

Red Alert! How to React When You Blank

August 22, 2011 by [Martha Newman, J.D., PCC, TopLawyerCoach, LLC](#)



4 Ways to Avoid Panic When Your Mind Goes BLANK

It has happened to the best of us. You prepare, you're ready, you walk out, and then you FREEZE. You can't remember the first thing you were going to say. Heck, you can't even remember your middle name.

It's hard not to panic in that situation. A little voice inside our head wants to answer that "red alert" signal by running and hiding. But before you sink like quicksand, here are a few tips to help keep you calm, cool, and collected the next time you blank.

1. Power back up.

Much like a computer's hard drive that is stuck, your brain needs a reboot. The information you were about to deliver is still there - it's just frozen.

Power your brain back up by sending a signal from your body. Change your physical pattern. Do something different - like take a sip of water. Adjust the microphone, or take a step back and then step toward the mic. You can even make small talk. Say, "Hi... it's good to see all of you here." Doing this is better than standing there like a statue.

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2. Don't forget to breathe.

You may have blanked because your breathing pattern was interrupted, or you may have unconsciously been holding your breath. When you blank, stop your panic. Take a slow, deep breath. Look up and try again.

3. Have your notes handy.

Your notes will get you back on track - so use them. In fact, you can give yourself added insurance against blanking by writing your opening on an index card and stashing it in your coat pocket.

4. Don't let them see you sweat.

If you blank during your talk, don't suffer over it. That audience will stay with you as long as you don't make it obvious that you're agonizing over it. Look up, take a moment, take a deep breath, let the idea come back, and carry on.

The next time you're afraid of freezing up at your next talk, consider this: Practiced speaker sometimes actually pretend that they've forgotten their next line, just to keep it feeling fresh - and the audience engaged.

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