

Manage Trait Anxiety

Brief: In addition to using techniques suggested for situational anxiety, students with trait anxiety should incorporate positive imagery, guided meditation, and live practice.

Learning Objective: Understand practical ways to manage trait anxiety.

Key Terms:

- **Trait anxiety:** A consistent tendency to respond with acute anxiety in the anticipation of threatening situation (whether they are actually threatening or not).

Tools for Managing Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety reflects a consistent tendency to respond with acute anxiety in the anticipation of threatening situations (whether they are actually threatening or not). If you have trait anxiety, you're likely to feel anxious when you're delivering a public speech regardless of the situation, audience, or context. Using techniques suggested for situational anxiety, such as the relaxation response, can offer some relief. In addition, trait anxiety can be managed through positive imagery and guided meditation.

Envisioning Success

Has your fear of public speaking been a lifelong one? If your anxiety has been long-term, you may find it necessary to engage in coping techniques to counteract this fear well before you are scheduled to speak in front of a group.

To manage long-term anxieties about public speaking, envision success! Think of how much energy you expend worrying about failure or ridicule. Instead, why not replace those thoughts with thoughts of empowerment, success, and victory? No one's in your head but you. Your inner thoughts are your domain. Why not feel better by choosing thoughts of success? Channel your nervous energy into delivering the most powerful speech you can.



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 through key elements of envisioning success. Guided meditation is a form of meditation in which 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. Concentrating on

positive imagery can help your brain set new expectations and become less and less anxious about the idea of public speaking.

A simple way to practice guided meditation on your own is to close your eyes and imagine you are successfully completing every step of your speech presentation. See yourself confidently approaching the podium, making eye contact with the audience, comfortably beginning your introduction, and launching into the body of your speech. See your audience responding favorably, nodding approval and laughing appropriately (if there are times when you'd like them to laugh). See yourself holding their attention throughout the speech. As you complete your conclusion, see yourself smiling. Feel the relief of having successfully reached your goal.

Preparation and Practice

By far, the most important aspect of delivering a speech confidently is preparation and practice. To get the most out of your practice time, make sure your rehearsal is as close to the real event as possible.

Arrange to have a live audience. If possible, practice in the physical location where you'll be speaking. Make sure to practice with aids you will be using in your final presentation, such as PowerPoint, video, audio, flipcharts, and handouts. With a finely tuned and well-rehearsed speech, presenters can reduce their anxiety and nervousness and deliver a speech with poise and confidence.

From Concept to Action

Make a commitment to set aside one minute a day to practice visualizing your success. Close your eyes and imagine you are successfully completing every step of your speech presentation. As you see yourself performing confidently, take a moment to savor what it feels like to perform confidently. Memorize how it feels in your body. Own the feeling. It's yours. You are able to perform without anxiety.

OER IMAGE SOURCES:

"Career Road Away Way of Life Success Road Sign." Pixabay. <https://pixabay.com/photos/career-road-away-way-of-life-479578>. Accessed 21 March 2019. [CC BY-SA 3.0]

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