



5-MINUTE TECHNIQUE TO CALM YOUR FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

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| PERFORMANCE-BASED
PUBLIC SPEAKING TRAINING

5-Minute Technique to Calm Your Fear of Public Speaking

By Gary Genard



Stage fright a problem for you? Here's an easy, 5-minute technique to calm your fear of public speaking.

Every week, I hear from people around the world who have fear of public speaking. Many ask for advice. And all describe the anxiety, self-consciousness, and physical sensations that accompany stage fright.

I understand that it's a challenge to find someplace or someone that can help with this common but painful form of anxiety. It's the reason I started the Fearless Speaking program at The Genard Method in Boston in 2001. It's also why I wrote this book that includes 50 exercises for conquering public speaking fear:

Improving Your Performance to Banish Stage Fright

It's well known that speech anxiety is one of the most prevalent forms of communication apprehension, affecting speakers of all abilities and levels of influence. People struggle with overcoming it for a particular reason: because it involves performance, it can't be resolved just by reading books and articles on the subject. Even cognitive restructuring, an approach I deeply believe in, leaves out the performative aspect.

An approach that makes on-stage performance a central component of banishing stage fright is needed, then. That means techniques and approaches that address body language, physical symptoms, focus and presence, and the ability to be comfortable and receptive in the presence of an audience.

Still, my book, and the approach I take, starts out with understanding the nature of fear of public speaking. It helps, for instance, to understand that *glossophobia* is one of the most pronounced forms of social anxiety.



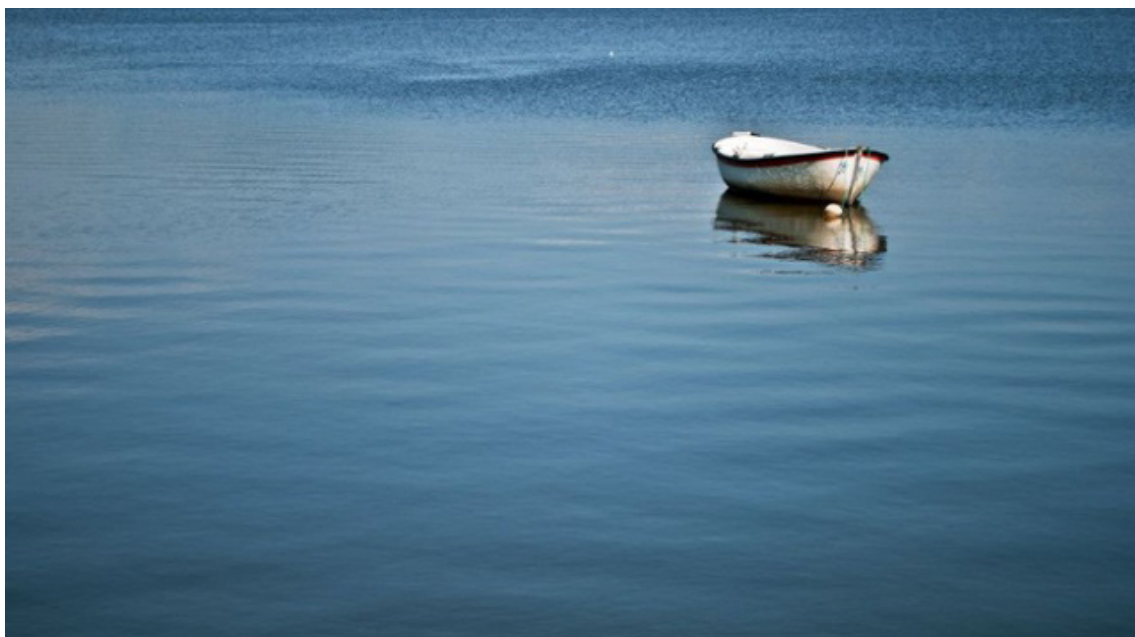
Fear of Public Speaking Is High on People's Lists

It never fails: When polled, Americans put public speaking high on their list of greatest fears. It's always up there with flying, snakes and spiders, heights—and these days, identity theft and government surveillance. Eliminating fear of public speaking, in other words, is a sentiment nearly everyone can relate to.

