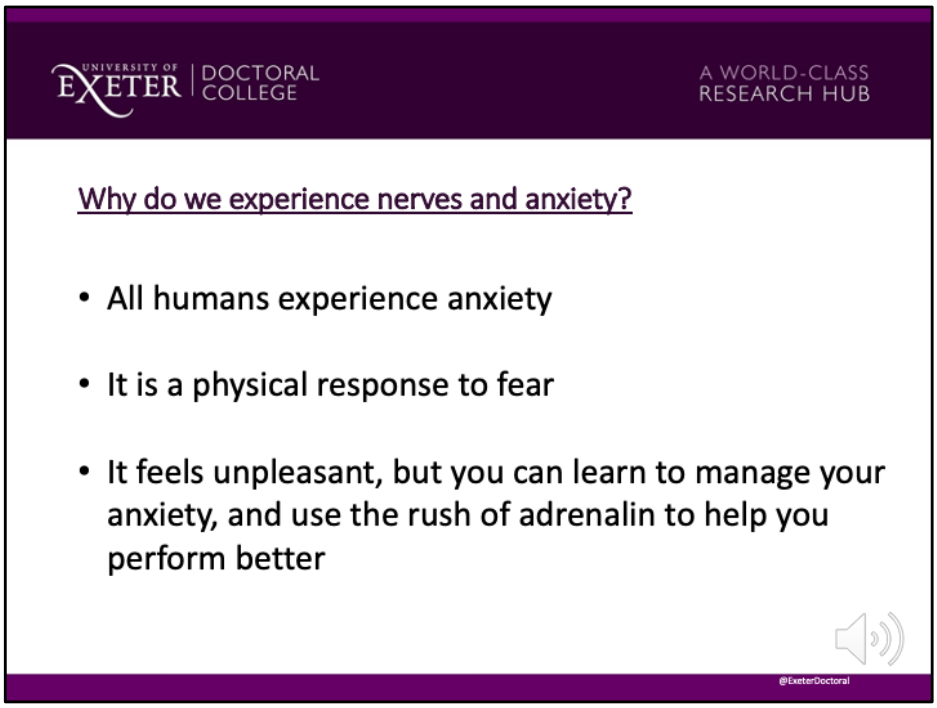
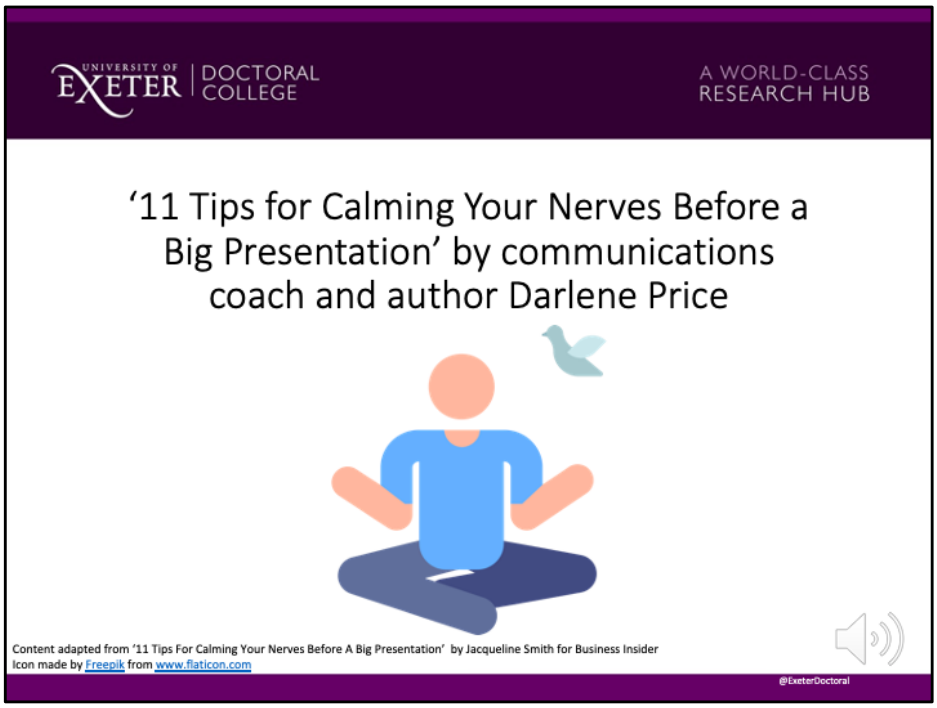
Feeling nervous before a presentation is completely normal.

