

THE BEST PUBLIC SPEAKING BOOK

How to Conquer Nervousness,
Polish Your Authentic Stage Self,
Develop & Deliver
Dynamite Presentations

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The Best Public Speaking Book

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Chapter Two

CONQUERING NERVOUSNESS

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Every public speaker gets nervous. Even seasoned politicians, professional actors and news anchors get butterflies from time to time. Why?

Speaking comfort seems to be a function of a presenter's perceived likelihood of success and perceived importance of the stakes. That is, a public speaker is likely to feel comfortable and in control to the extent that he is sure of himself, his abilities and his message, and to the extent that he believes the implications of his talk are unimportant and secure.

On the other hand, a public speaker is likely to be nervous to the extent that he is unsure of himself, his speaking abilities and his message, and to the extent that he believes the implications of his talk are important and at risk.

This is true for many things in life. As our perceived ability to perform goes up and the stakes go down, we're more likely to feel confident and in control. And as our perceived ability to perform goes down and the stakes go up, we're more likely to feel nervous.

- Fully prepared & no big deal = confident
- Not prepared & really big deal = nervous

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Consider two drivers caught in the same snowstorm. One is a native Alaskan taking a leisurely trip to the market. The other is a native Hawaiian—seeing snow for the first time—rushing his pregnant wife to the hospital.

Obviously the Hawaiian is much less prepared and has much more on the line than the Alaskan, so we can expect him to be very nervous, at least in comparison to the Alaskan. But regardless of his mental state, the important question is: what should he do?

FOCUS WHERE IT MATTERS— ACT WHERE IT COUNTS

Beyond turning on his emergency flashers, focusing on the road, and perhaps praying, there's not much the Hawaiian caught in the snowstorm *can* do. Fretting over what might go wrong (What if the gas line freezes? What if this snow turns to ice? What if the Abominable Snowman mistakes my car for a reindeer and eats it?!) is worse than useless—it's harmful.

As Stephen Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* puts it, a wise person aligns his or her "Circle of Concern" with his or her "Circle of Influence." That is, few things are more frustrating and pointless than fixating on problems we lack the power to control. But few things are

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more satisfying and productive than taking immediate action to achieve goals within our power.

This nugget of wisdom is expressed succinctly in the world-famous Serenity Prayer, attributed to twentieth century American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Whether you accept, tolerate or simply ignore the things you cannot change is up to you. Just remember, as author and life coach Byron Katie says, “When you argue with reality, you lose...but only 100% of the time.”

As public speakers, we’ll seldom be able to influence whether our audience arrives enthused, energized and receptive, or depressed, tired, and...*blah*. We usually won’t be able to control what’s at stake either, be it a promotion at work, a grade for a class, or the simple admiration of our audience.

So resist the temptation to amplify worries beyond your control, and direct your energy at whatever will do the most to achieve your goals. In a phrase: *Focus where it matters and act where it counts*. In an acronym: *FM-AC*. Just like a car isn't fully functioning unless it has an FM radio and AC (air conditioning), we aren't complete until we're Focusing where

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it Matters and Acting where it Counts. In both cases, the key is FM-AC.

Deciding to FM-AC ensures your time and energy are wisely spent. We may be unable to control the stakes or our audience's attitude, but we can certainly control how well we prepare. And when it comes to preparation, few things will more dramatically impact your effectiveness than how well you understand your material.

KNOW THY MATERIAL

Whether you're talking about widget fasteners, batting averages, deficit spending, or rocket boosters; whether you're delivering a speech to an auditorium or just deliberating with colleagues—knowing what you're talking about is an absolutely vital key to effective public speaking.

Why is this the case? When you know what you're talking about, everything—and I mean *everything*—improves. When you don't know what you're talking about, everything—and I mean *everything*—gets worse.

Back in my philosophy professor days, whenever I'd take the time to study, organize, and internalize my lesson plan, I could illustrate points with impromptu examples, diagram interconnected concepts on the board, and answer tough questions with ease. However, on days when I threw my

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presentation together at the last minute—even when I thought I understood the ideas—I’d struggle to articulate my points, stumble through crude explanations, and worry the whole time a student would ask a question I couldn’t answer.

