

Stage Fright II

It made the Beatles vomit before their stadium shows. It kept Barbara Streisand from live performances for over a decade. It causes dry mouths, shaky voices, sweaty palms, rapid heart-beat, shallow breathing, rigid muscles and frequent trips to the bathroom. For some it is butterflies in the stomach, for others it is a panic attack. These are the symptoms of stage fright. Also known as performance anxiety, it is an irrational but often devastating fear of embarrassing oneself. It exacerbates issues of worth, self-esteem and confidence. It is literally all in the mind but the mind sends the body into a physical state that is not supportive to best performance.

1. At the first sign of nerves, move the body in slow steady controlled movements. Walk with long strides, swing the arms like a pendulum, do stretches or yoga.
2. Fear triggers a fight or flight response in the body causing the digestive system to shut down and consequently the saliva ducts to close. Necessary lubrication for the vocal folds is then not available no matter how much water you drink. To stimulate the saliva glands, try sugar free lozenges or suck on your finger. Avoid anything that will coat the throat like sugar, milk products, peanut butter, nuts, or chewing gum. (212)
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