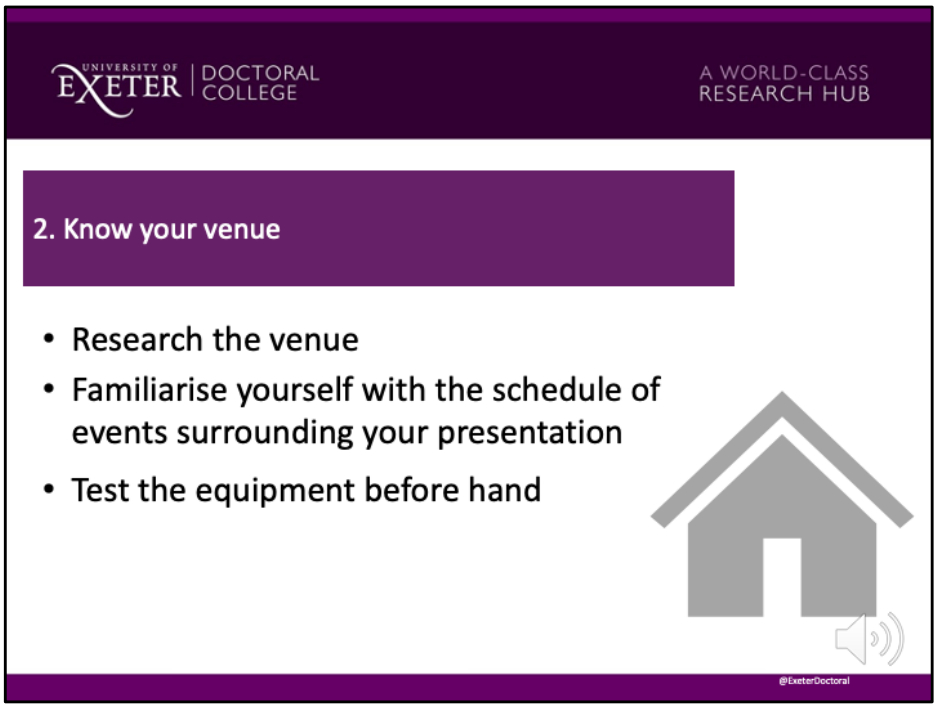


- All humans experience anxiety. It is a physical response to fear, that prepares our bodies to fight or flight. It feels unpleasant, but it is completely normal to feel nervous or anxious about presenting, and you can learn to manage your anxiety, and use it to help you perform better.

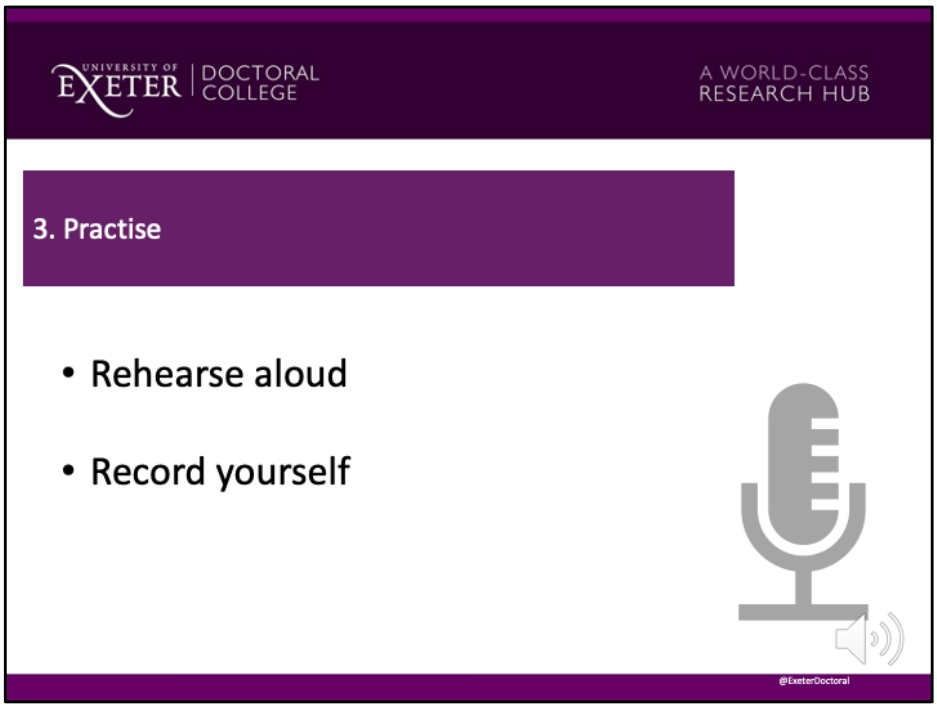


Here, we will take a look at 11 tips for calming your nerves before a big presentation, from communications coach and author Darlene Price.

