

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:

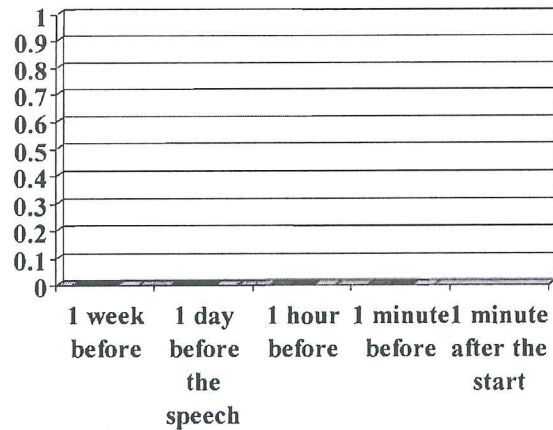
Data collected from several thousand college students:

High Anxiety	40%
Moderately High Anxiety	30%
Moderate Anxiety	20%
Moderately Low Anxiety	5%
Low Anxiety	5%

90%

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

Chart your speech anxiety



use this chart to identify where your anxiety is

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!

key

1. Answer alone
2. Share w/ neighbor (if time)

Discussion Question #1

- What are your fears related to public speaking?

Normal heart rate
60-80 beats per
minute
(BPM)

3 Stages of Communication Apprehension in Public Speaking

Before speech	→	Anticipation	90-140 (BPM)
@ Start of speech	→	Confrontation	110-190 (BPM)
Shortly after speech starts	→	Drop-off	90-140 (BPM)

(Adapted from Wassmer's 1978 SOFTENS Technique)

Tips for audience affirmation during public speaking situations

- 1) Smile
- 2) open posture
- 3) Forward lean
- 4) take notes
- 5) eye contact
- 6) nodding head

1. look for these behaviors in your audience.
2. teach "friends" in your audience to practice SOFTEN while you are speaking.
3. Do this when you are in the audience

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
- Seek professional support*
- > true work hand-in-hand*
- (identify reasonable speaking goals)*

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



Skills Training

- Standard English (when appropriate for audience and occasion)
- Vocal Variation
- Pauses, not Verbal Fillers
- Meaningful hand gestures
- Walking among the audience
- Speech organization



