A Few Suggestions for Managing Speech Anxiety

A. Mental Preparation
• **Prepare.** None of the tips on this sheet will help you if you have not prepared a clear, well organized presentation. Give yourself time to do so.
• **Rehearse.** Speak your talk or lecture aloud at least once. If possible, give a practice talk for a friend or colleague.
• Start your day off in a relaxed way—give yourself time to sit down and eat breakfast in the morning.
• **Set a clear objective in relation to your audience.** Give yourself a “pep talk.” Remind yourself of the bigger objectives involved in this talk. Why is it important to share this material with your audience?
• **Get the attention off of yourself and onto your audience.** It’s not about YOU, it’s about THEM. Make eye contact with the audience and pay attention to their reactions. Ask yourself—are my ideas “landing?” Are they getting it?

B. Physical Preparation
The following are suggestions to release tension before and during a public speaking event.
• Get a good night’s sleep.
• **Stretch and move:** if you have time, go to the gym in the morning. Or even do a set of jumping jacks before your lecture or talk. Move your body!
• **Progressive Relaxation:** tense individual muscles groups for several seconds and then release the tension.
• Get a massage.
• Practice deep breathing before the talk.
• Breathe low and deep during your talk. Remember to pause, i.e. breathe in between sentences. It gives you a chance to focus and gives your audience time to absorb your ideas.

C. The Long Haul:
Stress builds up over time. Take care of yourself both physically and mentally over the long run and you will reduce your overall stress level. Remember: school is a marathon, not a sprint.

1. **Maintain Your Overall Physical Health**
• Eat a healthy diet. Give yourself time to sit down and eat regular meals.
• Exercise. Aerobic exercise is especially helpful for relieving stress. (Running, rowing, swimming, basketball.)
• Get enough sleep—make it a habit. If you are tired and cranky it will be even more difficult to prepare for and deliver a strong talk or presentation.

2. **Reduce Stress in Your Life**
• Manage your time (learn how to say no).
• Set reasonable expectations for yourself (don’t expect to lecture or present a paper at the level of your highly experienced tenured advisor).
• Socialize. Leave the lab or the library and be with friends and family. This will not only reduce your stress level and be enjoyable; it will give you a fresh perspective on your work.