That’s why knowing your material is so important. Not only does it impact the content of your presentation, but also the quality of your delivery. On the days I knew my stuff, and *knew* I knew my stuff, the confidence that naturally followed felt great! But on days I didn’t know my stuff, and *knew* I didn’t know my stuff, the anxiety that naturally followed made me feel terrible. One third of the class would look confused, one third would look frustrated, and the other third would look out the window.

Of course, proper preparation takes time and effort. But it’s oh so worth it. If you can’t master your subject matter, at least figure it out the best you can given your resources, for few things will do more to improve your effectiveness as a speaker.

RELEASE THE NEGATIVE & AMPLIFY THE POSITIVE

“I always mess up—I’ll never be any good,” my four-year-old said in disgust, walking off the soccer field after an especially frustrating practice. A teammate, only a year older, immedi-

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ately interrupted: “Don’t say that. One time I said I wasn’t any good at baseball. But I practiced and got better.”

Now there’s a leader in the making. To recognize that a defeatist mindset is not only counterproductive, but irrational, and to have the goodwill and courage to coach a teammate in need—*at five?* Let’s just say I made a point to tell his parents, and they had every reason to be very proud.

Thanks to a thoughtful and exceptionally mature teammate, my son’s attitude changed almost overnight. He went from seeing himself as a soccer flunky who would never improve, to a rising star on a winding path to greatness, and his performance improved almost immediately.

In the grand scheme of things, how good a person is at soccer, especially when they’re four, is pretty insignificant. But the lesson at the heart of this story is very significant. When it comes to skill and performance, we’re rarely any better than we believe.

Take this example: “I’m terrible with names.” We’ve all heard someone say this—inevitably someone indeed terrible with names. But as Susan RoAne explains in *How to Work a Room*, to be good at remembering names, you must first stop repeating that you’re bad at remembering names. Then all it takes is creative association and repetition.

Meeting a man named John? As you shake hands, look into his eyes, and visualize him in the “john” shaving. Or imag-

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ine him reading a “Dear John” letter, or signing his John Hancock. Or combine all three: imagine John in the john, having just read a heartbreaking “Dear John” letter, consoling himself by repeatedly signing his John Hancock on the walls.

Meeting a group of people? Do the association trick for each, internally quiz yourself (so it’s Sally, Fred, and crazy bathroom John), and confirm you have it right as they depart. Should you forget someone’s name, admit it, remind them of *your* name, and run the same drill again.

The point is that remembering names is easy. But if you’re stuck at “I’m terrible at remembering names,” you’ll remain terrible at remembering names. If you’re convinced you can’t do something, you’ll never be able to—no matter how simple.

Before you can realize your enormous potential as a public speaker, you must first believe it’s possible. So say the following now and often, loudly and with conviction:

I am an excellent public speaker.

I feel fantastic in front of a crowd.

I seek out and look forward to public speaking opportunities.

Don’t be shy! This may seem a little silly. But trust me—it will really help. It’s OK to whisper or simply mouth the words if you’re in public. But really, go ahead and say:

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I am an excellent public speaker.

I feel fantastic in front of a crowd.

I seek out and look forward to public speaking opportunities.

It was Henry Ford who said, “Whether you think you can or think you can’t—you’re right.” And it was my mother who always told me, “Never run yourself down—there will always be someone else to do that for you.” So whether you’re thinking about your speaking abilities in general or a particular presentation, nurture your positive inner voice, and put a muzzle on anything negative.

In fact, when negativity creeps in, simply *let those thoughts go*. Recognize them for what they are—pointless distractions that are completely beneath you. Then just let them pass on through your consciousness without further attention.

Remind yourself of past successes (in any area of your life), visualize future successes, and remind yourself that you’re putting in the work to fully realize your potential as an outstanding public speaker. You’re not here to simply survive on stage. You’re here to *dominate*.

DECIDE TO DOMINATE

I once had a student named Tron Dareing. What an awesome name! I always imagined Tron rock climbing and completing secret agent missions on the weekends, which probably wasn't true...or healthy for the instructor-student relationship. But with a name like *Tron Dareing*, he *had* to be doing super cool stuff, right?

While Tron's presentations were always good, his third of three was simply outstanding. He was comfortable and confident, his silent message, timing and body language were simultaneously natural, inviting and powerful, and he expertly conveyed his ideas with grace and fluidity. Tron was a star that day. His presentation was considerably better than his previous two, and the best the class had seen in some time.

