Women@SCS Speaking Skills Workshop

Useful Advice and Tips

Goal and Audience.
*Think of all communication in this context.* What is your concrete goal for this communication? Who is your audience? How can you make what you say and do as effective as possible for achieving that goal, given your audience?

Let's take a look at **Goal and Audience** as a useful tool for refining everything about your communication, from what you say and how you say it to what you wear and whether you decide to incorporate that personal and embarrassing story in your otherwise serious talk.

**You get one goal. Not seven.**
Focus on one goal for your communication. It will make your presentation more clear and focused, and it will help you actually achieve your goal. Doing seven things badly is NOT better than doing one thing well. This may mean you don't get to present all your ideas or results. That's fine. "One" goal may be a bit of an exaggeration, but thinking about things this way is a helpful tool.

**What's in it for me?**
Imagine your audience members asking you this question at the start of your presentation. You need to answer this question right at the start of your presentation. What will your presentation achieve and contain? Why should they care? Why should they listen?

**Presentation structure should reinforce your goal.**
You can't achieve your goal if your audience gets lost and stops paying attention. One way you can help your audience in longer presentations is to tell them how your presentation will be structured, and to make sure they're always aware of where they are in the presentation, and how what you're saying fits back in with the goal you stated at the beginning.
Repeat yourself.
Audiences are forgetful. You don't get their full attention. Most of what you say will be forgotten within minutes after you've said it. So think about your goal and repeat your most important point over and over. You can reinforce this repetition visually. Tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, then tell them what you told them.

Communication really isn't all that scary.
Thinking about speaking, writing, teaching, etc. as *communication* not only helps you refine your goals, it can make it less intimidating. Thinking very concretely about your audience, what you want to help them understand, and how you're going to do that gives clarifies what you need to accomplish and makes it seem reasonable and achievable.

Figuring out how to achieve your goals takes practice.
Even once you've thought about your goal and your audience, you need to make sure that the strategies you choose actually work. Frame your questions in terms of goal/audience when you ask people for advice, to help them give good advice. "Should I wear that tight red mini skirt at my job interview? Given my audience, would it distract them? Would it diminish their inclination to take me and my ideas seriously?" You also need to practice communication. Give practice talks, and seek out opportunities to try out ways to understand your audience and achieve your goals.

Remember: Goal! Audience! Go out and have fun!