



Tackling Presentation Anxiety at Graduate School

What makes presenting in front of a group so difficult?

Presentation Anxiety (or presentation phobia) comes from the fear of being evaluated negatively or criticized. Those who suffer from presentation anxiety may feel humiliated and embarrassed for what they interpret as their own inadequacy. Fears can range from the **real** e.g. possibility of memory failure to the **unreal** e.g. possibility of death.

Reflection Questions

Does your anxiety get in the way of you making a great presentation? If so, how?

What factors have contributed to your fear of presenting?

Which of your fears are founded (e.g. forgetting something) and which are unfounded (e.g. fear of death)?

L. John Mason, founder of the Stress Education Center, states that ***“The fear of making a presentation is the most common phobia that exists. It ranks with the fear of death as a traumatic experience, probably because people unconsciously fear that the attention directed at them when they are making a presentation will somehow expose them to dangers that may lead to death! This unfounded fear (in most normal situations) paralyzes millions of people and keeps them from moving ahead in their careers...”***

www.anxiety2calm.com/guest_presentation_anxiety.shtml

This is an excellent website providing information about many types of anxieties.

Richard Kummins, a former president of the Daybreakers Toastmasters Club in Houston, says a number of issues may combine to cause presentation anxiety:

- childhood criticism from parents and teachers
- the message that one's never quite good enough
- the compulsive need to be perfect and so not attempting difficult things

http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/personal_development/78839

Many graduate students worry about the opinions and judgments of their peers and professors which is driven, to some extent, by the pressure to perform to the highest standard all the time. Add to this having to stand in the spotlight, with nowhere to hide for 20-30 minutes, and the result can be a meltdown for some students.



What are the obstacles?

Common responses to high level of presentation anxiety are:

- Forgetting what you have prepared
- Reduced eye contact or fixating on one spot or person in the room
- Shaking voice and hands or fidgeting
- Stilted movements or pacing
- Constricted breathing and possibly feeling like you are going to pass out
- Poor voice quality: flat, monotonous or very fast

Reflection Questions

How does your body react to presentation anxiety?

What thoughts are behind your anxiety?

Behind these responses are worries or fears about oneself as a presenter. These negative thoughts often get played over and over before presentation day, reinforcing them. Reframing negative thoughts into balanced, workable thoughts is the key.

Common thoughts might include:

What if people think my information is boring/ not well thought out, etc?

What if I can't answer a question? I'll look stupid.

I'm a lousy presenter.

What if I freeze up and can't remember?

For ESL speakers: *What if the audience can't understand my English?*

Overcoming Presentation Anxiety

Anything done for the first time, or even the first few times, involves some anticipation or fear. Overcoming the fear of public speaking requires *training* and *learning* in a supportive atmosphere. Self-confidence will grow with each exposure.

Reflection Questions

Describe what your body is feeling when you have a good amount of stress

What anti-anxiety strategies have you employed in the past? Which worked best?

Differentiate Helpful from Unhelpful Stress

You need to feel some stress before your presentation. You want to be neither too calm nor too anxious. You need a bit of adrenaline, produced during the stress response, to pump you up and give you the enthusiastic approach audiences love. So, it's important to be aware of how your body feels when you are experiencing stress which helps you, e.g. clear focus, a pang of excitement, versus bodily sensations indicating negative stress, e.g. racing heart, fuzzy head, nausea. Make a list of these bodily sensations so that you can compare them if and when your body starts to show signs of unwanted/unhelpful stress.

Strategies to use BEFORE a presentation

Preparation & Rehearsal Strategies

Presenters who are well prepared experience LESS stress.

- Never throw a presentation together at the last minute. Give yourself lots of time to prepare salient content, clear structure, and visual aids.
- Eliminate as many unknowns as possible: know the audience, the room lay-out, the equipment.
- Connect what you are saying to your core values and passions. What differentiates a good from a great presentation is the “difference between what you know and what you believe”.¹
- Know how to structure and organize an academic presentation. If you are unfamiliar with organizing a formal presentation, ask your supervisor, colleagues, and read books or website tips. Consider taking a presentation skills workshop delivered by Learning Strategies Development. Register at www.queensu.ca/qlc.

¹ This idea is sourced from “Executive Presentation Skills Workshop Manual”. Quintilian Executive Communication ©2005

- Rehearse between 3-5 times: less than 3 you might stumble over your words and more than 5 might cause you to memorize the presentation.