When I went to congratulate him after class, Tron smiled knowingly and said, "Since this was my last presentation, I decided to *dominate* it." Tron was a humble guy, and didn't say this in a cocky way. Rather, he simply exuded the satisfaction of someone who had just accomplished a worthy goal—one that was consciously pursued.

Notice that Tron didn't "hope," "want," or "expect" to do well. Tron *decided to dominate*. This is insightful, for one of the most powerful things you can do to realize your potential as a speaker is to resist the temptation to settle for second

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best, and commit to becoming overwhelmingly successful. This works for most anything, not simply public speaking.

For example, titling this book *Public Speaker as Teacher* might have captured the thesis, and *Your New Public Speaking Coach* might have been more inviting. But committing early to go with *The Best Public Speaking Book* generated a sense of optimism, drive and personal accountability that was absolutely integral to its success.

The same has been true in my personal life. By deciding to be an *outstanding* husband and father, my family is far happier and fulfilled than it would be had I settled for OK. This doesn't mean I'm perfect. I sometimes respond to negativity with negativity, set a bad example for the kids, lose my cool, and do things I regret. But by constantly recommitting to my vision of the encouraging, patient, wise and loving family man I've fully decided to be, the vision slowly becomes reality, one day at a time.

The extra good news is that when you act on your decision to dominate, this not only increases your likelihood of success, but dramatically decreases any associated anxiety. As Dale Carnegie says in *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, "I find that fifty percent of my worry vanishes once I arrive at a clear, definite decision; and another forty percent usually vanishes once I start to carry out that decision."

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So decide that you don't simply feel good in front of a crowd, but that you feel dominant. Don't simply hope that you'll become an acceptable public speaker, but decide that you're fan-freaking-tastic. Then do something to bring those goals about—they're fully within your grasp. After all, you're taking the time to read and implement *The Best Public Speaking Book*, right?

THE MIND-BODY LOOP

Paul McKenna explains in *I Can Make You Confident* that there's a two-way psycho-physiological connection between posture and mindset. The way we feel impacts our posture, and more importantly, our posture impacts the way we feel. McKenna calls this connection the “mind-body loop.”

While it's often difficult to simply *choose* to feel more confident or relaxed, we can indirectly accomplish the same goal by adjusting the way we carry ourselves. For example, think of a time when you felt exceptionally self-confident and relaxed, or imagine a person you consider to be self-confident and relaxed. Now, reflect on your or that person's posture. It most likely includes shoulders back but loose, head up straight, belly in, and chest out. Whatever your current posture, adjust it to adopt those traits.

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Notice anything? When we sit, stand and move as a more confident and relaxed version of ourselves would sit, stand and move, we actually begin to become more confident and relaxed. We decide with our minds to adjust our body, and in turn our bodies positively impact our minds. That's the loop!

Of course, the good posture habit is worth doing all the time, not just when giving a presentation. Depending on your current posture habits, it may feel awkward and uncomfortable at first. But stick with it. Your muscles will soon strengthen and your ligaments will adjust, such that the upright, confident you will become the natural you, and you'll enjoy a happier and more positive psyche as a result.

So the next time you're feeling especially anxious or down, it's important to release any negative thoughts and amplify any positive thoughts. But you can also kick-start and speed your recovery by first correcting your posture.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

In the same way posture can impact your psyche, so too can the clothes you wear. Author Tony Alessandra suggests (and I agree) that it's worth your time and money to invest in a wardrobe that makes you feel good.

What that looks like depends on your personal style, and is likely to change over time. When I was in the military, I felt

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most comfortable in camouflage. When I was teaching, I felt most comfortable in a button-up shirt and slacks. After a few months in an office setting, I felt most comfortable in a suit and tie.

However, some people absolutely hate ties. If that's you, by all means, don't wear one! And if you're not sure whether a tie is right for you, an important presentation isn't the time to experiment. I suspect the same is true of high heels.

We'll talk more about what Alessandra calls our "silent message" and how we can consciously mold it to suit our public speaking goals in Chapter Four. For now the point is that one way to stave off and decrease nervousness is to dress for success. But whatever you wear, don't wear it because it looks good on someone else. Wear it because it looks good on you, and it's true to who you really are.

