

## **Countering Stage Fright**

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Hello students, today I am here again, Professor Smita Jha, to discuss the causes of stage fright, for discussing countering stage fright. Well, see all the topics are interrelated. If I define the very definition of stage fright, or if I speak of the symptom of stage fright, or if I speak of any other related issue to anxiety or phobia- they are all interrelated. So, sometimes it appears that it is a kind of repetition also, but it is not repetition. It is a kind of discussion that you should know from within, what actually the core of this public fear or stage fright, you should know about it. And if in short I can say what are the main causes of stage fear, I mean the basic thing, lack of preparation, large audience, then lack of confidence, fear of failure, being evaluated, self-obsessed, higher status audience, then hostile audience, unfamiliar surroundings, lack of opportunity to build speaking skills, then a kind of health issues related to your personality traits.

So, these are the basic reasons, fundamental reasons. When you have enough, you know, idea in your mind, and when you are well prepared, there is no reason to be scared off for fearing large audience. At once it can also give you a sense of fear. Lack of preparation means going to anywhere without any preparation.

These are the things that can shake you while you are going to face the audience and this all creates the kind of anxiety for which you may see failure. Anxieties seem to appear out of the blue, often starting in childhood or early adulthood. So, you need to know the kind of anxiety. That is why I am using personality traits. A phobia may arise because of a combination of genetic tendencies and other environmental, biological, and psychological factors.

People who fear public speaking may have a real fear of being embarrassed or rejected. So, a struggle with low self-esteem creates this kind of phobia or anxiety. Your public speaking fear- may be that you struggle with low self-esteem. If you do not think highly of yourself, it is only natural that you would be nervous about speaking in front of others. After all, if you do not think you are good enough, then why would anyone else want to

listen to you? So, first, self praise.

Not praise, means, developing confidence in yourself. However, there are ways to build up your self esteem to feel more confident when speaking in public. Developing self-compassion, and learning to speak more kindly to yourself is key. No matter how a speaking engagement went, try to talk to yourself as you would to a good friend. What kind and encouraging, you know, things might they say to you? How might they see things differently from you? So, your public speaking fear or stage fright- may be that you have an underlying anxiety disorder, try to know this, feel it.

If you are anything like I used to be, I would get nervous in social situations and was prone to worrying about every little thing- that is called anxiety. Public speaking was just another fear on a long list. If you suffer from anxiety, you may find that public speaking is particularly difficult. However, treatments can help you to manage your anxiety and make public speaking easier for you. Consider how you can treat your anxiety generally.

Do you need therapy or speak to your doctor? Do you need more sleep and more time to relax and switch off? Now for me, hypnotherapy, you know, was beneficial for calming the nerves of or nervous system of a person because I am a consultant of neurolinguistic programming also. And I myself applied things when I realized that such things are developing. So, how many times do we hear "I cannot follow that?" After a speaker is following someone they believe has done a good job, the right answer is that you should not have too. Amateur speakers often self-combust before they have even begun, as they are too preoccupied measuring themselves to others, which leads to negative energy and self-image. Now doing this on a stage, is distracting at best.

This has also been accepted that the main cause of public speaking anxiety is thought to be related to negative self-image. Besides, the unfamiliarity with words, the lack of experience, the unfamiliar environment, the new audience, the status difference between speakers and listeners, and the position of speakers and audience are all stimuli of public speaking anxiety. Since public speaking anxiety is found to exert a negative effect on the speaker both physically and emotionally, general methods for reducing public speaking anxiety have been proposed, including communication, orientation, motivation, cognitive restructuring, visualization, and systematic desensitization. Now, very important aspect is communication apprehension. What are the causes of this communication apprehension? When someone is afraid of riding a bike.

It is not necessarily the riding itself, but instead the fear of falling or veering into traffic that causes anxiety. Similarly, communication apprehension does not stem from giving an actual speech, but rather the associations one makes with giving a speech. Although

public speaking is one of the most commonly feared situations by the general population, not everyone fears it for the same reason. The main cause of communication apprehension can be fear of failure. The audience has high stakes and is the center of attention.

