

Making Friends with your Public Speaking Anxiety Monster



Presented at the 2009 National
Association of Communication
Centers Mini-Conference

Workshop Objectives:

At the end of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Chart their levels of personal public speaking anxiety through the entire speech process
- Describe behaviors that audience members can do to make the presenter feel more comfortable while public speaking
- Identify nervous habits related to public speaking and techniques to manage those habits

Speech Anxiety

According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does this seem right? This means to the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you'd be better off in the casket than giving the eulogy.

Jerry Seinfeld

James McCroskey's Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety:

Data collected from several thousand college students:

High Anxiety 40%

Moderately High Anxiety 30%

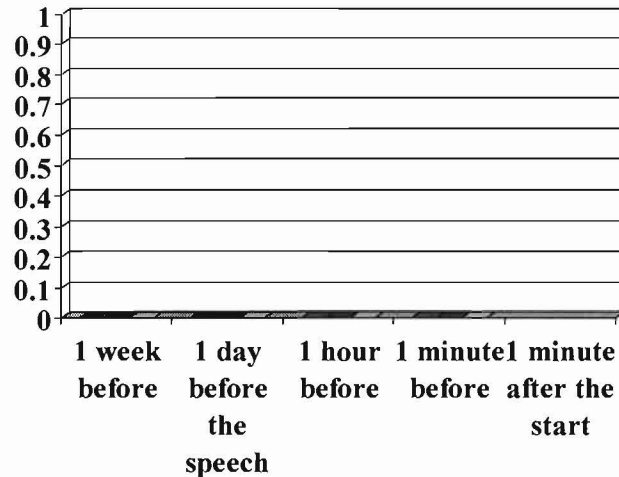
Moderate Anxiety 20%

Moderately Low Anxiety 5%

Low Anxiety 5%

According to this study, 90% of college students experience moderate to high levels of speech anxiety!

Chart your speech anxiety



Anxiety Chart Key

- 0.1 = low anxiety
- 0.3 = moderate level of anxiety
- 0.6 = anxiety has begun to take over
- 0.9 = anxiety to the point that it is paralyzing
- 1 = check me into the hospital, I can't go on!




Discussion Question #1

- What are your fears related to public speaking?

3 Stages of Communication Apprehension in Public Speaking



Anticipation
Confrontation
Drop-off



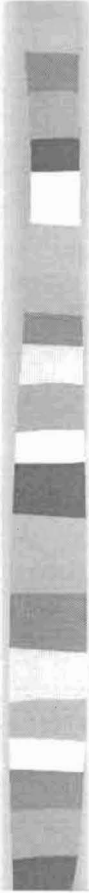
Tips for audience affirmation during public speaking situations

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)



Communication Anxiety

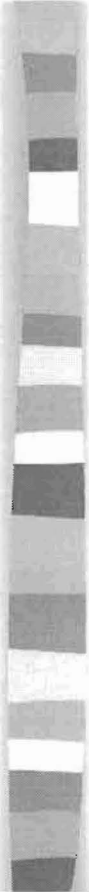
- **Situational Anxiety** (state anxiety): anxiety caused by factors in a specific situation
- **Trait Anxiety**: internal anxiety an individual brings to the speaking situation; not dependent on the specific situation



Advice to Stay in Control with Situational Anxiety

- Prepare and practice
- Warm up
- Use deep breathing
- Use an introduction that will relax you
- Concentrate on communicating your meaning
- Use visual aids

Hamilton, C. (2008) *Communicating for Results; A Guide for Business and the Professions* 8th ed.



Advice to Stay in Control with Trait Anxiety

- Positive Visualization/Imagery
- Cognitive Restructuring
- Systematic Desensitization
- Skills Training

Hamilton, C. (2008) *Communicating for Results; A Guide for Business and the Professions* 8th ed.



Skills Training

- Standard English
- Vocal Variation
- Pauses, not Verbal Fillers
- Meaningful hand gestures
- Walking among the audience
- Speech organization



Skills Training

- Eye contact
- Practice without pacing or rushing
- Practice with friends
- Practice being relaxed, poised, and confident in advance



Discussion Question #2

- Working with those sitting around you, focus on one of the fears you identified earlier. List all the ways you could manage that fear.