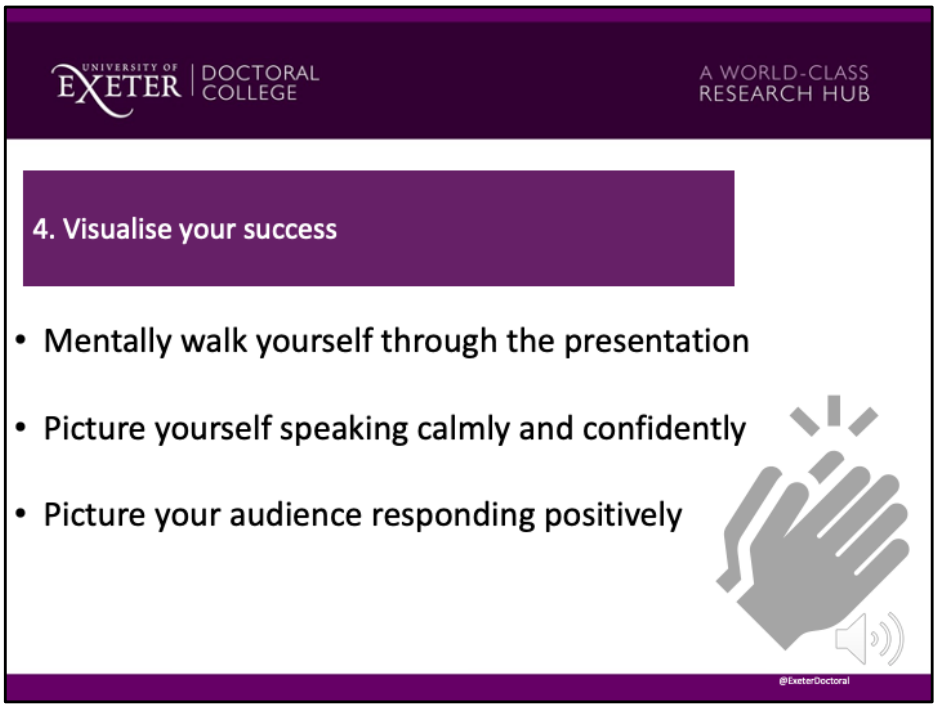
Being prepared can help you feel more confident in yourself. Research your subject, craft your content, and know your material well in advance.



Research the venue so you know where you will be presenting. Become familiar with the schedule of events surrounding your presentation, and test the equipment beforehand if you can. You can speak to the session chair if you need any help with the equipment.



Practise rehearsing aloud. Recording yourself practising can be helpful here!

