

I recently went on the **Telling People** course I saw advertised on the WIN website. As I read down the list of usual courses and events this one jumped out at me. I just couldn't ignore it. It seemed exactly the type of course I needed and exactly the type of course I had spent my life trying to avoid! Having recently set up lets-buy-algarve.com with my husband Ian, I was suddenly in the position of having to face my biggest fear – public speaking. I knew I could delegate the presenting to Ian but that would be a total cop out.

I made the move and Emailed Dr. Simon Raybould asking for more information on the course and describing exactly how fearful I was of public speaking. His return Emails were fantastic. His response was informal and funny and he made me feel totally at ease with my dilemma: I was “normal” - or at least my fear was - as of course he hadn't met me yet!!

The day arrived and I felt nervous but the lure of the wonderful venue at Blackfriars Restaurant and the thought of that wonderful food kept me going. We started the day off with an informal chat - Simon put us at ease and was very approachable. His style of presenting was very interactive and the day was jammed packed. In the morning we concentrated on our breathing, relaxation and voice training, which was great fun - particularly some of the voice exercises as we practised together with our faces distorted trying not to laugh. After lunch (included in the cost) we worked on preparing presentations. I found this very useful: it really helped me see how important it is to structure your thoughts and get everything down before going *near* a computer to prepare the slides.

I thoroughly enjoyed the day. There is a lot crammed in but plenty of breaks to keep you going and I learned such a lot. I never felt pressurised to do things I would be uncomfortable with and we were never put on the spot. I left the course with my head full but with a spring in my step. I certainly feel like I am a long way forward to conquering my fear of public speaking. To encourage anyone out there who is as scared as I was I can give you 3 things which might spur you on: public speaking is the number one fear (so you are not alone); nerves are normal; and you can become a confident public speaker with practice – so go on book yourself on the course – what are you waiting for?

By Judith Dawson