Physical/Relaxation Strategies

- Controlled and deep breathing: breathing deeply and slowly from the diaphragm will slow the heart rate and increase blood flow to the brain
TOOL*: [Take a Deep Breath and Relax](#)
- Mindfulness: stay in your body, in the present, without judging
TOOLS: [Mindful Walking](#) and [Mindful Body Scan](#)
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation: tensing and relaxing muscle groups can gently loosen tight spots
TOOL: [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)
- Warm your hands and feet
- Avoid stimulants (caffeine, cigarettes)
- Drink water

*All TOOLS included in the APPENDIX OF TOOLS



Cognitive Coping Strategies

- Concentrate on the advantages to public speaking, e.g. disseminating your research.
- Realize that you have knowledge or experience from which others can benefit. If you are seen as an expert, people want to hear what you have to say.
- Build awareness: know what thoughts cause you to feel anxious about a presentation.
TOOL: [Recognizing your stress-inducing self talk](#)
- Use positive affirmations: Writing things down helps to imprint our thoughts, so consider writing out a list of positive affirmations in the 1st person, present tense. Review and repeat them frequently. *e.g. I am a good presenter. My smile engages the audience. I am confident with my topic. I have excellent strategies to help me cope...*

- Imagine yourself as a brilliant presenter. Even if you've never felt this way, it's important to see yourself in the most positive light. Olympic athletes who do physical and mental training show great improvement. Like a runner before a race, envisage yourself winning, not losing. Focus on your goals, not the pitfalls along the way. Every time you think of your presentation, run through the visualization to prevent any negative thoughts from filtering into your mind.

TOOL: Visualizing Success—Seeing yourself as a brilliant presenter

- Use coping statements: Combined with relaxation from deep breathing, these statement help you cope during a stressful situation. Although it's better to create your own stress-coping statements and memorize them, the **TOOL** provides some examples to get you started.
TOOL: Coping Statements
- Recall past successes: When we are very anxious, we often forget about the positive experiences we have had with presentations. Try to recall past presentations in which you received encouraging feedback and maybe even accolades or felt satisfied with your content and delivery.

Strategies to use DURING a presentation

The Introduction

You are usually the most nervous during the first few minutes of a presentation.

- Use an attention grabber: Start by grabbing the audience's attention, rather than the traditional "*Good afternoon. My name iszzzzzzzz*". Stand up, look at the audience for a pause, and then hit them with the grabber. For example grabbers see:
TOOL: You got my Attention! Attention Grabbers for Presentations
- Memorize the first 2 minutes: Go ahead and memorize the first 2 minutes BUT ONLY THAT! You don't want to sound scripted.

Using your BODY to help you relax

- Be enthusiastic is the number one strategy. When you project enthusiasm and passion (through gestures, eye contact and vocal energy), the audience responds positively and your fears and worries

"Your success as a presenter will be judged by how you project your passion for your topic, your compassion for the audience and your over-all enthusiasm."

*George Stewart,
Quintilain
Executive
Communication,
2005*

dissolve. When you are in the moment full of enthusiasm, it is rare that you forget or stumble over your words.

- **Keep breathing:** Breathing high in the chest or shallow breathing is an indication of stress. If you notice that you have shortness of breath during the presentation, take a pause to breathe. You might wish to do this covertly by picking up your water, taking a deep breath and then a sip of water. Standing up straight will also help with oxygen flow.
- **Vocal control:** Breathe naturally and drop your shoulders to relax your throat. Slightly lower the tone/pitch of your voice. Project beyond the back row of the audience. Speak slowly so the audience can follow your talk.
- **Eye contact:** Having eye contact not only helps control your audience's attention, it can increase their interest in your talk. When you see that the audience is interested, you gain confidence and begin to relax.
- **If your body wants to move, then do so:** walk around (but don't pace) and get as close as possible to the audience.
- **Smile:** the more you are engaged with the audience, the more you will naturally relax.
- **Hide stress in a muscle:** Take what could be shaking hands or voice and move the energy to an area of the body invisible to the audience e.g. tense your toe or calf muscle.

