the stagecoach

BEFORE YOU GO ON

To study stress, researchers first have to cause it. Since 1993 the standard way is the Trier Social Stress Test: five minutes to prepare a talk, delivered in front of three judges who do not react, with your notes taken away before you start. Public speaking is what science reaches for when it needs a stress response on demand.

So this is how I warm up: by tricking my brain and body back under my control, so I can be intentional.

GET YOUR BODY READY

ENUNCIATION

Move your mouth so the words come out clearly.

- Say a tongue twister aloud. “She sells seashells by the seashore.”
- Over-enunciate your opening (and use a hook!)
- ABCs

BODY AND FACE

We can see your face and some of your body. We read body language just as much as the content.

- Smiles make the audience feel less awkward. If you look bored, we will definitely be bored.
- Think about how you want your audience to feel. Inspired? Secure? Convey that with your face.
- Shoulder rolls, touch your toes, a few squats

GET YOUR HEAD READY

BREATHING

Start speaking on the exhale.

- A big deep breath into your belly, then start speaking as you let it out
- Or three full breaths, then talk
- Or box breathing before you go out. In for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four. Four times.

CONFIDENCE

You need to be your biggest fan and hype yourself up.

- Self-talk, like a mantra
- Someone thought you were the best person to speak about this topic. Trust yourself and tell the story.
- Nobody knows what the script is supposed to say

HOW ASHLEY WARMS UP EVERY TIME

- Over-enunciate the ABCs, really stretching my mouth
- Box breathing before I go out
- Touch my toes and hang there for a moment
- My mantra: it will go great, it always does. I say it while I picture walking off stage, or off camera, and it having gone great.