

## **Countering Stage Fright**

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Hello, students. Today, I am here to discuss symptoms of performance anxiety with reference to counter-stage fright. In the previous lecture of mine, I had to define what stage fright is and various types of performance anxiety. I mostly use the term performance anxiety because this kind of fright is a part of anxiety. Then, I also discuss phobia and various types of phobia related to this stage fright. But today, I am going to discuss symptoms of performance anxiety and related to individual one.

As I told you repeatedly, there are individual variations. If a person gets nervous on their stages, it does not mean that the level of nervousness will be the same in another individual, too. It depends on the nature and the personality of that individual. So, it is very important to discuss and to know some of the health issues also.

Generally, we have this opinion that stage fear is a common thing. That is true, and it may happen to anybody or anywhere without thinking of the level and the intensity, but here I want to tell you that due to health issues or personality traits well, this level of anxiety varies from person to person. So, it is very important to know this level of anxiety with personality traits and also health issues. So, performance anxiety debilitating fear or worry when it is time to step up to the plate that is a stage. The plate can be anything from giving a speech to finally making sweets.

So, performance anxiety or stage fright is a sudden, intense panic that occurs when you feel like you have to perform, and it differs from person to person. That is why you know the level of panic in any situation shrouded by pressure to achieve can lead to performance anxiety. Maybe it is the crowd chanting someone's name, God's name, you know, master name, in the hope of winning something- that can also be a level of panic. So, feeling panicked about standing up to speak or singing a song or dancing in front of a crowd which shakes a person from within is nothing but stage fright. Of course, there are times we get called up to speak in public with no script extempore, a script, or a stage inside.

This performance anxiety can crop up before a class presentation, a board meeting, or even a wedding party. See, we teach first-year students this stage of performance not just to pass the examination or to get marks but rather to develop and train a personality that can lead up to the final destination of their career. So, what is the individual response if we talk of symptoms, triggers, and responses to anxiety disorders depending on individual experiences and the type of anxiety disorder a person has? Now, according to some medical practitioners, psychologists, therapists, and psychiatrists, you know several examples of disorders are there, and what are these disorders? Generalized anxiety disorder, in short it is GAD, panic disorder. Social anxiety disorder, phobias, separation anxiety disorder, agoraphobia. Some of the phobias I discussed in previous lectures of mine.

Now, for instance, social anxiety disorder causes more psychological responses, such as intense worrying and irrational thoughts that something will happen. If I have to catch the train, I will miss the train unnecessarily. In contrast, panic disorder causes more physical symptoms such as heart palpitation. Yes, sometimes it feels as if the heart will come out. The palpitation is so high due to the fear due to the anxiety.

Now, there are other symptoms also related to this anxiety. Now, according to these medical practitioners, there are different types of anxiety disorders. So, symptoms depend on the individual and the type of anxiety they have. As I told you, that individual varies. However, all types of anxiety present several key symptoms, because we are discussing symptoms.

Stage fear symptoms and performance anxiety- and this is very helpful because before you lose the game you better rectify yourself. So, what are these keys of symptoms? Emotional symptoms include feelings of anticipation. This is a kind of anxiety that is available in most people, especially old age. Person emotional symptoms are anticipation, tenseness, irritability, dread and, headache, fatigueness, sweating, disturbed stomach functions; these are all part of, you know, emotional symptoms leading to stage fright or performance anxiety. Many people experience nervousness, jitters, and, in some cases, panic when expected to complete a task under pressure.

Performance anxiety or a stage fear or fright can prevent you from doing tasks such as giving a speech or presentation, meeting, you know, interacting with your colleagues, your friends, your relatives in you know large crowds, groups, and even in personal relationships. There are many different types of performance anxiety including social anxiety disorder and also personal performance anxiety. There is more popular, you know, these are very, very common things. I would not say popular, but common things, even personal relations. And in fact, it affects 9.

25 percent of men and 6 to 16 percent of women. So, thankfully there are plenty of methods to help you overcome your performance anxiety, but what is required? That, you must know your personality traits. Remember I told you at the beginning of my lecture that you introspect and try to know about yourself so that you can check yourself? If you are feeling nervous or apprehensive about a performance know that you are not alone. Performance anxiety is a common issue that affects many people, but it does not have to control your life. Yes, with this idea you have to move.

The first quotation I shared with you is that before this particular aspect that is stage fright going to ruin your life, check it. So, it can be common, but you need to check it because you are not going to be controlled by these symptoms, but you are there to control such symptoms. Feeling nervous before an event or performance is a feeling that most people can relate to. Whether it is a sporting event, acting, public speaking, or even a class performance, it is quite natural to experience such kind of, you know, excitement you can say that leads to nervousness. But when these feelings start to impact your career and your life, quality of life, it is the time to seek help or to check.

