

# Feeling Anxiety Is Normal

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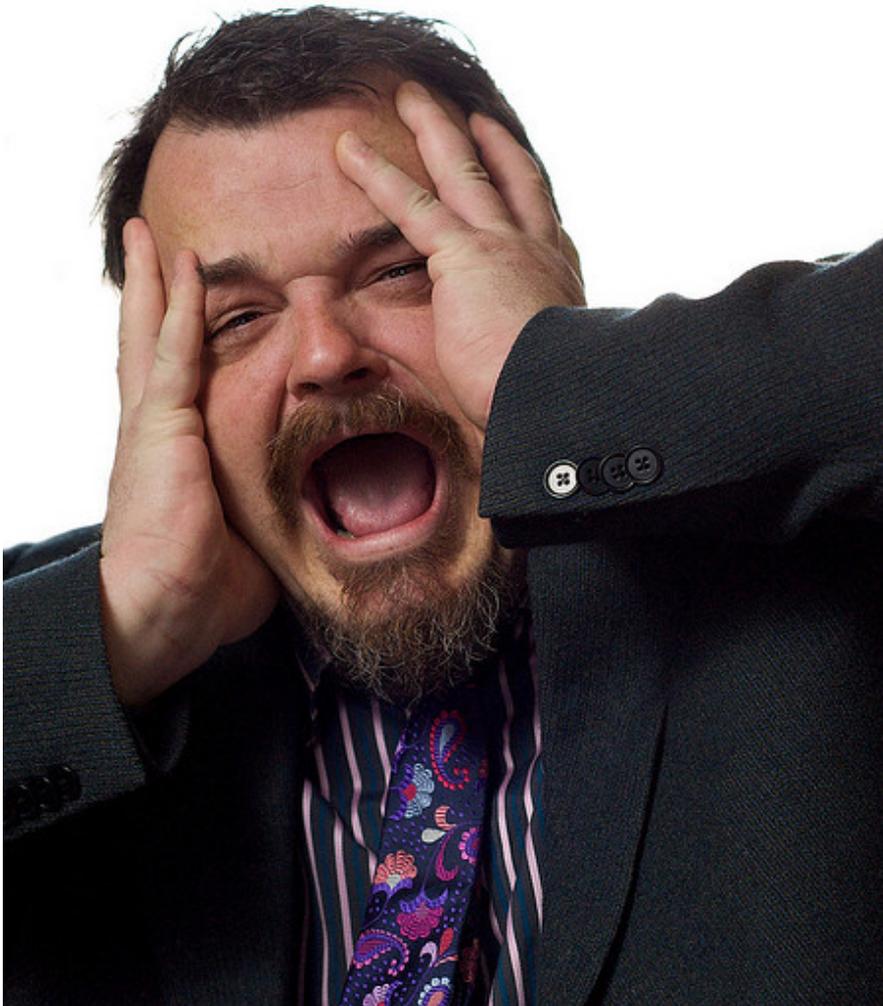


## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn about speech anxiety and how to cope with it. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. What is Speech Anxiety?
2. Common Effects of Anxiety
3. Fear vs. Anxiety
4. Conquering Public Speaking Anxiety

## 1. What is Speech Anxiety?



Sometimes referred to as "glossophobia," speech **anxiety** is a very real fear held by millions of people around the world.

As many as 75% of all people experience some degree of anxiety about having to speak in front of a group of people, so if you're nervous, you're not alone. It's more common than you think.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Anxiety**

An unpleasant state of mental uneasiness, nervousness, apprehension and obsession or concern about some uncertain event.

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## 2. Common Effects of Anxiety

Anxiety is characterized by an extreme shift in mood and behavior including feelings of dread, worry, doubt, or fear.

You may feel faint, have an upset stomach, or want to run out of the room. You might feel like you're going to throw up or suddenly feel clammy or sweaty. Your heart might race or you may feel short of breath.

In very severe instances, these feelings may escalate into a **panic attack**. Know that these feelings and behaviors are natural and there are ways to both confront and conquer them as you prepare to give your speech.

The most important thing to remember is that it's perfectly normal to be anxious about presenting in front of a crowd, no matter how big or how small. There is hope and you can get through it.



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### **Panic Attack**

A sudden period of intense anxiety, mounting physiological arousal, fear, stomach problems and discomfort that are associated with a variety of somatic and cognitive symptoms.

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## 3. Fear vs. Anxiety

Both anxiety and fear can trigger the same response in the human brain and body.

Fear, however, is a response to an immediate, external threat; anxiety can occur without any kind of immediate threat.

Anxiety looms rather than pounces. So in the weeks leading up to your speech, you may feel anxious. Right before you walk out onto the stage, you may feel full-fledged fear.

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## 4. Conquering Public Speaking Anxiety

Organizations such as Toastmasters International, POWERtalk International, and the Association of Speakers Clubs help nervous speakers reduce their anxiety to manageable levels through practice and support networks.

In addition to public speaking training courses, there are many self-help materials that address public speaking anxieties. Tips on how to improve eye contact, posture, and speech delivery, as well as how to reduce anxiety before and during public speaking, are common areas addressed in public speaking books and courses.

By far, the most important aspect of delivering a speech confidently is preparation and practice. It is crucial for both amateur and experienced speakers to rehearse speeches just as they plan to present them. Using aids such as PowerPoint, video, audio, flip-charts, and handouts during practice also helps with smooth transitions between slides and breaks.

Other benefits of rehearsal include:

- Accurately setting the pacing of the presentation
- Practicing in front of others and receiving helpful feedback for improving your speech

- Rehearsing in the actual location where you will be delivering your speech, thereby increasing your comfort level
- Helping to detect any audibility issues, either by recording or listening carefully to yourself during rehearsal

With a finely tuned and well-rehearsed speech, presenters can reduce their anxiety and nervousness and deliver a speech with poise and confidence.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that as many as 75% of all people experience some form of **speech anxiety**. Anxiety may be characterized by sudden changes in mood and behavior. Some **common effects of anxiety** are feeling a sense of dread, light-headedness, and nausea. Anxiety can then trigger a **fear response** in the moments before your speech. It's important to remember that feeling anxious before a speech is normal, and you can often **conquer public speaking anxiety** through adequate preparation.

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