Allies not Foes

Especially at the beginning of the presentation, look for at least one ally in the audience—someone who looks open and interested in you and your ideas. Looking at audience members with closed or negative body language too early may lead to increased worry and negative thoughts. It is alright to avoid direct eye contact with hostile looking audience members but you should make an effort at least gloss over them with your eyes so you appear assertive and confident.

Tell a story

All people love a good story so if appropriate, engage your audience by telling them Your Story (i.e. your methods and results). Adding a human element with direct, 1st person speech gives your talk a friendly, personal tone rather than a stilted, text-book one, e.g. *“I did this and then I did that, but that didn't work so I did something else”*.

The Q&A Session

The Question & Answer period (which typically involves unpredictable questions) can add to your anxiety because not everything is in your control, e.g. hostile audience, a question you can't answer immediately, or not feeling “smart” enough.

Responding to Questions

- Say “What are your questions?” instead of “Are there any questions?” The former prompts discussion rather than offering an opportunity not to ask questions.
- Listen carefully and thank the person.
- Collect your thoughts before you answer: you might buy yourself time by paraphrasing or restating the question.
- Be brief, direct and concise. Answers that last 10 to 40 seconds work best. If they are too short, they seem abrupt; while longer answers appear too elaborate.
- Be concrete and specific. Keep on track. Do not let off-the-wall questions sidetrack you into areas that are not relevant to the presentation.
- Admit when you don't know the answer. You are expected to know the information boundaries for the presentation not all possible information. If you don't know an answer, say so and then offer to find the answer: “*I'm sorry but this was not part of my research, but I'd be happy to look for...and get back to you.*” Never try to make up an answer; the audience will be onto you in a flash.

Reflective Questions

What worries you most about the Q&A session?

Before your talk, are you clear about your knowledge or information boundaries?

Responding to Difficult Questions

- Be firm and polite
- Fight fire with ice water: if you sense that the questioner is hostile, stay cool. Thank the person for his/her question and reply with a calm and collected tone of voice.
- Move on quickly to the next question
- Save the last word for yourself, e.g. summarize the main themes arising from the questions, highlight new areas of interest, etc.

FOR English Second Language Speakers...

- Rehearse more than 3-5 times
- Memorize your introduction
- Structure your visuals so that the images convey most of the story to the audience
- Remember that 93% of communication is **non-verbal**

Irrespective of your language proficiency, do **not** read your presentation.



APPENDIX OF TOOLS



Take A Deep Breath and Relax

How Deep Breathing Works

While babies breathe from the belly, adults tend to breathe from the chest causing shallower breathing. Consequently, less oxygen is taken in with each inhalation and the blood is forced to move through our system very quickly so that enough oxygen gets to the brain and organs. Deep breathing can reverse these effects.

Calming Breath Exercise: 5 In – 5 Hold – 5 Out

This calming breath exercise will help you achieve a deep state of relaxation quickly. Use it when you feel anxiety coming on. It will also reduce panic reactions such as hyperventilation. A note of caution: avoid taking excessively deep breaths repeatedly and stop the exercise if you feel faint.

1. Sit, stand, or lie down — up to you. If sitting, ensure both feet are planted on the floor. Wear loose, comfortable clothing.
2. Breathing from the abdomen, inhale slowly through the nose to the count of 5. 1...2...3...4...5 as you inhale. Imagine a balloon in your belly beginning to fill slowly with air. You may wish to put a hand on your belly to feel this sensation.
3. Pause and hold your breath for 5 breaths.
4. Exhale slowly, through the nose or mouth, to a count of 5. Feel “the balloon” in your belly deflating slowly. Exhale fully.

Do this for about 2 minutes or more each time.

As you relax more and more, you may increase the counting to 6, 7, or more.

Added Options

Use words

- Use words on the inhalation and exhalation. E.G. Inhale say “in” and exhale say “out”. Try the word RELAX: Inhale say “re”; exhale say “lax”. Or, the phrase CALM DOWN. Inhale say “calm”; exhale say “down”.

Use imagery

- Adding a peaceful, safe scene to your breathing will increase the relaxation effect. Imagine breathing in ocean air, the scent of the forest, a flower.

Effects of Deep Breathing

Because it releases the body’s own painkillers (endorphins), deep breathing can relieve muscular-skeletal tension, headaches, stomach aches, and sleeplessness. It allows blood pressure to return to normal, which is good for your heart. Take time to practise deep breathing every day. By extending your practice to a month or longer, you will begin to retrain yourself to breathe from the abdomen

Your breath goes with you wherever you go so you can use it anytime, anywhere.



