



The ECHO™ — Your Weekly Presentation Tip

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Fight or Flight

When you present, does your heartbeat accelerate? Do you get butterflies or a knot in your stomach? Do your muscles feel tight? Walter Bradford Cannon, M.D., coined the term "fight or flight" in 1915 to describe an animal's response to threats.

This term explains a lot as it relates to giving presentations. When you step in front of your audience, your digestive system is disrupted, your muscles contract, and your blood pressure elevates. On top of that, a whole bunch of chemical reactions kick in. It would be easier to run than to face the unknown of your audience. To counteract these symptoms:

- Avoid caffeine and sugar-your body already has a heightened awareness and doesn't need any more energy
- Walk around backstage or out in the hall to work off some of the nervous energy
- Swing your arms in circles
- Shake out your hands
- Relax your shoulders (you might try a yoga exercise)
- Take a deep breath before you begin

Then, when you step in front of your audience, you'll feel less threatened when presenting and be able to hold your ground without "fighting or fleeing."

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