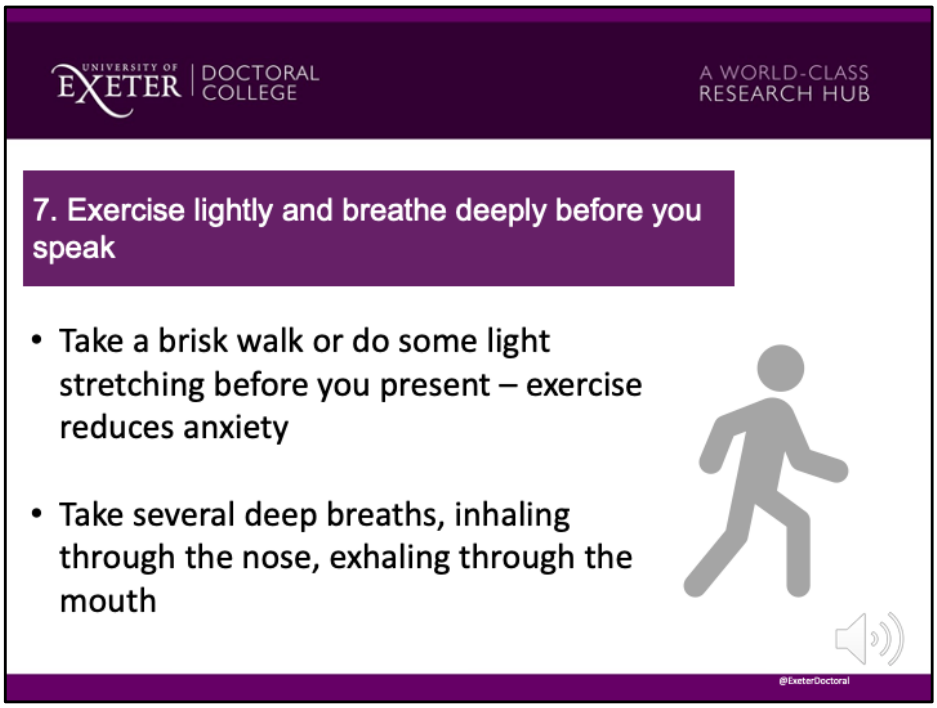


Sports psychologists have proven that an athlete's ability to vividly visualize his or her success creates a higher win rate. Before your next presentation, mentally walk yourself through the presentation. Picture yourself speaking calmly and confidently, and your audience responding positively.

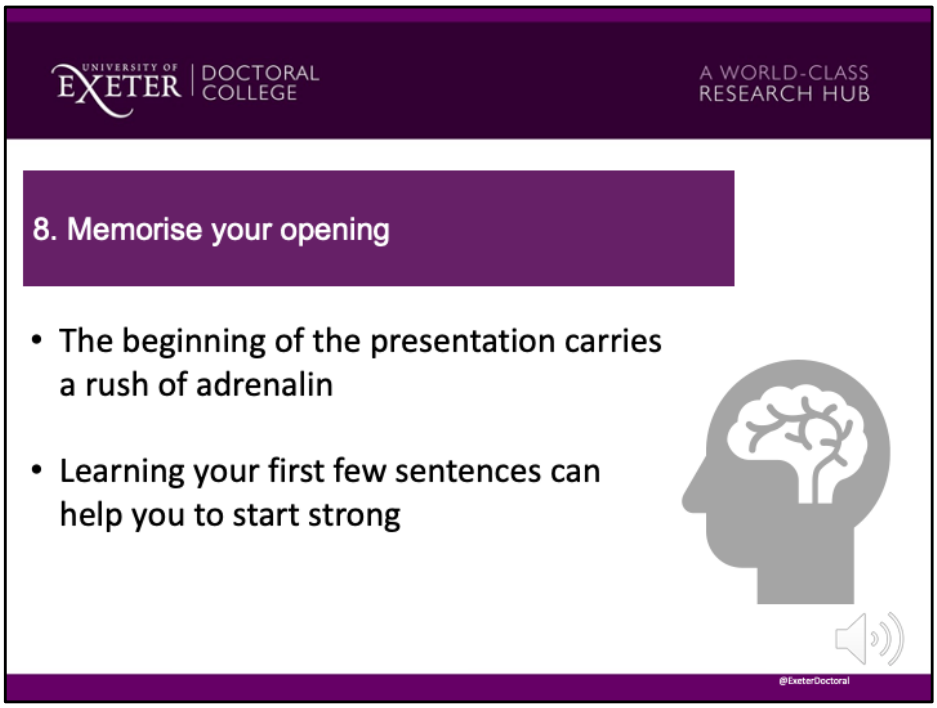
Practice positive self-talk, replacing negative thinking with positive affirmations, such as:

- I am a dynamic speaker
- I am enthusiastic and engaging
- I am prepared and confident