So, fear of failure is something that speakers with fear of failure often imagine themselves- forgetting a part of their speech or performing poorly. This fear manifests you know, in different ways, like they may feel as though they have not prepared enough, or well. They use self-fulfilling prophecies predicting that they will fail, like, "I can never get the right, I am a terrible speaker, this is going to go badly." They have had negative prior experience giving a speech and believe that it will be repeated. Speakers may feel intimidated by their audience because they see themselves as less qualified, less knowledgeable or less accomplished than them.

Suppose as X begins his or her presentation at work in front of high-level executives, he or she experiences an overwhelming fear of being unable to answer their questions or that their knowledge may contradict his own. Even without feeling inferior, simply feeling different from your audience can lead to anxiety. Suppose Y, someone called Y, has been unable to find much common ground with him or her and she is worried that they will turn against him/her, become uninterested, or judge him or her poorly. So, some speakers who feel fine when practicing their speech become very nervous in anticipation of the actual event. And for some, the highest stakes are situational, such as knowing that a promotion, a big opportunity, or passing a class needed to graduate is on the line.

For others, suffering from perfectionism can create overwhelming pressure to perform. Since giving a speech is a live event, there is a degree of unpredictability. A speaker with very little experience may not know what to expect or how they may respond to the situation. Experienced speakers, though, can also fear uncertainty. Regardless of how much one prepares and practices there is no way to guarantee that everything will go exactly as planned.

Yes, it is not as you practiced. It is spontaneous also, between the audience, technology, environment and even one's own performance. There are always elements of uncertainty in any speaking situation. So, excessive self-focus can make the thought of anyone, let alone everyone staring at or waiting to hear what we have to say, intimidating rather than focusing on the message. So, X believes the audience is more concerned about how she or he sounds, what he or she sees looks like, or any mistakes as if he or she is ready to catch the mistake, any mistakes he or she might make, which leads her to obsess about those things.

The speaker may also suffer from low self-esteem in which they only believe negative things about themselves and feel unworthy of the attention from the audience. So, public speaking is a common form of anxiety and fear. Over 75 percent of people experience some degree of anxiety or nervousness when it comes to speaking in front of others. This anxiety may not be confined to speaking to large audiences; people suffering from glossophobia may struggle to speak in a meeting, classroom, and other smaller groups or settings. This can make it very difficult for sufferers to communicate verbally in order to express their ideas and thoughts.

As a result, glossophobia may hamper the sufferer's ability to further his or her academic, social, or career opportunities. Well, I want to refer to a book titled "Confessions of a Public Speaker" by Scott Berkun, in which he suggests that our brain identifies some of the conditions which are extremely bad for survival, like standing alone in an open territory with no place to hide. Feeling of insecurity being without a weapon in front of a large crowd who are staring at you. This is a very good book and you must read it. Now these conditions made sense during the early years of humans.

Being alone or without a weapon, for example, could have been very dangerous with wild animals and other fierce tribes nearby. Their conditions happen to all be experienced during public speaking. You are often alone on a stage, open to the audience who are looking at you without a weapon and with nowhere to hide. A common fear in public speaking is the brain freeze. This is also a term, brain freeze.

The prospect of having an audience's attention while standing in silence feels like judgment and rejection. So, the question is that why the brain freezes, and why this kind of feeling occur? The prefrontal lobes, I mean I discussed this earlier also, the prefrontal lobes of our brain sort our memories and is sensitive to anxiety. And Dr. DeGeorgia of Case Western University Hospital says, "if your brain starts to freeze up you get more stressed and the stress hormones go even higher that shuts down the frontal lobe and disconnects it from the rest of the brain. It makes it even harder to retrieve those memories.

" There are many explanations and hypotheses on the causes of public speaking anxiety. The book "The Challenge of Effective Speaking," speaks that the public speaking anxiety of some people might be inborn. People who are born to be more introverted or neurotic tend to have greater possibilities to experience public speaking anxiety than those who are more extroverted or level-headed. Except that, one's previous experience in growing up process is also deemed to be one of the causes of public speaking anxiety. The thought of failing is very threatening to the self-image of the individual, between the threats of possible danger and the experienced fear.

