

Public Speaking

Millions of people are terrified of talking when they think that other people are listening. Research has shown that more people are scared of public speaking than they are of dying!!

They are physiological reasons behind the fear of public speaking. When we are nervous our breathing patterns change. Our breaths become shallower and faster. This is part of a natural “fight or flight” response taking place in our body.

The response evolved millions of years ago, when we had to attack our enemies or run away quickly from dangerous animals in order to survive.

The “fight or flight” response takes the blood away from our thinking brain. We don’t need to think too hard when we are fighting to the death or sprinting for our life. And that is why it is difficult to get our words out when we are nervous.

The “Fight or Flight” response sends blood to our muscles instead of our brain, so we can move fast. While of course we are not punching or running we are talking but our body does not know this because our brain isn’t thinking straight. The muscles are expecting activity, and they start to shake in anticipation. That is why we tremble when we are nervous.

We talk on an out breath. So if we’re not breathing properly it is difficult to speak well. And when we feel that we’re not speaking well, we worry even more. This sets up a vicious circle. The more nervous we get, the more we persuade ourselves that we are no good at public speaking. We get increasingly worried and we spiral downwards into a “I can’t do this” hole.

BUT IT DOESN’T HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS!

You can stop your fear in its tracks and turn it into an upwards, confidence boosting spiral by starting the very basics of good, natural breathing.

- Give yourself time to collect your thoughts. Sit down and try to relax yourself by breathing deeply and slowly.
- If you have a quiet voice or you tend to mumble, try this voice exercise: Speak and pinch your nose at the same time. If you find that your words sound very nasal and strange, particularly ‘d’ ‘b’ and ‘m’ sounds, this is because you are talking from the front of your throat. Pinching your nose, talk from the back of your throat. You will find that there is very little difference in how your voice sounds and your normal speaking voice.

Once your breathing pattern is sorted out and you’ve learned how to project your voice, you’ll be more confident about talking. Each time you speak you will sound and feel a little better, until soon you will start to wonder why you ever had a problem.

