

## MODULE 3 – WRITING A SCRIPT, PART II

By now, you have written the introduction and conclusion to your presentation. You must be wondering when you will get to the public speaking part of this course.

Well, before you speak in public, you need to be sure of what you are going to say. Have full confidence in that and you will be far more relaxed.

What we are going to look at in this Module is basically the middle section of your talk, the body of it, although our comments on the use of language can apply equally to the Introduction and the Conclusion, if appropriate.

We are going to look at language and also at some basic things to do and things not to do when writing and giving your talk.

Let's look first at the correct use of language. When we say correct we are not talking about grammatical correctness, though this is highly desirable as well, but about correctness from a marketing point of view. When you stand up on a stage to give a talk, you are marketing yourself, your therapy and, to a certain extent, all alternative therapists. If you are going to talk in public at all, use words and phrases which serve your purpose.

### WORDS, PHRASES AND SENTENCES

These are words, phrases and sentences which have been proven to work.

- **Words**

Words have power. The right words at the right time can induce you to buy things you don't particularly want, they can help you convey important ideas and impressions, they can be used to paint a vivid picture of a person or an event. Unfortunately, using the *wrong* words can sabotage your attempts to carry your audience with you, no matter how good your ideas or your skill as a therapist.

Thus, one of the easiest ways to improve your presentation skills is to become aware of certain words which must be used sparingly, if at all.

These words are:

**I and me.**

Why? Because your audience wants to know how what you have to say relates to them. They are, quite honestly, not that interested in you except as a therapist. They are there, listening to you, because they feel your talk might benefit them. They are primarily interested in themselves. The easiest way to relate something to them is to use the word "you" as much as possible, and to avoid the words "I" and "me".

You might be asking yourself how on earth you are going to give a talk on your particular therapy without using those words. Well, you can use them, but do so sparingly. There are times when it is unavoidable. However, what you need to do is to go through your script and see if there is a way to reword it so that every “I” becomes a “you” and every “me” becomes a “your”.

Use “your” and “you” instead of “the”. An example of this might be, “your consultation with a therapist,” instead of “the consultation with a therapist.” Once again, it relates what you are saying to each individual listening, instead of allowing it to be merely a generalised statement.

- **Phrases**

Avoid hackneyed phrases and clichés.

What are hackneyed phrases? They are phrases which have been used so often that they have lost their impact. Sometimes, in fact, they can sound contrived or even comical. Often they sound incredibly insincere. An every day classic example of this is “we apologise for any inconvenience” on a notice board when your train has been cancelled. This is saying something for the sake of saying something and filling a blank space on a board. You don’t want to do the same thing with your talks! They certainly are not going to make your speech sound convincing.

Another good example of a hackneyed phrase is “I’m hearing you.” This smacks of ‘therapy speak’ and just happens to be a pet hate of one of the authors.

- Don’t use long or complex words.

Even if the correct technical word to use is a long one, find a simpler way to express what you need to say. One trick is to use the technical term and then say something like, “...or to put that another way,.....”

If you use complex words, you will lose part of your audience, who will simply not be familiar with those words, and you will lose another part who will think you are being pretentious. Don’t alienate any part of your audience by doing this because it is unnecessary.

- Keep your sentences short.

The longer the sentence, the more likely people are to either lose track of what you are saying or to misunderstand you. Don’t forget, also, that what seems a reasonably short sentence when seen on paper may seem a far longer one when someone has to listen to it. Don’t be terse, but err on the side of shortness.

- Make sure the transition between the points you make is smooth. Some words and phrases are ideal for allowing you to slide from one idea or point to the next, without making it clear that you are leaving one topic and starting on another. In effect, they prevent the audience from seeing the joins in your speech. We call them link words or phrases.

You can build up your own list of useful words and phrases, but some to get you started are:

“Therefore”  
“Thus”  
“And so, as you can see..”  
“And this leads me to...”  
“What’s more....”  
“In addition...”  
“However....”  
“In the same way....”  
“A second point is ....”  
“Then”  
“Similarly”  
“For example”  
“So”  
“And of course”.

