgrounds, use the following tips from the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown University.

- Consult with people from the community about customs and taboos in speaking and presenting. Do not assume anything about practices and customs. Is it acceptable to look a person in the eye when they are speaking? Is it considered rude to shake hands before someone else introduces you?

- Consider asking someone from that community who can effectively deliver your message to co-present or conduct the entire presentation.
- Think about your message. Is it crafted in a way that is relevant (and not offensive or condescending) to your audience?
- Be open to suggestions, and be willing to adapt and modify your message and presentation style to your audience.

If you have to use an interpreter, keep these points in mind.

- Talk directly to the audience and not the interpreter. Give the presentation as if they speak your language, and try to connect with them.
- Do not use clichés or jargon that might confuse the interpreter or may not be translatable.
- Jokes are seldom funny when translated, and they may be culturally offensive.
- Give the interpreter as much information ahead of time as possible. If you have a copy of the speech, share it even if you know you won't follow it to the letter.
- Notice the pace and manner of the interpreter. Practice with the individual if possible. Try to adjust your speech to that pace.
- If you want to put in a few words or phrases in the audience's language, make sure you can pronounce them properly, that you are saying what you mean to say, and that the interpreter knows what you are trying to say beforehand.