BREATHE

One of the first things boxing coaches teach new students is how to breathe. Why would an aspiring fighter need to be reminded of something so simple? Because while hitting others is a huge stress reliever, the idea of getting hit is a huge stress builder. One way our body deals with it is by clamming up and constricting our breath. This may have helped our ancestors hide from predators, but it's apt to make a boxer

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light-headed, and consequently slower and easier to knock out.

Breathing is equally important for public speakers. You most likely won't be dodging punches, but your brain definitely needs oxygen to remember your talking points and keep you on track. One simple way to calm your nerves as your presentation approaches and to align your thoughts during transitions is to take a slow, deep breath.

Don't attempt to recite your entire presentation on one exhale, and don't breathe so hard that your audience can see or hear it. But do deeply inhale and exhale at a relaxed pace, both before you begin, and occasionally while you're speaking, and your mind will be sharper and your nerves calmer.

BUILD ASSERTIVENESS WITH THE URBAN HONEY BADGER

In civilized society, physical intimidation is rarely overt. However, it's often implicitly conveyed in a person's tone, expressions, and body language. The pushy car salesman may not directly threaten to punch you if you don't accept his terms, but he may subtly convey as much by standing up, putting his hands on his desk and leaning toward you as the sales contract is presented.

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Most of us wouldn't be too frazzled by this. We know the salesman isn't going to hit us, even if he wants to give that impression so we'll sign on the dotted line. However, when we're sensitive to this sort of intimidation, we're more easily pushed around. And that general physical insecurity diminishes our general self-confidence and tends to make us more shy and less outspoken.

Sometimes nervousness in public speaking is the result of a physical insecurity of this sort. We're uncomfortable with physical confrontation, and while there's little risk our audience will attack us, we're reluctant to expose ourselves or share our ideas, which generates anxiety.

However, one way to resolve this tension and build confidence is to learn a thing or two about self-defense. That's why I began teaching martial arts in my public speaking classes long ago.

I've used the Urban Honey Badger drill you're about to learn to help hundreds of otherwise timid students overcome long-standing shyness. By learning to confront and ward off an attacker, they became comfortable with the idea of standing up for themselves in other ways as well, and as a result, didn't feel nearly as vulnerable on stage.

The exercise mixes the teachings of three respected self-defense experts: Sigung Richard Clear of Clear's Silat (Silat is an Indonesian martial art known for its fluidity, viciousness,

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and use of weapons), a former undercover policeman who goes by the name “SouthNarc,” and Rich Dimitri, creator of a simple but devastatingly effective close-range technique called the “Shredder.” Many thanks to each of these great teachers for all they’ve contributed to the field of personal defense. All three are worthy of further study.

So here’s the drill: Imagine you’re on a street corner late at night, in a notoriously dangerous area, when you notice someone walking directly toward you with a scowl and menacing body language.

Once it’s obvious they’re coming at you and not the vending machine beside you, you need to engage them both physically and verbally as soon as possible to let them know you see them, and that you’re not afraid to confront them. If you’re not already, turn to face them, bring up one hand into the “halt” position, and ask, “Can I help you with something?” Go ahead—practice right now. Imagine the scenario, and take the initiative to confront this potential attacker with both a question and a hand gesture.

The specific words you use aren’t nearly as important as how you say them. You may say, “Can I help you?” but your body, your face, and the inflection in your voice should actually convey, “BOTHER SOMEONE ELSE.” Your demeanor shouldn’t be overly aggressive—you’re not looking for a fight; you’re attempting to prevent an assault. However, there

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should be no tone of timidity or accommodation in your voice. Make it clear that while you're being pleasant for the moment, you are fully prepared to take it to the next level.

If the person never meant you any harm, he'll stop, answer your question, and be on his way. "Yeah, I was just looking for First Street. Know where it is?" But if he continues to approach, you need to elevate your assertiveness by transitioning from a question to a command, and from one physical barrier to two.

Firmly and with moderate volume, say "STOP" as you raise your second hand into the halt position. Whatever level of forcefulness you used in step one, double it in step two. You need to make it painfully clear that you do not appreciate this person's aggression, and that you are not going to passively take whatever it is they're apparently giving. If "HOLD IT RIGHT THERE" feels more natural, that phrase works just as well.

