

eyes **WIDE** open

It has been said, "the eyes are the windows to the soul". As a beauty professional, effective eye contact is critical in establishing trust whether you're speaking to one person or a group of 200.

Eye Contact

According to Renee Gallart, Hairco Educational Director, eye contact is an essential filter for your brain as you process all the information around you. "Your brain can easily get flooded with all the distractions involved in public speaking, and eye contact can help eliminate those distractions by helping you to stay focused."

Tips and tricks for effective eye contact:

- Do** establish trust and respect with your audience with your eyes
- Do** move from person to person with your eyes when speaking
- Do** gauge if your audience appears interested in your message
- Do** establish a positive environment for eye contact before speaking
- Do** add life to your presentation by using other forms of nonverbal communication such as hand gestures
- Don't** freeze when speaking in front of others and just stare blankly
- Don't** fumble with notes and other devices while speaking
- Don't** stand in the same position during your entire presentation unless you're using a podium

Rhythmic Communication

Once eye contact is mastered, enhance it with the eye-to-brain control method. Follow these steps to embrace key elements of eye contact used during public speaking:

- 1. Lock eyes.** Establish eye contact with one person at a time. Then, gradually move to your next contact. The key is to move steadily from person to person.
- 2. Deliver your thought.** Say one thing to one person, maintaining the eye contact at all times. Example, "Hello, my name is ____." And then break.
- 3. Stop talking and find the next set of eyes.** After the thought or sentence is complete, move on to the next person and lock eyes with them.
- 4. Continue the cycle.** Complete your next thought (i.e., "I'm here to discuss ____ with you.") Break again. Be sure to breathe steadily between statements. After the second thought is delivered to the second person, continue this technique until you've covered the entire room.

Gallart says to think of this technique as the "fighter pilot" method. All you have to do is aim at your target and shoot. Essentially, you're listening with your eyes. As the speaker, you're the leader of the group and people are looking at you as the authority figure. By watching their reactions and paying attention to their verbal and nonverbal feedback, you can understand the character and personality of your audience.

Effective communication is the forefront of personal and business success. As such, it is paramount that you pay attention to what your eye contact, or lack of it, communicates to your audience.

75% of all Americans report having a fear of public speaking, also known as glossophobia.

The Basics of Public Speaking

Once the presentation is prepared, practice using the following techniques:

- **Stand before a full-length mirror.** Use all the gestures and body language you would in front of an audience and give yourself a personal evaluation.
- **Tape or record yourself.** Record and replay your presentation as many times as it takes for you to be satisfied with the results.
- **Gather a mock audience.** Ask for feedback and constructive criticism.
- **Rehearse your speech.** Try to memorize as much as possible so you don't have to rely on your notes, making you look more confident and credible.
- **Don't be afraid to ad-lib.** Once you're comfortable with your presentation, it's safe for you to change things up a bit. Throw in a few jokes or share a personal story to lighten things up for your audience.

[book]

The Complete Idiot's Guide to Speaking in Public Through Confidence by Laurie Rozakis

WRITTEN BY EMILY MULLEN

NEXT ISSUE: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION THROUGH VOICE

SOURCES: www.soyouwannacomm.com, www.presentations.com, www.publicspeakingtips.com, www.toastmasters.org