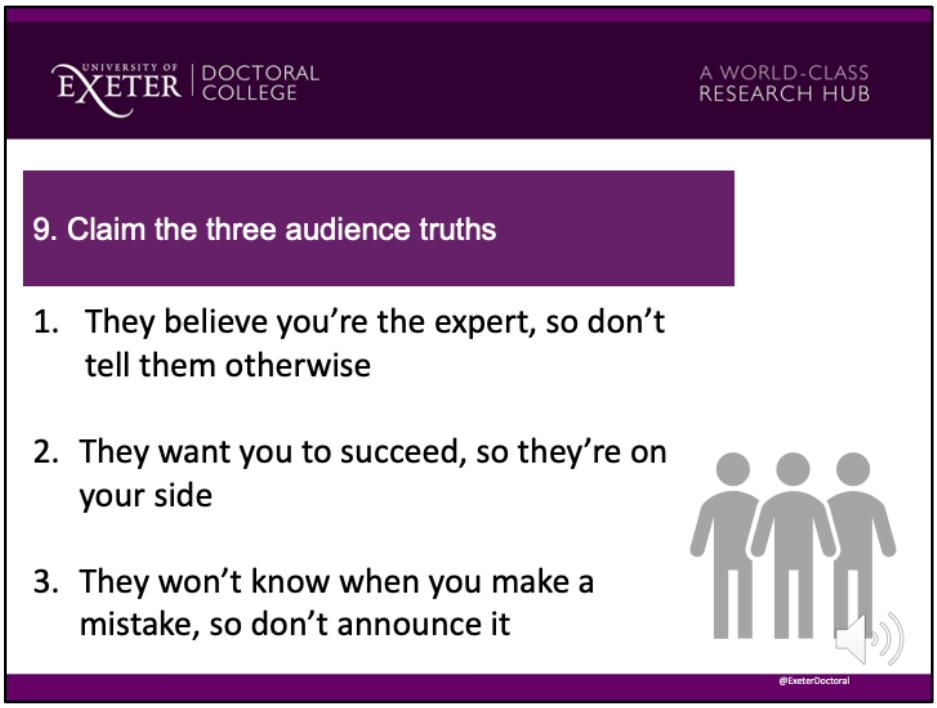
Chatting to the audience beforehand, maybe in the coffee break or lunch break at the conference, can be helpful, as it means you'll have an idea who your audience are, and a few friendly faces that you can focus on when you're presenting. Conversation also helps to relax your nerves and helps you create a bond with your audience. This sets the stage for 'personable' speaking versus 'public' speaking.



Exercise reduces anxiety. Find a private area beforehand where you can do some light stretching or take a brisk walk. Take several deep breaths, this calms your body down. Try breathing in slowly through your nose as you count to three, and exhaling through your mouth, counting to three.



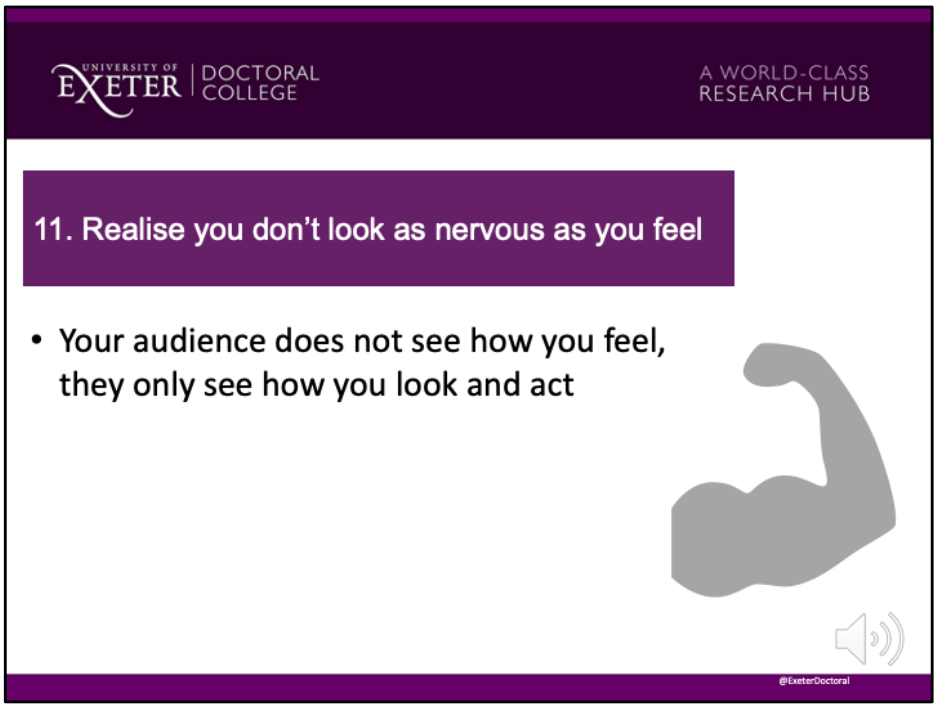
The beginning of the presentation often carries a rush of adrenalin. Memorising your first few sentences can help you feel strong and confident as you begin your presentation.



Claim to three audience truths:

1. They believe you're the expert, so don't tell them otherwise.
2. They want you to succeed, so they're on your side.
3. They won't know when you make a mistake, so don't announce it.

Smile when you're presenting. Smiling calms your nerves and promotes a sense of wellbeing. Plus, it shows your audience you're enthusiastic about your research.



Presenters who review their videotaped presentations almost always say, "I don't look nearly as nervous as I felt." Your audience does not see how you feel, they can only see how you look and act.

Check out the podcast below for some more tips on how to manage nerves from some of our University of Exeter postgraduate researchers