- Use attention-grabbing words and phrases

These are words and phrases which subconsciously tell your audience that you are about to say something interesting. Examples of this are:

“Now – and this is interesting....”  
“And I’m going to tell you why.”  
“You might ask yourself....”  
“One thing you might want to know is.....”  
“One thing more.”

Obviously, if you use this technique, you than have to produce some interesting fact or statement. Look at it from your audience’s point of view (note the use of “you” instead of “the”). What will be interesting to *them*?

### **GENERAL POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN WRITING YOUR SPEECH**

- Simplify and simplify again. Anything that can be misunderstood, will be.
- Write out a list of points you want to make. Number them.

## **AVOID**

- Long, complex sentences
- Complex or technical words
- Hackneyed phrases and cliches
- “Everyone” or “they”.

Those words are too generalised.

- “Um”, “Ah”, “Er” and other similar words.

You will probably have to work at this one, but these will disappear of their own accord as your confidence grows.

### **Put as many facts as possible into your talk**

Providing your audience with facts, and stating them to be facts, gives you credibility. It also implies (a) that you know your subject, and (b) that you are professional enough to have done some research. After all, you obtained that fact from somewhere.

### **Put as many references as possible into your talk**

Whatever your opinion on the subject most people, especially those with no prior experience of alternative therapies, will be far more satisfied with what you are saying – and thus more receptive to your ideas – if you can back up the points you make with some authoritative reference, such as the names of universities or medical bodies.

### **Use numbers and statistics where possible**

Numbers and statistics impress people. There is the feeling that they are real and checkable. This is particularly important for you as a therapist because there is still a belief that at least some alternative therapists are airheads and have been seduced by an idea which is not backed up by any data or facts whatsoever.

### **Notes and handouts**

Bear in mind that if you plan to distribute notes or material, do this at the end of your talk otherwise you will find that people’s attention will be divided between what you are saying and reading your material. This is human nature and it is something which experienced speakers are at pains to prevent. It merits its place as one of the golden rules of public speaking and presentation.

## **Use other modalities**

Don't forget that people can see as well as hear. Use visual aids. A flip chart is an under rated aid for a speaker. It can be used to jot down key words or points and to keep them prominently displayed throughout your presentation.

## **MIDDLE SECTION**

In Module 2, you worked on the introduction and conclusion to your speech. Having now worked through Module 3, you have much more information at your fingertips and you can now tackle the body - the middle section - of your presentation,

In general, there are three ways you can tackle this.

1. You can simply not do any planning or writing in advance, hoping inspiration will strike on the day. This option is not recommended, unless you wish to qualify for one of those Japanese quiz shows which specialise in people making fools of themselves in public.
2. You can write your script out word for word in advance. This is what we want you to do as an exercise for this Module (see below), because we want you to use some of the techniques explained so far in this course. In practical terms, though, this is not the idea thing to do when presenting material.
3. You can either make short notes or draw a flow diagram, showing your train of thought and how one idea or point flows logically into the next.

## **Pros and cons of each method**

### ***Method 1***

We made something of a joke of this but you would be surprised at the number of people who arrive to give a presentation with no script and nothing prepared. There are usually two reasons for this. The most common is that because they are not entirely happy with public speaking, the task of preparing the presentation automatically becomes an onerous one, to be pushed aside for as long as possible in favour of "more important" tasks. Invariably, the night before the presentation, when that therapist knows he absolutely must finally sit down and do some work, something crops up. The result is that he arrives for the presentation harassed, nervous, knowing he's under-prepared and he has effectively sabotaged himself before he has begun,. His rationale the night before, when he chose to go to bed rather than to work through the night on his presentation, was that if there's one certainty, it's that he knows his subject. All right, his talk isn't going to be brilliant, but he is sure he can talk for thirty minutes about this therapy.