Mindful Walking

Mindfulness is about being present. It is all about being showing up, about being fully present to your life, as it is right now, without trying to change it in any way. You'll be glad to know that mindfulness is not about closing your eyes and focusing on your breath all day long.

Just remember... there are no expectations. This exercise is mindful and that means that you remain detached and non-judgmental of whatever comes to mind. If you find this hard, be mindful of your (perceived lack of) mindfulness. Doing a mindfulness exercise means you're doing it right –so you can't go wrong.

Some people use walking meditation instead of breathing meditation. All you do in walking meditation is walk and focus on the sensation of walking. That is your focus as opposed to your breath. In walking meditation, you are not trying to get anywhere. To reinforce this, you walk in circles around a room or up and down a hall. This gives your mind the message that there's no use hurrying since you are not going anywhere anyway. Walking is generally a pleasant and relaxing experience for both mind and body, and an excellent way to release stress or restless energy.

You can begin by focusing on your legs, feet or your whole body. It isn't the walking speed that matters so much as focusing fully on the activity. Some people find it helpful to slow their walking and pay attention to each part of each step while others wobble when slow and need to speed things up. Just go with whatever feels right to you.

If your mind wanders from the focus, notice where it has gone, then respectfully escort it back to the walking. People who are agitated may find walking meditation a good meditation to do (there's a reason we pace when we're agitated). Preferably do your mindfulness activities in a private spot, either in your home or in your yard.

Now let's start...

Stand straight, head up, feet about shoulder width. You're forming a solid stance, firm base.

Feel your balance, how you're shifting slightly back and forth, from side to side. Normally this happens automatically. Become aware of these minor movements.

Feel the soles of your feet, roll gently back and forth to emphasize the sensation of your feet against the ground.

Focus on a point in front of you. It's time for your first step...

Rolling forwards, push off with your right foot and s-l-o-w-l-y take a step.

For a couple of seconds, feel how your leg moves through the air. The sensation of impact as your heel touches the ground.

Slow, fluid movements...

Now push off with your left leg. Feel how your right leg muscles are balancing your body as your left leg travels through the air and touches the ground.



Mindful Walking (con't)

Take 5 slow, fluid steps like this. Then halt and turn around. Now walk back to your starting point, close to normal speed this time. Did you feel the difference? This time you relied more on sight and less on feeling your balance and your senses didn't you?

Slowing down the pace, we tend to become aware of other, lesser used senses.

Now repeat the slow walk and return.

Let's have some fun.

Pretend to be running in slow-motion. You're now the hero of a movie chasing down the bad guy. Or, pretend you are a model walking in slow-motion down the catwalk. Walk, look... and turn!

After you're done stand still for a minute and feel your mind and body.

Simply **observe any sensations or feelings**. Whenever you become aware of any thoughts or sensations, remain mindful and detached and let the sensations go. When a new thought or sensation comes, let that one go.

Become aware of the **gentle, fluid movements** within your mind.

Thoughts and sensations are replaced by other thoughts and sensations - a perpetual, impermanent cycle. This is natural, just as the moving, changing sensations in your body, coming and going as you walk.

Final thoughts

Hopefully your mind enjoyed the break from habitual patterns and thinking about what-to-do-next. You didn't achieve a destination, you were just moving. Mindfulness is more about living than exercising. If you can learn to establish awareness during walking meditation—when you are physically moving with your eyes open—then it won't be difficult to arouse that same wakeful quality during other activities, such as eating, washing dishes or driving. It will be easier for you to arouse mindfulness when you walk to your car or during any other time. Your mindfulness will become a habit that will begin to permeate your entire life.

References (compiled from)

1. Mindfulness Activities in Slo-o-ow Motion <http://www.meditation-techniques-for-happiness.com/mindfulness-activities.html>
2. Mindful Nature Walking (One Step at a Time) <http://www.yogajournal.com/practice/773>



Mindful- Body Scan

In this exercise, we will be scanning the body in deliberate stages. A tense body is hard and solid while a relaxed body is a fluid play of sensations. The body scan acts like a biofeedback mechanism — the body is led back to health. Using the sensations in each place to hold your attention brings subtle tensions to the surface. You can scan up or down, fast or slow whichever you wish. You could imagine massaging or flooding the body with a white or golden light, or say an affirmations or mantra while you scan. You could scan up or down the central axis points of the body, the charkas.