If after asking your opening question, transitioning into a command, and clearly displaying the international sign for halt, this person *still* continues to approach, assume he intends to do you serious harm, and as loudly and as powerfully as you can, yell "GET BACK! GET BACK!" Show them your "war face," crouch down into a fighting stance, and pump both hands aggressively with each syllable. Punctuate your com-

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mands with profanity if you're so inclined—this is no time for manners.

If the above sounds like the sort of thing you'd have trouble doing, you're not alone. Step three is where shy students often cower, cover their face, or break into laughter. But they're precisely the students who most need to practice the drill. Assailants feast on complacent and timid victims, and pleading or reasoning with them is unlikely to help, for if assailants were merciful or reasonable, they probably wouldn't be assailants.

I actually used this technique to de-escalate a potential assault in a library parking lot, of all places. My wife and I were loading our kids into our car when I noticed two men approaching from the rear. I overheard a female who was with them anxiously whisper, "*What are you doing?*" and my spider-sense immediately kicked in. I threw up a halt hand and asked, "Can I help you?" in the firm way I described above. The two men began to fan out, continued their approach, and the closest one asked if I had a light. I replied, "No, I do NOT have a light," maintaining the halt hand and general "BOTHER SOMEONE ELSE" body language and tone. After only a few more steps, they slowed their approach, stopped, turned, and walked away.

Whether they really just wanted a light or something else, we'll never know. But whatever the case, the technique kept

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two potential threats from getting close enough to harm me or my family, and standing up to them in that way felt really good...at least once the adrenaline wore off!

The technique also worked for a former student named Zach, who was walking in front of the campus library when a man stopped him and asked for a light. (I have no idea what's up with chain-smokers at the library!) When Zach kindly told him no, the man pressed forward, exclaiming, "Oh I think you DO have a light—you *DO* have a light!" Zach immediately began pumping both hands and yelling, "GET BACK! GET BACK!" which startled the man, who took a step back in puzzlement, giving Zach the chance he needed to run to safety. Now, maybe the guy just *really* needed a smoke. But more likely he was asking for a light as a ruse to get close enough to do some sort of harm. Luckily Zach didn't give him that chance.

The final portion of the Urban Honey Badger only happens if an assailant makes physical contact, and should only be employed when you're in reasonable fear of serious bodily injury or death. And actually, I'm not going to get that graphic here. Let's just say it involves mauling an assailant's soft targets in ultraviolet fashion—google "Rich Dimitri Shredder" to learn more.

Go ahead—give the Urban Honey Badger drill a try. You've already recited the "*I am an excellent public speaker—*

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I feel fantastic in front of a crowd” mantra from above. You might as well do this crazy exercise too!

As you practice, get mean. Get loud. Get aggressive. Decide that you will NOT be a passive victim—in any area of your life—and that those who would take advantage of you will regret any such attempt. Find a place where no one will mind your yelling, and give those imaginary bad guys and earful!

If you’re finding it difficult to muster the enthusiasm to practice with conviction, just imagine you’re protecting a loved one. I once taught the Urban Honey Badger to a reluctant grandmother who I could barely convince to stand up, let alone shout. But as soon as I threatened her grandbabies, she went crazy! Ms. Iris, I pray no one ever suffers your wrath!

Last, if this drill really resonated with you, sign up for a martial arts class. Experts argue over which style is most effective on the street, but studying any system is better than studying no system. The key is to switch from thinking of yourself as the prey to thinking of yourself as the predator—at least when forced to do so. You’re a honey badger, darnit. Cobras don’t eat you. *You eat cobras!*

FAKE IT 'TIL YOU MAKE IT

Maybe you're not as assertive as a honey badger just yet. But Aristotle taught that if we seek to possess a trait or virtue, we should act in every instance as if we already possess it. That is, if you want to be more assertive at work, more loving at home, or more disciplined and ambitious in your free time, beyond making the decision to bring the change about, act as if it's already occurred, and soon it shall.

We can of course use this technique to grow as speakers. Simply imagine the sort of speaker you desire to become, and in everything you do, go ahead and *be* that person. In your preparation, your practice and your delivery, act as if your personal speaking vision has become a reality, and it will.

