

"reaching for the bleachers" approach. Since microphones, you don't need to shout and make grand gestures any more. Smaller, more confidential, and much more informal is the way to go, especially with business speeches which can be so technical and detailed or hard-line sales-oriented.

Think of yourself as having a conversation with only one or two members, representatives of the audience, not the whole mass. It's much more persuasive, believable, and easier to listen to. It puts *you* into a much more relaxed frame of mind and therefore relaxes your audience and your delivery. It wears better for a longer speech.

### *They're Only People, Like You*

Seeing your audience in this light can help encourage you to be more yourself and not quest for some acting image you think will make you more acceptable. They *want* to be reassured that you're like them, and that you understand them! Knowing this can get you over the hurdle of fear and strangeness that any speech usually engenders. But talking about fear, let's get right into the biggie—stage fright.

## **Stage Fright**

### *What Is It*

Stage fright is based on a myth. It's you measuring yourself against some image of a perfect performance—a "10"—and developing levels of anxiety based on how far short of that perfect "10" you can, and think you will fall. You focus only on what others will think of your performance, and as you do that, you lose sight of what you're actually there to do. Fear takes over and you're into high- (or low-) level paralysis. You begin worrying about what could happen: "I'll lose my place," "I won't find the right words," "**I**ll be boring," "The boss (colleagues, clients) will think it's dumb (incompetent, ill-conceived, dry, confusing) and that I am, too."

Add, "I never *could* speak in public, " "My mother (father, teacher) always said I mumbled," "I *hate* making a show of myself," and you've got a full-fledged case of stage fright!

### *Why*

It's too bad, but early imprinting has a lot to do with who feels comfortable on stage and who'd rather die than . . . Those experiences—and your never-to-be-forgotten adolescence.