That is, tarnishing the image of one's own self. Accept that. One's past experience and previous experience in the growing up process are also deemed to be one of the causes of public speaking anxiety. Usually, people who have failed in public speeches in their childhood are more likely to experience public speaking anxiety. Besides, hypotheses from other perspectives are also proposed.

For example, some evolution psychologists propose that the fear towards public speaking can be traced back to early human behavior. In early human life, when people still fought wild animals, cooperation between humans was the key to survival. Since cooperation is achieved through communication, communication becomes a matter of life and death most of the time. Here, survival means the protection of image. That is why people tend to show how great anxiety while speaking in public.

There is speaking performance, and communication outcomes were directly related to their lives in ancient times. And this anxiety remains till this date. Fear of public speaking may be the general term, but for each speaker, there are distinct and enduring reasons why a turn at the lectern can be so fraught with anxiety. Some questions I want to pose: Are you battling a self-imposed expectation of perfection? Do you fear the gaps in your knowledge will make you look like a fraud? Are you prone to anxiety or fear? Do you worry you will repeat the mistakes of a particularly disastrous presentation? So, if you fear speaking in public more than riding an escalator, you are certainly not alone. Speech jitters rank with the word over on a list of things people would rather not do.

But what specifically causes this type of social anxiety? Why do we have this kind of communication problem that is called speech anxiety? And as I said, that fear of public speaking can be easily understood if one considers just how normal it is to be anxious. Anxiety in and of itself is a reflexive and useful response we have developed to help us face, you know, difficult or dangerous situations such as threats, tough decisions, presentations, or any time all eyes are on you. We become highly alert and focused- two qualities including- that can make for a greater presenter. However, if you become too hyper-focused on yourself, dwelling on those fears and doubts, that speech anxiety takes over what you need to know to start your journey to greater confidence and enjoyment of public speaking. These are some biggest reasons you or any person has this fear.

As an experienced teacher, I want to give you some tips on how you can overcome it and basically get your life back. So, this is the most frequently named reason for performance anxiety, which is self-consciousness in front of large groups. Speech coaches often hear, "I am fine talking to small groups, but when it is a large audience I get really anxious." Two strategies can help you. First, remember that the people in a big audience are the

same ones you talk to individually.

And the other, concentrate on just talking to them, not presenting. You will be at your best. So, do you fear that you will look fearful? Many speakers do, it is easy then to believe that if the audience sees those nerves, they will think you do not know your topic, you know a kind of complex, but of course, the two are not linked. When you see that a speaker is nervous do not you sympathize rather than making a judgment on that person's professionalism? If anything, your audience will extend you sympathy, not resistance.

Concern that others are judging you. The tough love message here is that people really do not care about you. They are in the audience to get something out of your lecture, presentation or speech. They want their time to be well spent. Watching a speaker fail is embarrassing for everyone.

So, the audience is actually pulling for you. And also as I said, the previous experience. This kind of anxiety is often learned behavior. That is, at some point in the past, you failed and the seed of self-doubt was planted. But if you know your stuff and are prepared this time, there is no reason for things to go south like they did long ago unless you insist that will happen and believe it. So, plan to succeed instead, and also, if you have not done your homework including knowing your audience- one of the important points factors to get success.

There is no reason you should succeed. Blame nobody but yourself. Do not give any lame excuses. Nothing undermines public speaking confidence like being unprepared. But nothing gives you as much confidence as being ready now it is your choice. And I also discuss in detail about narcissism- narcissistic activity and feeling.

And this is the toughest love message, you know, I used to give my students with stage fright. Indulging in extreme self-consciousness while speaking is narcissism. How can you influence others if you are totally wrapped up in yourself? "I," personal pronoun "I"? You cannot. So, turn that bright spotlight around and eliminate your listeners.

You do not matter, they do. Like if you are dissatisfied with your ability, fine. This is a legitimate concern, but it is also one of the easiest of the top 10 causes to remedy. You should feel dissatisfied if your speaking skills are below par, but dissatisfied can be an excellent spur. Get the speech training you have been thinking about. Just knowing you have first-rate skills can provide you with a truckload of confidence.

It is also much more likely to make you eager to speak. So, my dear students, these are the basic problems you need to think about to correct yourself. Let us meet in another

lecture to continue the same because this is the fundamental of stage fear. Till then, thank you.