So, a stage fear or a stage fright, performance anxiety is a set of emotions that can be beneficial up to a point, triggering a fight or flight response that prepares the body for potential danger, making us more alert and ready to respond. For many these feelings will subside once the performance is started or shortly after. Even I have seen in my teaching career how students get nervous and sometimes even panic and also faint also you know such kind of thing. But for others, performance anxiety can be extremely limiting, stopping or preventing them from pursuing their passion or career. So, if this happens it is important to seek support to improve your quality.

When you hear someone who speaks fluently, consistently, emphatically, and clearly, you must realize that if you could speak like that. Now for that, you need to practice and also to check your quality. Now, what are the symptoms that we generally dig out for improvement? And this is what I am discussing. The number of people who suffer from stage fear or performance anxiety is unknown because I do not know. I mean otherwise, I am normal.

The moment I come to this stage, I feel some kind of feeling that I cannot explain, may be nervousness, may be anxiety. So, it can be unknown, but we know it is a widespread issue, and the victims are experiencing it at some point in their lives. So, the amygdala is a part of the brain responsible for our fear function. The amygdala triggers a set of chemical reactions that release adrenaline, a kind of hormone. So this results in a soaring throat rate, dry mouth, and other physical symptoms of performance anxiety.

This I mentioned earlier also includes numbness that is inactivity, trembling hands and voice, sweating, feeling sick, a racing pulse and pounding heart, tight throat, and dry mouth. It is due to the amygdala releasing the hormone that is called adrenaline, and that makes you, you know, fear. Other common symptoms of performance anxiety include dreading the performance, worrying endlessly, and becoming withdrawn. Unfortunately, many people with performance anxiety do not seek help due to embarrassment or fear of public scrutiny. Some may resort to using drugs or alcohol to manage their symptom, but it is utterly wrong.

Never do this. So, a stage fright or performance anxiety can strike anytime you are the central focus of an event or performing. So these are some situations where you may experience this kind of anxiety. Participating, I told you to raise your hand in class. Even then, your heart palpitation will be very high, playing a sport, playing music, or performing dance. So many things, where you can feel this.

Almost anyone with performance anxiety will experience some physical symptoms, and this is because your body responds to the situation in the same way it would if you were being attacked. That is why the term is "panic attack." The fight or flight mechanism kicks in and you feel as if you were in real danger. So, such symptoms, you know, make you shaky and sometimes even you know, threatening to life. Because a racing pulse is not a good thing.

A racing pulse can harm you by tightening your throat, causing trembling, sweating, nausea, vision changes, and sometimes vomiting. So, see these are not good symptoms. So, one has to check it because sometimes these are momentary, in a particular moment when you are going to speak. But this should not happen because you need to give your best when you feel that when you are experiencing a sense of impending doom or panic that you are lost nothing is left. And when your heart rate increases, you know you are not in a position to think or to control.

Also, trouble sleeping, not good sleep. And that will make you unable to concentrate, and before such a presentation or any kind of performance, you need to take care of it. Also, gastrointestinal problems such as nausea or vomiting. And sometimes dizziness too. Because as I said that there are people who try to take alcohol or drugs to avoid this.

This is absolutely wrong. That may cause dizziness, and you may faint. So, these are all psychological hormonal performance anxieties. With more severe performance anxiety, you may also experience intrusive psychological symptoms like a sense of mental numbness and dislocation, blackout, complete forgetfulness, memory slips, and worrying

for weeks that is anxiety. Worrying for weeks in advance of a performance will make you, you know, more weak, full-blown panic attacks at the mere thought of performing. So, see, that makes you unable to perform.

You are not working hard for the exam or the performance, rather thinking that you are going to fail because you are incapable. And this is the fact that instead of concentrating on the work to give the best you concentrate on that hypothetical situation that you are going to lose. Performance anxiety, sometimes known as stage fright, is when you are so nervous. That is why I say stage fright and performance anxiety together. Where you are unable to function well in a desirous manner, feeling nervous before singing like music performance or throwing, you know, a foul shot in sports is totally normal and not a cause for concern.

However, if your nerves make it so that you physically cannot function, it is worth discussing with a professional. Some people, both men and women, consider you know physical activity also a part of anxiety, including that they either cannot perform or have no desire. This is a personal feeling. So, the anxiety you feel when presented with a challenge can manifest mentally, physically, or some combination of the two. Now, it is very important to know about the brain at this moment because I told you that we all are different from each other.