Anxiety Monster Activity

- What does your monster look like?
- What is it saying to you?
- How does it make you feel?

Techniques for Managing Public Speaking

- **Movement helps breathing! Plan and practice your movement. The most logical times to move would be during the transitions of your speech.**
- **Wait. Don't begin until you are ready. Take a few minutes to look over your note, say your first sentence to yourself, take a deep breath, and then begin!**
- **Practice concepts, not words. Never, never, never write out a talk word for word unless absolute accuracy must be maintained (legal situations). Otherwise, just make brief notes. A little spontaneity adds tremendous amount of character to your talk. Written speeches are almost always boring, and when you read text, it is much more difficult to make a connection with your audience.**
 - **Memorizing a talk word for word can actually lead to more anxiety. If something out of the ordinary happens or if you ever lose your place, you will put an extreme amount of pressure on yourself to get back. A better way to memorize a talk is to narrow your talk down to just a few main ideas and commit those main ideas to memory. If during your presentation you have additional time, you can add more details to the main ideas, and if times runs short, you rest assured that your main points were delivered.**
- **Exercise. Try walking before your speech. More strenuous exercise should take place much earlier in the day, not just before your speech. Stretch your muscles throughout your body. Try isometric exercise (Tense the muscle group, hold, release). Make a "Lion Face" and a "Mouse Face" to loosen up your facial muscles. Make fists, hold, release. Try shoulder rolls/lifts.**
- **Do deep breathing exercises. This is the old standby for any tense situation and professional speakers swear by its effectiveness. Take a deep breath, hold it for three or four seconds and exhale. Repeat four or five times. You'll feel remarkably more at ease.**
- **You might warm up your voice: "My mama makes me eat my M and M's."**

<http://www.performanceanxiety.com/topten.htm>
<http://www.leadersinstitute.com/resource/publicspeakingtips2.html>
http://www.roch.edu/dept/spchcom/anxiety_handout.htm
http://nsaspeaker.org/media_center/fear_of_speaking.shtml

- **Drop your hands:** Your hands and your gestures can add great impact to your delivery. When you are not using your hands, just drop them to your side. It will feel awkward at first, but dropping your hands to your side is the most natural gesture you can use. For instance, when you walk down the hallway at your office, do you cup your hands in front of you as you walk? Is it more natural to lock your hands behind you when you walk? Probably not. In most situations, it is natural to just let your hands drop to your side. When you do this it will allow you to make more purposeful gestures when you need to.
- **Realize anxiety exists.** What are your fears? Make a list of your fears. Now look to see what is realistic and what is not? Would the entire audience REALLY begin pointing, laughing, and mocking you? Probably not. Could you drop your cards; yes. What would you do? How about pick them up? See...you can plan how to respond to realistic fears.
- **Have a “GIMMICK” for each part of your speech...**Role-plays, skits, poems, music, etc. This helps you to look forward to different areas of your speech.
- **Mingle with the audience before the speech –** If it’s possible, try to meet people in the audience before you speak. A simple chat with a few people in the audience will increase your familiarity with the audience and improve your comfort level.
- **If you are standing behind a podium,** gently push your fingernails into your palm, squeeze a paper clip. Or press your foot onto one of the shelves in the podium to trick you brain. You should inflict minimal pain, enough that your brain focuses less on your nervousness and more on the pain felt.
- **If maintaining eye contact with your audience’s eyes makes you nervous,** look at your audience member’s ears instead. No one will know the difference.

<http://www.performanceanxiety.com/topten.htm>
<http://www.leadersinstitute.com/resource/publicspeakingtips2.html>
http://www.roch.edu/dept/spchcom/anxiety_handout.htm
http://nsaspeaker.org/media_center/fear_of_speaking.shtml



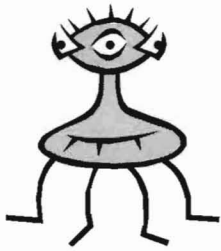
My Personal Plan of Action

- What techniques will I use to manage my public speaking “anxiety monster” throughout my entire speech making process?



My Personal Plan of Action

- What behaviors will I use to affirm others while they are speaking publicly?



My Public Speaking Anxiety Monster

Major: _____ Classification: _____