Ah yes, but he's forgotten - or has never realised - one thing. "*Talking*" and "*giving a talk*" are two completely different things. Talking is what you do face to face or over the

phone. It contains a large element of spontaneity because what you say is influenced by what the other person says.

Giving a talk implies that you are starting at a particular point in order to reach a conclusion. You are going to take a straight path between the two, and you are going to explain yourself in a way which makes this path both clear and obvious to the people to whom you are speaking. The appropriate word here is "logical". The path you take between the beginning and the end must be logical and the way you explain it must be logical to those listening. You are going to follow a logical sequence of events and explain this sequence in language that everyone listening can understand. This has nothing to do with inspiration and creativity (public presentations rarely do, although the aim is to make them look that way): it has everything to do with logic and planning.

It is very, very hard to create and follow a logical sequence when standing in front of numerous people who you know have made the effort to come and hear you speak. Inspiration may strike, but can you rely on it striking in the right order?

The message is, never go unprepared to a presentation.

### ***Method 2***

There are two main problems with reading word for word from a script:

1. If your hands shake with nervousness at any stage (and most of us suffer from that, especially at the beginning), the text will be blurred and you won't be able to see it. This can be disastrous if you've been relying on that text. It leaves you way out on a limb, with all your information on a page which is bobbing up and down so much that you can't see it.
2. The second problem is that when you normally look at a piece of paper, it is usually roughly twelve inches or less away from your eyes. Most people who type out their speech type it in normal sized letters. Now, when this is eighteen inches or two feet away from your eyes, as it might well be if you are standing and holding it in your hands, you won't be able to read it: the typeface is too small.

The sensible thing to do, of course, is to enlarge the size of the typeface. However, using a typeface which is large enough for you to read comfortably at this distance will result in your holding what looks like a bible, rather than a script. This will look silly.

This doesn't mean that you can't write out your script in full beforehand - simply that it can be difficult to try to read it word for word in front of your audience.

There are, in fact, positive benefits to be obtained from writing out your script in advance as you can note down the points you wish to include and the presentation tricks you wish to incorporate.

- You can write the script out in plain English, which will give you some idea of its length and thus whether you need to put in more material or take out some points.
- You can scan and alter the script in order to avoid the kind of mistakes we have pointed out in this course.
- You can scan and alter your words to take advantage of some of the tricks we have shown you in this course.
- You can check to see whether one point flows logically into the next, thus giving you a logical sequence all the way through.
- You can check the beginning and end of each paragraph to see that the last sentence of each paragraph leads to the first sentence of the next.
- You can mark words, phrases and sentences where you intend to use voice emphasis or oratorical techniques (covered in Module 5).
- Having carried out any such changes, you can read your script to find out exactly how long your presentation is going to take.

Thus, writing out the full script you intend to present has overwhelming advantages. We would say that if you fail to do this, you are going to your presentation inadequately prepared.

Writing out a script, therefore, is a stage in your preparation, and should not be treated as the end result.

### ***Method 3***

If you have a naturally logical and orderly mind, you might want to start the preparation for writing your script by drawing out a flow chart. This means that you put down one or two sentences for each topic you want to cover, to make sure your sequence is logical. What you do then, when you are sure it is correct, is to expand each of these points by writing out your text.

You were probably taught this method at school for planning your essays.

It is an excellent technique but only a minority of people are able to think in such a concise and logical manner. The rest of us tend to have *some* idea of what we want to say, to jot down notes and allow other ideas to grow from that. What we advise is that you continue doing this, and make your flowchart at the end, when all your ideas are on paper in note form, but before you begin any substantive writing. By doing this, you will be able to see where your logical sequence falls down (if, of course, it does).

Thus, when you have completed this stage of your preparation, you should have one flow diagram and one completed script. Your script may not yet be perfect, but it has a good skeleton and has already acquired quite a lot of meat. Moreover, because you've spent some time working on it and manipulating the ideas into the correct sequence, you are becoming very familiar with it. This constitutes good preparation.