PRACTICE

Preparing for the Body Scan

1. Notice how you're sitting and let go of any unnecessary tension. Shift from thinking to sensing, from active to passive. Come into the present. This is how you escape the thoughts of the past and future. Let the mind settle on its own accord.
2. Let the body soften, back straight, let the neck sit naturally over the body.
3. Check out the breath now. Sigh gently a couple times, to loosen it up. Let everything breathe out.
4. Focus on your body now. You can adjust your posture at any time.
5. Let all sensations surface, whether they are pleasant or not.

Scan body over 7 Breaths

We will scan the body over 7 breaths.

7 as you breathe out, relax the scalp and forehead

6 soften the face

5 neck and shoulders, arms and hands. [It's like touching each part of the body with your mind.]

4 feel the chest rise and fall, expand and contract

3 feel the solar plexus, diaphragm move and your back against the chair

2 soften the belly completely as you breath out

1 feel the weight of your buttocks and hips against the chair; your legs, and your feet against the floor

Now sense your body as a whole, observing it non-judgmentally. Be comfortable in your body just as it is. The mind calm and alert, just watching. Don't be annoyed by the background mental traffic; it rarely disappears completely.

Zooming in to a place of tension

Now use the mind as a zoom lens and sink into one place where you still feel tension, a pain, an irritation, almost anything. Start to massage this place from inside. You could imagine massaging or flooding this area with a white or golden light. You might notice warmth or tingling or heaviness. How do you feel? You might notice little aches or fatigue, but that's a good sign you are relaxing.

Coming back

...notice the sounds around now as your scope widens to include the outside world. Take one last breath, open your eyes, and return to the here and now.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This exercise asks you to tense and release various muscles. If you have a special problem with any of the muscle groups, you can either skip that part of the exercise or do it very gently. During the exercise you can keep your eyes open or closed, whichever is more comfortable for you. Take a moment to get comfortable in your resting place. If you are in a chair, you may wish to uncross your arms and legs and make sure your back and neck are comfortable.

Feet & Legs

Begin by lifting the feet slightly off the floor. Point your feet and curl the toes under until the toes are scrunched into a little ball. Curl as far as you need to feel the tension without strain. Concentrate on holding the toes and count to 5. Now uncurl your toes and gently drop your feet to the floor. Feel the blood rushing into the feet, thighs and calves. Can you feel the difference between the tension and relaxation?

Buttocks/Low Back

Next slowly, drawing your knees together and imagine placing a penny between the knees. Explore the sensation of your knees pressing into the coin. Can you feel the edges of the coin? How about the smooth flatness of its face? While you press and hold, breathe in and out, slowly and evenly. Now hold for 5. And release. Study the difference between the tension and the relaxation in the buttock, low back, and pelvis.

Stomach

Take your mind's eye to your navel. Take a deep breath in and watch the navel push outwards. Exhale evenly and pull the navel towards the spine till you have squeezed all the air from your lungs. Hold for 5. Release and let the navel settle back to its normal resting place. Now let the breathing go back to its natural rhythm and the stomach totally relax. Relax deeply into the heaviness of your relaxed stomach.

Shoulders

Move to the shoulders. Shrug both shoulders up to your ears as high as they will go without straining. While you hold, listen to the tension in your shoulders. What is it saying to you? Hold for 5. Drop your shoulders back to their normal resting place and enjoy the calming breath. Allow the warmth and heaviness of the relaxation to suffuse this area.

Arms/Hands

Move to the arms and hands. Clench both your fists and bend your elbows, bringing your fists towards your chest. While you hold be aware of the tension in your hands, forearms and biceps. Continue to breathe in and out while you hold for 5. Now, open the hands slowly and feel the blood racing back into each finger. Study the warmth created by the fresh surge of blood or any other sensations you experience.

Facial Muscles

Now move to the muscles of the face. Playfully make a big frown. Feel the corners of your mouth pull down till you look like a sad clown. At the same time, you may squint your eyes, clench your jaw and wrinkle up your nose. Whichever feels right for you. Enjoy imagining what you look like at this moment as you hold for 5. Let go and return to a relaxed expression. Be amazed by the softness of the face.



