

THE EXTRA POINT

BY JERRY ROBERTS



1476 If Participating in Meetings Make You Nervous

You're sitting in a staff meeting and you know that the boss is going to call on you sooner or later. Your heartbeat picks up, your hands get sweaty, and you feel the butterflies forming in your stomach. Anxiety is overtaking you. I'm Jerry Roberts, and if this happens to you, I may have a solution — coming next on The Extra Point.

Meetings play a crucial role in the workplace, providing a platform for collaboration, idea sharing, and decision-making. However, for many workers, the fear of being called upon to contribute can lead to major anxiety.

The worry of not being adequately prepared can hinder our ability to engage and make meaningful contributions. By addressing these concerns and developing strategies to overcome meeting anxiety, we can gain confidence and actively participate.

Here's a few ideas that may serve to help you get rid of such anxiety.

1. Understand the problem for what it really is. Meeting anxiety stems from a fear of being seen as inadequate. We'll get something wrong, or get criticized by the boss. Coworkers will judge us.

The reality. We're not the only one feeling this way. More than likely, several people in the room are worried, just like you.

We'll give you the fix in just a moment, but remember this principle: *what people think about me is none of my business.*

I've said it before and it's worth going over it again. Do not spend time worrying about this. Do your work well and treat people even better, and none of this will ever be a factor. Now, the fix for the worry...

2. Be prepared. One of the most effective ways to eliminate meeting anxiety is by knowing your stuff. Get a copy of the meeting agenda, with topics and objectives. Being

well-prepared, you will feel confident in your knowledge, reducing anxiety. An old mentor in the training field once told me how he dealt with anxiety before a speech or training class. He would say, "I know what I know, and I'm glad you're here." I've used that for years.

3. Be an active listener. Pay attention to what is being said in the meeting, not just on what you think might be your time to contribute. What if you're asked to comment on a point raised by someone else?

By doing so, you can gain valuable insights, build on existing discussions, and contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

4. When it's your time to speak, relax your face, clear your throat, and maybe take a sip of water. Then, speak with energy and clarity. As you hear your own voice come out with power and authority, it will reinforce your confidence.

5. Reference work, ideas, and opinions of others. Recognize that meetings are meant for collective problem-solving and knowledge sharing. Coworkers will appreciate your giving their work and ideas a positive stroke.

Overcoming meeting anxiety is a journey that requires practice and self-belief. There was a time in my life when I was plagued by a nearly uncontrollable stutter. The thought of being called upon to say anything in front of a group was terrifying. If you suffer from this meeting anxiety, I've been there and I understand. Use these ideas and see if it helps.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3FM, the Ray Gibson Show, and First Hawaiian Bank, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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