So, the amygdala is the part of the brain, a collection of nuclei deep within the temporal lobe, the area of your brain near your ears. This part perceives emotions such as anger, fear, and sadness. The amygdala also stores memories of events and emotions to help you to recognize what they are and why you are feeling them. People with anxiety disorder may have an overactive amygdala which heightens their emotional response to certain situations. The environment is equally important or responsible.

Some people develop an anxiety disorder in response to an embarrassing, unpleasant, or shameful experience. Now, for example, if you are singing in front of a crowd and they hoot you, you may feel so embarrassed that you develop anxiety about performing in front of others again because that is there in the back of your mind. Similarly, if you have trouble getting to know anything in your personal life, that also may cause problems. So, brain structure, you know, collection of nuclei, and that is responsible for so many things, sadness, emotional response to a situation. You know about this mental and psychiatric condition.

I am telling you all these things because I need to tell you so you may correct them in your life to achieve success. Mental and psychiatric conditions can be challenging to diagnose. I have also seen students feel shy to get to know a psychiatrist because they

have this feeling that people will consider them as a mental cases.

It is not like that. Everyone has depression. Everyone has anxiety. But yes, the level of anxiety, the level of fear does matter. So, a provider will usually discuss with a therapist, doctor, or psychologist you know all these symptoms to assess for any underlying medical illness. If the intensity is very high, they may use, you know, a survey, or some questioning to help quantify the symptoms of a person. So, performance anxiety is not technically classified as a psychiatrist condition.

So, there is no specific test or worksheet that can be used to diagnose this. So, a provider or sometimes even you can diagnose this by a history of your own symptoms. See, if I feel that this type of situation makes me fearful, I will take note of that I will take care of that whenever the situation occurs. So, sometimes, you have to be careful of these things to rectify your situation and your mental condition.

Know yourself. One of the very important aspects of stage fright and performance anxiety is know yourself. Knowing yourself is exactly about, you know, neutralizing, and minimizing all the psychological symptoms that are hampering your performance. Anticipatory anxiety is hypothetical thinking. Anticipatory anxiety refers to the feeling of fear that you experience before an event. While it is normal to feel stress about future events, anticipatory anxiety involves an excessive worry about the future.

So, a certain degree of stress can be adaptive and very helpful to you while performing your best. So, when this anxiety becomes severe, it can be debilitating, and this type of anxiety might cause you to become overly focused on adverse outcomes. It can also be all-consuming and long-lasting. So, instead of feeling a little nervous right before an event, you might find yourself overwhelmed with feelings of worry and fear for weeks or months beforehand. While it might involve anxiety about upcoming events, it can also occur in response to everyday occurrences.

Now, for example, you might experience anxiety while driving to work or catching the train, so that you may reach well on time. So, anticipatory anxiety is not a distinct mental health condition. If you want to do things punctually, it is not a mental condition, but when you are obsessed with this, that becomes a mental condition obsession. Instead, it is often a symptom of anxiety disorders, including social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, or generalized anxiety disorder. One way to deal with anticipatory anxiety is to try re-leveling your emotions.

Instead of calling your feelings nervousness or anxiety, you know, it is better to work on reframing them as excitement and anticipation. For example, instead of saying I am

nervous, you would say I am so excited, and this is what I say the level of excitement, how much you are excited. Generalized anxiety is a chronic and exaggerated worry that occurs without having a specific source, and this type of anxiety is also sometimes referred to as free-floating anxiety. So, people who experience this type of anxiety spend a lot of time worrying about a wide variety of future events. And such anxiety may center on health, social interactions, work relationships, and everyday events.

So, if a person experiences excessive worry that interferes with essential areas of life and lasts most days for longer than 6 months, they may be diagnosed with generalized anxiety disorder in short GAD. So, a generalized anxiety disorder can be shown as always feeling on edge, always thinking of the worst possible outcome in every situation, that is, the negativity, fear, and inability to stop worrying about, problems coping with uncertainty, and concentrating on worries that are out of proportion to the actual danger. So, generalized anxiety tends to be a choice as common in women as in men. Women tend to experience anxiety disorders at higher rates. So, experts suggest that women and girls over the age of 13 should be screened during routine health examinations.

If you experience generalized anxiety, you should talk to a primary healthcare provider or a mental health professional. Nowadays in every college and every institution, there is a center called wellness, having a psychiatrist and mental trainers. All these can determine if your symptoms meet the generalized anxiety disorder diagnostic criteria. They can also recommend effective treatments including psychotherapy and medications.

So, students, I would like to stop here. Next time or in the next lecture, we shall discuss again some of the aspects of panic attacks and the symptoms. Thank you very much.