We can also use this technique to promote success for specific presentations, and to even overcome nervousness. The phrase to remember is: *Fake it 'til you make it.*

Although nervousness has a tendency to crescendo as a presentation approaches, it almost always dissipates a couple of minutes in—it's just a matter of getting over that initial hump. The same is often true for athletes. A football player who was a nervous wreck prior to kickoff is instantly calm and focused after his first hit. Players will often speed this transition by slamming into one another pre-game.

As a speaker, I don't advise that you tackle anyone backstage to warm up. But one way to overcome that early nerv-

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ousness hump more quickly is to concentrate on appearing as if you're confident and in control until your mind matches your body.

This trick works on at least two levels. First, there's McKenna's mind-body loop we just discussed. Confident speakers display confident posture, and when you physically behave as if you're fully comfortable and confident, your mind soon becomes comfortable and confident as well.

Second, there's an external speaker-audience loop. Whether or not you actually feel confident, if you can display the outward appearance of confidence, your audience will respond positively. They'll think, "Wow—anyone *that* sure of themselves *must* have something important to say!" Their good vibes will work their way to the front of the room, and once you soak them in, your fake confidence will transform into genuine confidence.

So remember: as your presentation approaches, regardless of what you're feeling inside, behave as if you're fully calm and in control. When you appear confident and relaxed, not only will this positively influence the mind-body loop, but your audience will look upon you more favorably, which you'll sense, and cause you to feel even better. Before you know it your words will flow naturally, your audience will be attentive, those butterflies will disappear, and bam—you're a successful

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speaker. So take it from Aristotle. Speed that transition. Fake it 'til you make it.

IF NERVOUSNESS HAPPENS, JUST WORK ON THROUGH

Sometimes despite FM-AC, despite knowing your material, despite developing the right mindset, despite the assertiveness drills, and despite faking it until you make it, nervousness still happens.

A few months ago I got really nervous leading up to and during a particular presentation. My voice wavered, my hands shook, and an irrational fear and panic grew and grew, no matter how hard I tried to reason it away. My nervousness crossed over from mental to physical, much more than it had in years. And to make matters worse, I thought, “I can’t get this nervous—I’m writing a book on public speaking!”

Then about a month later I got dry mouth for the first time. In this case as in the last, I perceived the stakes to be relatively high, and my comfort level was relatively low. But this time things were made worse by the fact that I was presenting from a spot where a few years prior, a president had given a speech.

The good news is that in both cases I was able to power through the nervousness without missing a beat. In the first

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situation, I caught myself worrying that the audience would notice my shaky voice and think less of me for it. But of course, they couldn't. I've had dozens of students apologize for their shaky voice after a presentation, but hardly ever did I notice it. Key lesson: Don't let the fear that others can tell you're nervous amplify your nervousness, because they probably can't.

In the second situation I was more surprised than anything. "Why in the world is my mouth so dry? I bet President Obama's mouth didn't go dry!" Luckily that presentation included a built-in break, so I was able to reset my saliva while the second speaker said a few words. But even without that break, I would have been fine, for I simply slowed down, pronounced my words more methodically, and reminded myself that no one could tell my mouth was dry but me.

So remember that conquering nervousness doesn't always mean preventing it. Sometimes it just can't be avoided. When it happens, the trick is simply powering on through. Breathe, ensure you're holding a confident posture, and mentally regroup; soon that sensation will pass, and you'll do just fine.

ACTION CURES FEAR

Most of what you're learning applies to nervousness that occurs immediately before or during a presentation. However,

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anxiety can be just as disruptive weeks and even months before a talk. David Schwartz sums up how to overcome this sort of anticipatory anxiety in *The Magic of Thinking Big* with a single phrase: “Action cures fear.”

A few years ago I volunteered to play in an alumni basketball game to benefit my old elementary and junior high schools. It was supposed to be just for fun, but since I had been an athletic underachiever in school, I let my competitiveness get the better of me, and came to see the game as a chance to prove that I was finally good at sports.

I perceived the stakes to be very high: I could redeem my athleticism or confirm that I *still* wasn't any good at sports. And at first I didn't feel prepared or confident at all. However, rather than dwelling on how I rode the bench and struggled when I was a kid, or worrying that I might repeat that pattern as an adult, I got to work practicing ball handling, passing and shooting. I watched instructional videos, played pick-up games with friends, and drove my poor wife crazy dribbling in the house.