Identifying Your Stress-Inducing Self Talk

The next time you feel presentation anxiety, pause to analyze what thoughts were going through your mind about the situation, i.e., identify your “self-talk”.

1. Write down some of the examples of your self-talk.

Consider...

Why is this situation a problem for me?

*What's **really** upsetting me?*

What was I saying to myself that caused my stress to increase?

Is my self-image or self-esteem feeling threatened?

Am I feeling intimidated or rejected?

What fears, beliefs, insecurities may be operating here?

2. Notice if there are any patterns to your self-talk (bet there is!).

3. Notice whether your stress level lowers after you understand why you got upset.

Adapted from: Posen, D. (2003). *The Little Book of Stress Relief*. Toronto: Key Porter Books Ltd.



Coping Statements

Although it's better to create your own stress-coping statement, here are some examples to get you started. These coping statements were designed as part of psychologist, Dr. Donald Meichenbaum's, Stress Inoculation Training program.

1. PREPARATION

- There's nothing to worry about.
- I'm going to be all right.
- I've succeeded with this before.
- I know I can do this.
- It's easier once I get started.
- Tomorrow I'll be through it.

2. CONFRONTING THE STRESSFUL SITUATION

- I can do this; I'm doing it now.
- I can only do my best.
- Any tension I feel is a signal to use my coping exercises.
- If I don't think about fear, I won't be afraid.

3. COPING WITH NEGATIVE EFFECTS

- Relax now!
- Just breathe deeply.
- There's an end to it.
- Keep my mind on the task at hand.
- I can keep this within limits I can handle.
- I am only afraid if I decide to be. I can decide not to be.
- I've survived this and worse before.

4. REINFORCING SUCCESS

- I did all right. I did well.
- Next time I won't have to worry so much.
- I am able to relax away anxiety.
- It's possible not to be scared. All I have to do is stop thinking I'm scared.

Source: Davis, M., Eshelma, E.R. & McKay, M. (2000). 5th edition. *The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.



Visualizing Success—Seeing yourself as a brilliant presenter

Before you start this visualization, take a moment to relax your mind and body. Do some deep breathing and/or a body scan.

Once you feel relaxed, close your eyes and gently turn your mind inward.

Imagine yourself preparing for a presentation. You feel completely relaxed. You see yourself going over your materials, confidently and calmly.

Now, imagine yourself on the day of a presentation: you feel completely relaxed and your mind is clear and focused.

It's time to make your presentation. With full self-assurance, you walk to the front of the room.

Notice your surroundings. You scan the audience and see that they look open and receptive. You smile at the audience and they smile back. As you begin to present, you are relaxed and focused and it doesn't matter if you stumble over a word or make a mistake.

You're now halfway through the presentation. You feel relaxed and happy. You hear yourself presenting all the information you have prepared. The audience nods in agreement.

Your formal presentation is now over and it's time for the question period. You remain completely relaxed. You feel excitement and happy anticipation to share your knowledge and ideas with the audience.

You are now finished and you calmly gather up your resources. Your body feels light and you have a smile on your face. Savour this feeling.

This visualization has been modified from Dr. Jim Elliot's CD script on presentation anxiety. Dr. Elliot is the manager of Student Transition and Retention Team (START) program, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia.

<http://unilife.curtin.edu.au/start.cfm>



You got MY Attention! **Attention Grabbers for Presentations**

Attention grabbers must be short (30 seconds or less), punchy, and very interesting.

Types of Grabbers

Shocking statistic: e.g. 16% of U.S. children are obese

Anecdote, personal experience (keep it very short)

Quote or saying: e.g. “*A business that makes nothing but money is a poor business.*” Henry Ford

Surprising or provocative thought: e.g. Within our life time, we will own domestic robots which will perform our household chores.

A sensory object: a picture, model, sound/music, smell, a physical action.
e.g. Memory skills presentation: have the audience smell sprigs of rosemary. Then explain that recent studies indicate the smell of rosemary enhances memory.

HAHAHA What about a joke?

Use jokes with great caution. Unless the joke matches perfectly to your content, avoid it. Humour is very personal and also culturally bound so your joke might not “translate”. You don’t want to risk offending your audience or turning the grabber into a moaner.