

Public Speaking - Eye Contact Exercises

Modern presentation theory espouses a conversational approach to presenting, because that's the way to maximize both comfort and trust between you and the audience.

The conversational approach, a modern refinement of the humanist style first made popular in western cultures by president John F. Kennedy, is quite a bit different from the oratory style that most people associate with earlier great speakers such as Winston Churchill.

The foundation of the conversational approach is proper eye-contact, and the nature of that eye-contact is quite unlike the way 99% of presenters practice. In fact, once you know what to look for, you will discover that what first differentiates those who have The Skills from those who don't is the way they engage their audiences with their eyes.

Make no mistake, proper eye-contact is only one component of The Skills, but when you understand exactly how you must look at your audience to be a great speaker, the other components tend to fall into place.

When you nail down these (surprisingly straightforward) eye contact techniques, you can deliver to a group of 500 without ever feeling more anxiety than you would when discussing your job to friends around a lunch table.

Most people find that hard to believe until they've actually received training in The Skills, but when you get it, it's rather powerful stuff!

These exercises sound simple enough, but they do require a bit of vigilance on your part to have the desired effect. You must practice them at every opportunity for a week or so. At the end of that time you will know what you need to know to move on to the next level of acquiring The Skills, but only if you make a conscious effort to do what the exercises ask you to do every day.

Exercises:

1. Observe others' eye contact. In every situation in which you interact with others, watch their eyes. Observe how long they maintain eye contact while they are speaking to you. Watch how they maintain eye contact while speaking to others. As often as you can, count the number of seconds they maintain continuous eye contact before switching to a new target and note this, preferably in a log of some sort.
2. In situations where someone is speaking to a group, again count the number of seconds the speaker maintains eye contact with each individual. Determine what the average amount of time is.
3. Be conscious of your own eye contact. When speaking with someone, do you stay focused on them? Do you look up, away, or down while speaking? Or do you maintain eye contact the entire time you are speaking with someone? How often do you move away from eye contact and then return? Do you look at other people for the same amount of time when talking to one as when you are talking to many?

If you've vigilant in your observations, you'll probably be very surprised at the amount of time people hold continuous eye-contact when speaking. And yet it is this amount of time that sets the tone for what makes average speakers average and great ones great.

About the Author

J. Douglas Jefferys is a principal at PublicSpeakingSkills.com, an international consulting firm specializing in training businesses of all sizes to communicate for maximum efficiency. The firm spreads its unique knowledge through on-site classes, public seminars, and high-impact videos, and can be reached through the Internet or at 888-663-7711.

Source: www.isnare.com

Source: <http://articles.exospy.com>