

SpeakerNotes

be confident.
be heard.
be inspiring.



FROM **professionally speaking**SM EXECUTIVE SPEECH COACHING, COMMUNICATION & PRESENTATION SKILLS TRAINING

ARM Yourself and Knockout Stage Fright for Good

Trembling hands. Dry mouth. Weak legs. Your mind is racing and so is your heart.

Sound familiar? Welcome to the very popular “[glossophobia](#)” club, more commonly known as stage fright.

If you suffer from speaker’s anxiety, you’re in excellent company. Fear of speaking in public still ranks as one of the top — if not the number one fear — in the western world. But rather than attempting to eradicate it completely, you may be surprised to learn that many speakers learn to live with fear — and indeed, use it to their advantage, especially during high-stakes presentations.

Three steps to fighting fear

Just as skilled warriors arm themselves for battle, great speakers use the same “ARM” approach to calming their nervousness:

- **A**cknowledge
- **R**eframe
- **M**anage

Step 1: Acknowledge your feelings.

Fear is an absolutely normal reaction to an uncertain or high-stakes situation. Such feelings are usually a result of thinking that your shortcomings will be on display for everyone to see. Take a step back and consider that these so-called shortcomings are probably just a figment of your imagination. And even if they are real, chances are you have blown them out of proportion.

While teaching at Duke University, I worked with a woman who would put her hand near her heart whenever she gave a speech. When asked if she thought her heart was going to jump out of her chest, she responded in all seriousness, “Of course it is, can’t you see how hard it’s pounding?” She was more concerned about “hiding” this perceived vulnerability than presenting what she had to say.

Step 2: Reframe the situation.

Watching an “internal movie” starring you doing everything wrong will only fuel your anxiety. Instead, keep things in perspective and focus on what’s important right now — delivering your message.

SpeakerNotes

be confident.
be heard.
be inspiring.



FROM **professionally speaking**SM EXECUTIVE SPEECH COACHING, COMMUNICATION & PRESENTATION SKILLS TRAINING

Remember: You've been asked to make this presentation to this audience on this topic because someone thinks you're the best person for the job. So start by focusing on how you can best approach your subject with your listeners. By maintaining a positive attitude and taking productive steps to prepare for your presentation, you'll feel more in control of the situation.

Step 3: Manage your feelings in the way that works best for you.

For nearly a decade, I've worked with a CEO to prepare his opening remarks for an annual trade show. Over the years, this executive has perfected a personal formula for managing his anxiety, especially when the stakes are high:

- He's prepared. Almost 90% of the time, fear stems from a speaker's discomfort with the content or focus of the presentation itself. Having conviction and clarity about your message builds confidence and reduces anxiety.
- He recognizes that it's his job to connect with his audience, helping them to understand and act on his message. Focusing on your audience re-directs your energy so you feel self-assured rather than self-conscious.
- Finally, this CEO practices — and involves others in his practice sessions. By soliciting feedback from staff and peers, he gains first-hand knowledge about what works and what he needs to say or do differently. This helps him build the self-confidence to handle any curve ball thrown his way.

By coming to terms with your fears, shifting your perspective, and having a personal plan for success, you'll find that great presentations come together with much less anxiety. Remember: Simply flex an "ARM" and put glossophobia in its place for good!

Professionally Speaking, helping people deliver winning presentations . . . especially where the stakes are high and results matter!