Schwartz was right! The more I practiced, the better I got, and the better I felt about the game. By tip off my anxiety was completely gone, and I was eager to get out there and play. When I scored more points in one evening than I had in all previous games combined, it felt absolutely fantastic. Never mind that it was just for fun!

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Practicing cured my anxiety about the alumni game. But what can speakers do to cure long-range public speaking anxiety? First, as soon as you know you'll be giving a presentation, start thinking about the overall goal of your talk. Once that's clear, sketch the main points you'll need to convey, reflect on how to best order them, and draft a few examples you might use to illuminate your ideas.

Second, if you're feeling antsy, pinpoint the problem. Are you worried about a lack of clarity of purpose? About who might be in the audience? About how long you'll be expected to speak? Whether there will be other speakers? Whether you'll have access to a projector? All of the above?

In each of these cases, a quick phone call, email or visit will shed light on the unknown, which will enable you to FM-AC. If the purpose of your presentation is unclear, clarify it. If you're unsure who will be in the audience, ask. If you're concerned about how long you'll be expected to speak, negotiate. If you don't know whether a projector will be available, find out, and bring your own if necessary.

In each case, isolate the issue, clarify the unknowns, and take immediate steps to overcome potential obstacles. You'll feel better as the presentation approaches, and do a better job as a result.

Key Takeaways

- ➔ Replace worry with **action**
- ➔ Study and **internalize** your material
- ➔ Wear clothes that make you feel **good**
- ➔ Boost your **assertiveness** by practicing the Urban Honey Badger
- ➔ In all things, **FM-AC**

Chapter Three

DEVELOPING A CLEAR & MEMORABLE PRESENTATION

The key that distinguishes good from great presenters lies in intelligent message development. The seven steps to my method, which I'll explain below, are:

1. Clarify your goals and sketch an outline
2. Embrace your role as expert and teacher
3. Consider your audience
4. Download and unpack your core message
5. Logically arrange your ideas
6. Backfill with analogies and illustrative examples
7. Revise using Zinsser's Four Principles

1 CLARIFY YOUR GOALS & SKETCH AN OUTLINE

Imagine if military commanders gave their soldiers orders to “Do well” rather than “Take that hill by noon tomorrow.” Or if business leaders told their personnel to “Work hard” rather than “Increase profits by 15% by the end of the third quarter.” In both cases, success is much more likely with goals that are *SMART*—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.

Developing a Clear & Memorable Presentation

No need to put a deadline on your presentation goals, but you do need to ask yourself: *What's the point of this presentation? What do I aim to achieve? What do I want my audience to understand, learn, remember or do?*

For example, if I were planning a pre-game speech for my tee ball team, I'd need to reflect on our goals for the season:

- Have fun
- Make friends
- Build confidence
- Learn tee ball basics

Then I'd need to think about what I could do or say during the ninety seconds between warming up and taking the field that would help bring those goals about:

- Have fun:
Lead a team cheer (Go, Panthers!)
- Make friends:
Have team exchange high fives
- Build confidence:
Compliment each player on some area of improvement
- Learn tee ball basics:
Reinforce one quick tip from practice

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For the final draft we can remove the background goals, and no outline is complete without a proper ordering. The team cheer traditionally comes at the very end, and we should probably exchange high fives before the individual encouragement and the tip from practice. Plus, a little more detail would be nice, so I should add a few sub-bullets. How about:

- I. Have team exchange high fives
- II. Compliment each player on some area of improvement
 - A. Andrew's patience
 - B. Lexi's swing
 - C. Miles's defense
 - D. Amelia's speed
 - E. Justin's throwing
 - F. Malia's focus
- III. Reinforce one quick tip from practice
 - A. Remember to twist your whole body when you swing
- IV. Lead team cheer (Go, Panthers!)

We'll talk more about logically ordering and fleshing out your ideas in a moment. The point here is that whatever your speaking opportunity, be sure to clarify your goals at the very

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This concludes the free preview of ***The Best Public Speaking Book*** by Dr. Matt Deaton. The complete book and ebook are available at [Amazon](#) and [Barnes & Noble](#).

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It's available online – along with instructional videos and other public speaking resources at www.BestPublicSpeakingBook.com

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