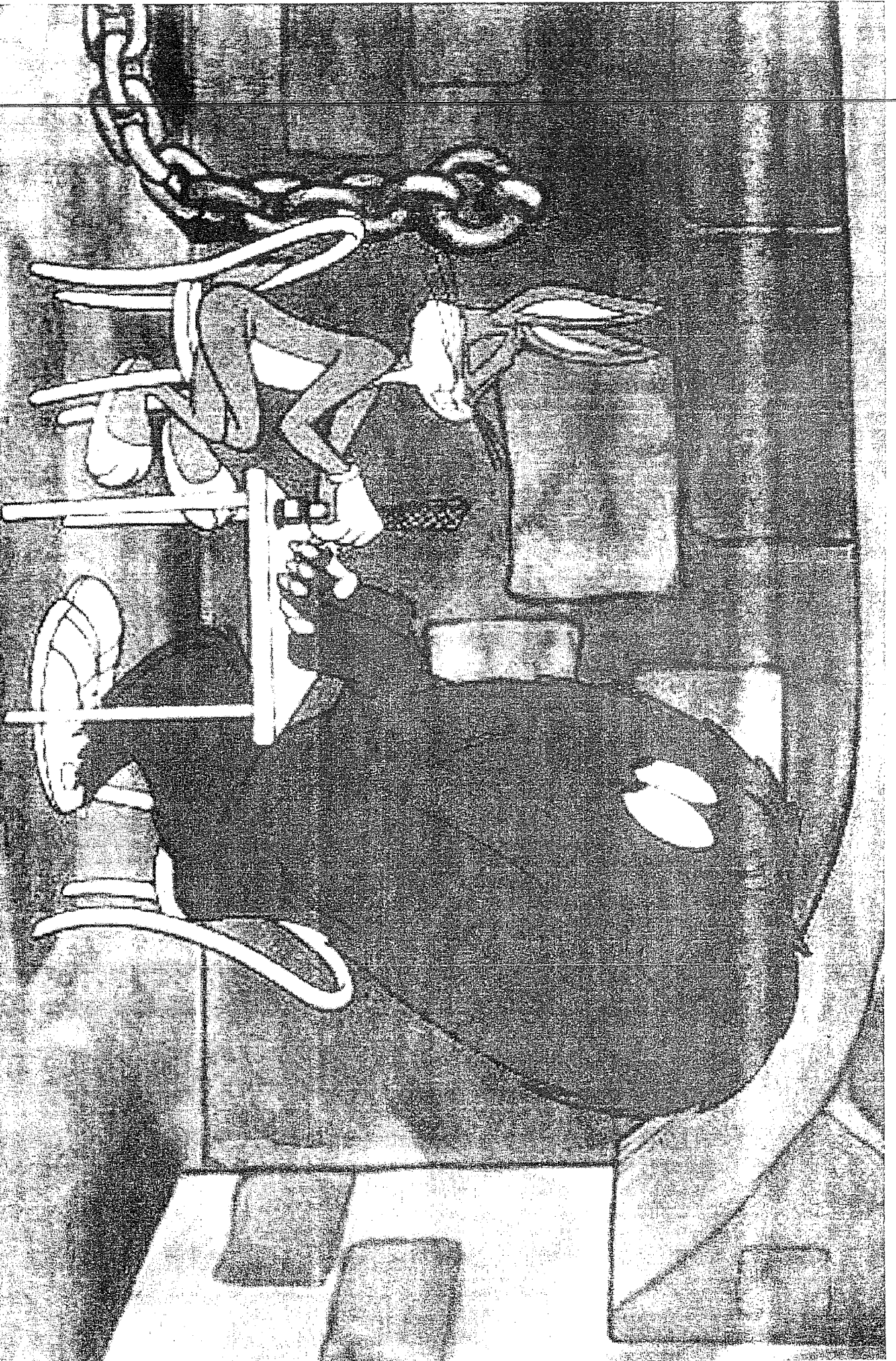
Skills Training

- 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.

1. Share image on next page → (not in audience)
 2. Read narrative on page after Anxiety Monster Activity image → Packet)
 3. Give participants the My Public Speaking Anxiety Monster + Crayons so they can create their monster
- What does your monster look like?
 - What is it saying to you?
 - How does it make you feel?

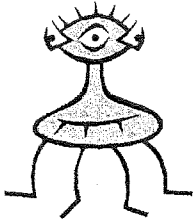


There is a Bugs Bunny cartoon (available on video cassette, Bugs Bunny, Hollywood Legend) called "Hair-Raising Hare" where Bugs meets a monster. The monster is heart-shaped, yet determined to eat Bugs. First, Bugs tries running away from the monster, then, up to his usual style, he uses tricks to deter the monster. At one point, he reprimands the monster for having ugly nails, and begins to give the monster a manicure. He talks to the monster, assuring the monster that he has heard that monsters have interesting lives. Bugs lulls the monster into feeling safe in order to pull his next trick.

We all have a public speaking anxiety monster within us. It wants to eat our confidence all up (like the Freudian 'id'). This monster attacks us before, during and after the process of giving a speech. Like Bugs, our first reaction is to run as far away from this monster as possible. We deny it by avoiding public speaking altogether. Eventually, though, the monster always catches up and we are forced to confront it. If we take it by surprise and try to lull it into allowing us to get close enough to give it a "manicure", we will be better able to deal with the monster in the future. Remember the monster will always be with us-the trick is to tame the monster.

One way to get to know your "monster" is by drawing a picture of it. Visualizing how the monster looks, in what setting and what it may be saying to you, is an effective first step in dealing with your fears about public speaking.

*Created by Cathy Blackburn, Associate Professor
Brookdale Community College.*



My Public Speaking Anxiety Monster

Techniques for Managing Public Speaking *Anxiety*

- **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 your 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?