My coaching practice has worked with thousands of executives worldwide, and the fear of getting up in front of a group causes some level of anxiety in many of them. It's an experience shared by literally millions of people worldwide every day.

Stage fright is a complex response made up of various factors, and differs in its manifestation from person to person. It may include fear of sounding incompetent, of making a mistake, of not being interesting, of being unable to adequately answer a question, and many others reactions. All this fear often has a way of coming to a paralyzing climax right before we get up in front of others, or when we actually begin speaking. Here's a list of the **top 10 causes of speech anxiety that create fear of public speaking**.

Remember, the important visual you show in every presentation is yourself. And so you should definitely work to improve your performance at every opportunity. One way you can do it is through learning the **5 key body language techniques of public speaking**.



How to Calm Your Nerves Before Speaking

Obviously, you need to counter this response: For your speech or presentation to be effective, you need to find a way to **calm your nerves** before speaking. If you can't begin your speech in a state of total mellowness, you need at least to establish control. That kind of centering and **staying focused as a speaker** creates its own feeling of confidence. And of course, displaying confidence engenders **credibility** in the minds of your audience.

Here's an exercise that's custom-made to allow all of that to happen. It's a way to achieve sufficient relaxation and calmness that takes just five minutes. Yes, you can actually learn to relax in that amount of time! Once you master the technique, you can do it easily, even at a moment's notice, which is actually when you'll need it most.

1. **Find a quiet place** (if all else fails, a stall in a bathroom near where you'll be speaking will do). Sit in a relaxed position with your feet flat on the floor.
2. **Close your eyes to block out distractions.**
3. **Listen to your breathing for a full minute.** Feel the way breathing nourishes and sustains you. Experience the breath flowing down your throat and filling your lungs, bringing oxygen to every cell in your body.
4. **Now, with your eyes closed, focus on a visual image in your mind.** The image should be a simple colored shape—a green circle, a yellow square, a blue triangle, etc. Choose an object that doesn't have emotional overtones for you, and avoid red as a color.
5. **See that object with as much clarity as you can.** This will take real, sustained concentration. And in fact, you may have to do the exercise a few times before you get good at it. As you're 4/5 imagining your object, thoughts, other images, and feelings may arise in your mind. Notice them but let them go gently on their way. Keep a calm, persistent focus on your image.

Your breathing will become slower and deeper. This is what you're aiming for: you're now in more of a **state of mindfulness**. When you're ready, open your eyes, and slowly stand. Try to maintain this level of calmness and relaxed breathing.

That's it. This simple exercise allows you to calm yourself and focus your attention—two critical attributes of eliminating public speaking anxiety. Practice it, enjoy it, and use it as a convenient tool for more controlled and confident presentations.

If you'd like to know more about the work I do to help professionals overcome their nervousness and speaking fear, please visit the **[Fear of Public Speaking](#)** page on our web site. Don't let speech anxiety limit you professionally any longer!

About the Author

Gary Genard, Ph.D., founder of **The Genard Method**, is an expert in theater-based public speaking training. As an actor and speech coach, he uses performance techniques to help executives and leadership teams speak with confidence and influence. Dr. Genard consults and trains for corporations, governments, nonprofits, and individuals worldwide. He is the author of the books ***How to Give a Speech*** and ***Fearless Speaking***, and the blog **Speak for Success!** To learn more, visit the **[website](#)** and follow Gary Genard on **[Twitter](#)**.

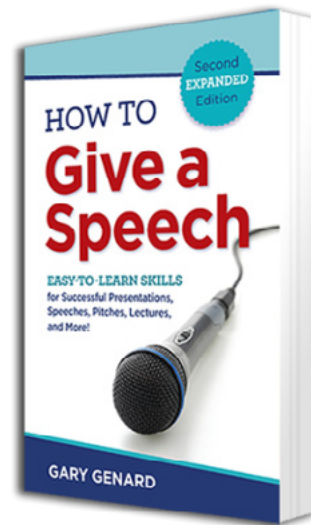
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FEARLESS SPEAKING

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If fear of public speaking is limiting your career, Dr. Gary Genard offers a way out. Learn his proven method to transform your stage fright into confidence. Read a chapter a day and practice the exercises. In just 12 days, you'll have the tools to beat your anxiety, build your confidence, and present with ease in all types of professional situations. Available in paperback and e-book.

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