Managing nerves in teaching

What nerves do you experience (thinking about) doing teaching?

‘Stage fright’

Video: TED The science of stage fright
Evolved responses to threat

“There are two types of speakers. Those who get nervous and those who are liars.”
— Mark Twain

Activate the Parasympathetic nervous system
(With some privacy!... Experiment with what helps your body’s nervous system)
• Shaking out the main areas of tension (arms or legs)
• Pausing
• Stretching out excess tension (raise shoulders or stretch legs)
• Lengthening your breathing

“FEAR IS EXCITEMENT WITHOUT BREATH.”
The mind-body connection => behaviour

Nervousness is our adrenaline flowing, that’s all. It’s a form of energy.

How can you manage the energy from adrenaline?
- Breathing in abdomen (”Fear is excitement without breath.”)
- Feeling the feet on the floor; transfer your weight slowly from foot to foot and feel the sense of balance
- Using it to express your enthusiasm; put the energy into words, gestures and performance
- Notice if you feel anxious about feeling nervous!

Preparation and practice

- Handle the logistics:
  - What are the Audio Visual (AV) facilities?
  - Do you know how to use them?
- Plan for support with the IT e.g. clickers:
  - http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/iit/teaching-research/teaching-rooms.aspx
- Visit the room:
  - Do a practice run if you can get access to the room! (Check the room timetable online to identify a gap when the room is not in use).
  - Visualise yourself teaching and interacting
  - Hear yourself speaking in the teaching space
- Practice using/explaining/speak about your teaching materials
  - Enlist a trusted friend to give feedback
  - Record yourself using he
  - Review teaching materials with a teaching mentor
- Give extra focus to practising the start of the teaching session
How do experienced lecturers prepare?

Podcast (video):
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/pesl/browse/results/performance/lecture470/

Performance: What does this non-verbal language communicate to you?

And this?
Non-verbal communication: Mirroring by students

‘Power’ poses to reduce cortisol & improve influence


‘FAKE IT UNTIL YOU MAKE IT’
“Fake the non-verbal communication until you can become the confident teacher!”

Any other difficulties?

- Restless
- Shaking hands
- +

Life skills: Learning how to manage your sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous responses

- Important for long term physical and mental health
- More control of executive functions of the brain which allow decisions to be made more efficiently and more creativity
- Risk of amygdala hijack (fear response over-ride)
- Avoidance of burnout – this is a risk for professionals who are ‘extra’ conscientious and perceive that what is being demanded of them is greater than their resources (skills/energy)
More resources for building skills and practising the parasympathetic nervous response (relaxation!)

Using mindfulness to activate the sympathetic nervous system:
http://franticworld.com/

Podcasts to listen to for relaxation:
http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/self-helpresources/podcasts.aspx

• Body language and confidence:
http://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are