

# Tools for Managing Trait Anxiety

by Sophia Tutorial



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will learn some tips for managing trait anxiety before your speech. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Envisioning Success
2. Guided Meditation
3. Accepting the Outcome

## 1. Envisioning Success

One of the biggest challenges for those dealing with **trait anxiety** is that their fear of public speaking may be a lifelong one. In order to confront and combat this long-term anxiety, you may find it necessary to engage in coping techniques well before you are scheduled to speak in front of a group.

One of the keys to managing long-term anxieties about public speaking is to envision success. Instead of constantly worrying about failure or ridicule when you speak, imagine instead that the crowd goes wild. Begin to replace those thoughts of doubt with thoughts of empowerment, success, and victory.

Stop and ask yourself: What is it that you're *really* afraid of? You might feel that if you have to get up in front of a crowd to speak, you might die. But really think about this: will you *really* die if you have to give a speech? Chances are, probably not.

So rather than get caught up in the anxiety, channel that nervous energy into giving the most powerful delivery of your speech that you can.



### TERM TO KNOW

#### Trait Anxiety

Anxiety can be either a short term "state" or a long term "trait." Trait anxiety reflects a stable tendency to respond with state anxiety in the anticipation of threatening situations.

## 2. Guided Meditation

If this is a particularly deep-seated fear, you might have trouble committing to a vision of success right away.

Sometimes it's helpful to prepare weeks and months in advance with a guided **meditation**, working you through key elements of envisioning success.

Guided meditation is a form of meditation where an individual is verbally guided into a beneficial state of consciousness, either by a person's live voice or by a recording of a voice. This process and practice of meditation requires an individual to follow verbal instructions that teach how to relax the entire body, clear the mind, concentrate on breathing, and focus one's awareness and attention.

During meditation, one may choose to keep it simple by just sitting quietly every day for five to twenty minutes, or one may decide to fully explore the tremendous subtleties and depth for hours on end. What one chooses to explore when meditating all depends on the individual's intentions, needs, and level of interest and passion.

When practiced regularly, the sacred state of consciousness that is achieved from meditating has the power to produce a variety of benefits to one's self: reduced stress, increased energy and sensitivity, better mental and physical health, enhanced creativity and focus, a greater understanding of one's self, and healing powers.

Meditation even has the power to change perspective by replacing negative thoughts with positive ones. The benefit that is acquired after meditating is dependent on what the individual is specifically seeking guidance for. For example, if an individual were having trouble falling asleep, an effective drug-free solution would be to listen to a guided meditation for deep relaxation and sleep.

In the case of managing anxiety related to giving a speech, meditation might involve concentrating on positive imagery, so that the brain can become conditioned to becoming less and less anxious about the idea of public speaking. One of the greatest aspects about guided meditation is that it is never without a purpose.



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Meditation**

A devotional exercise of, or leading to contemplation.

## 3. Accepting the Outcome

This can be incredibly hard to do, but sometimes, not every speech goes well. Sometimes your nerves just get the better of you. But like we asked before: Did it kill you? Again, probably not.

Sometimes you may have to accept the outcome of your speech no matter how well or how poorly it may have turned out.

There's always next time and consider a less than stellar speech just practice for the next speech, making you stronger and more confident as a public speaker.



#### SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned several methods for combatting trait anxiety before a speech. If you're worried about your speech being successful, try to **envision it being a success**. Consider trying **guided meditations** on positive imagery well in advance of your speech, to help you build up your

confidence early. Even the best public speakers can have a bad day. If your nerves do get the best of you, simply do the best you can and **accept your performance** for what it is. There's always next time.

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