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# what's up doc?



by Dr. Mary Livers

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Hello, Everyone:

The last couple of issues of WUD, I've talked about how fear can be your nemesis or your friend. And it's like anything else – you've got to find a balance. I have shared with some folks that I've long had a fear of speaking in front of people, and many of you have kindly said “you sure can't tell.” I think they are being kind. But I was one of those people who would do anything to keep from getting up in front of people. It still is a little frightening. But then again, fear can either be your friend or it can debilitate you. For many, many years, it debilitated me. I went to extreme measures to avoid having to present in public. I even altered and restricted my opportunities because certain things would have required me to speak publicly.

One such occasion was when I interviewed to be the superintendent of a work release center. I was in my early 30s. At the very end of the interview my future boss, “Do you have any questions of me?” And I said yes – how much public speaking do I have to do to perform well in this role? And she said “Oh, none really. Very little, if any. You just need to run this facility and manage it well. I can't think of anything that would require you to speak in public.” Relieved, I said, great, I sure would like the job.

So about 6 months later, she announced at her managers' staff meeting that I had to make a presentation about the impact of overcrowding and budget issues before the legislature's appropriations committee. Because she had assured me that I would not have to do any public speaking, I assumed she was joking. She was not. No matter how much I begged and pleaded, she stood firm and insisted that I would be the one to make the presentation. She assured me there would be only a handful of people there, and surely not the governor. The governor did not attend these budget hearings. So there I was, shaking in my boots, about to make the presentation, when the committee chair asked for a pause while he introduced a guest who was going to listen and observe the hearing. You guessed it – the governor strolled in. I thought I was going to die. My knees were knocking so loud I thought people in the front row could hear them. There was news coverage and everything, and a lot more people than I'd expected. Somehow God let me live another day and I got through it.

I was determined not to go through that any more. I had to conquer this and I came up with a plan. So I enrolled in a Dale Carnegie public speaking course. It was painful but I learned some very valuable lessons, and I even was chosen for two awards by my class. I was chosen most improved, and most effective speaker. One thing that really helped me was not to compare myself to other people, because there's always somebody more talented and better at it, and it's unhealthy to compare. Second: speak from my heart as much as possible, and number 3: be prepared. Fear helps you to be prepared.

As you all know, when it's OJJ's turn before the legislative appropriations committee next week, it will be me at the mike representing the agency, and representing all of you – and our youth. And while I still don't like doing it, and I still have that sense of fear in my gut, I know that I have to it, and that I CAN do it. I have to represent OJJ to the best of my ability. For the good of the agency and everyone who is counting on me, I try to be as well-prepared as possible, and do the best I can. This is my least favorite time of year, when I am preparing to testify before the Appropriations Committee and deal with budget issues. I guess all we can do is expect the worst and hope for the best.

My thanks to each and every one of you in every OJJ office and facility, for all you do every day to meet the mission.

Sincerely, “Doc” *Dr. Mary Livers*

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