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# Confront your fears

Manage your anxiety about public speaking by visualising success

FEAR is an unpleasant feeling of perceived risk or danger, real or not.

It functions to make us alert and ready for action should we encounter problems. Depending on the manner in which you handle your apprehension, fear can either stir you to action or immobilise you.

## Types of fear

Basically, there are two types of fear — empowering fear and disempowering fear.

Empowering fear may include the fear of developing lung cancer through smoking. This would inhibit you from picking up the bad habit or impel you to kick your addiction. An empowering fear may also be termed as a "healthy" fear.

Of interest here is disempowering fear that can incapacitate aspects of how you function if you do not overcome your fear.

How would you respond when you are asked to give an impromptu speech in public? This may send some people's heartbeats racing or give them butterflies in their stomachs.

It is no surprise that public speaking has been ranked as one of the top causes of anxiety in people. Let's examine the roots of the fear of public speaking.

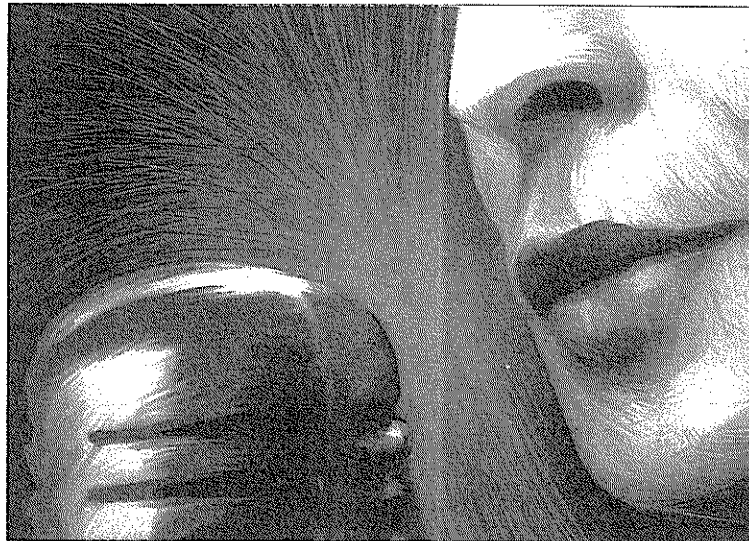


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One of the most effective techniques of dealing with the fear of public speaking is to visualise yourself confidently making a speech in front of many people.

## Truth be told

Why do so many people dread public speaking?

The truth is, most people are not fearful of speaking in public per se. Instead they are more apprehensive about the unfavour-

able scenarios that they have built up in their minds.

For instance, people who have a phobia of public speaking may be afraid of rejection.

"What if I perform badly and end up making a fool of my-

self?" and "What if my audience dislikes me and rejects me?" are some thoughts that flit through their minds.

If you perceive yourself being rejected and faltering as a speaker, this may very well be a

self-fulfilling prophecy. Usually, speakers who are not confident are likely to lose their audience's attention.

On the flip side, having fear is not always a bad thing. If you never experience any fear, it is likely that you are living your life much too safely and avoiding challenges.

It is only when you conquer your fears and venture out of your comfort zone that you learn and grow most as a person.

## Managing fear

When it comes to public speaking, there are only two choices: You can either avoid it or face it.

Dodging will only remove your discomfort temporarily as your fear returns when you are asked to deliver a speech again.

You can successfully eradicate your fear only when you identify the root of the problem and learn the art of re-directing your focus. Ask yourself: "What can I do to overcome this fear and become a better speaker?"

One of the most effective techniques to deal with fear is to practise visualisation. You can start by picturing yourself in the act of accomplishing your most lofty goals. Flex the muscles of your imagination and envisage what it feels like to live in a

world where you are comfortable making a speech or giving a presentation in front of thousands of people.

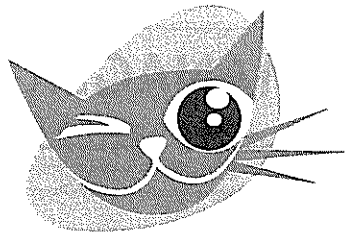
Visualising success allows you to overcome your fear directly. The more time you spend thinking positively about what you want to accomplish, the less time you have to be fearful.

Fear does not necessarily inhibit you. Learning how to separate unhealthy from healthy fears, letting go of fears that paralyse you and focusing your energy on eliminating them can do wonders for your well-being and self-esteem.

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## Be clear about your goals

Your priorities will help you set the direction you want to take

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Look at yourself in the mirror every morning and think positively.

HAVE you ever wanted to start on something new, but you don't? Have you ever promised yourself to kick a bad habit but found yourself doing it even more?

Some people tend to wait for something to happen before taking action. For instance, when an e-mail arrives, people usually ignore it even though it may be an important assignment or a business opportunity.

The stakes are significant if the issue concerns your personal lives or careers. If you want to spend your time on more meaningful tasks, you need to create a path for yourself. If you want to control your future and decide the direction of your life, then setting your personal priorities is of primary importance. Be clear about what's important and what's not.

Everyone faces the problem of procrastination. You consciously or unconsciously avoid accomplishing a task or project.

All of us have a different set of priorities. When you give something or someone priority, it implies that you place it before everything else, with respect to time and importance. For example, your family and career are your top priorities because they are what you treasure and value most.

For others who are beset with financial difficulties, the utmost priority is to explore ways to eliminate debts. Situations happen and change in many ways but one thing is clear: you will find ways to support your core values and deepest desires.

How do you know what is important when you are prioritising? Life is short, and you need to maximise your

time to do the things you love and are passionate about.

All aspects of life — physical, financial, social, career and even spiritual needs — must be considered when setting your priorities.

As motivational speaker Tony Robbins once said: "Your ability to achieve success in life is rarely a matter of your capability, but your motivation." If you are motivated to take action and set your personal priorities, then you overcome any obstacles that come your way.

### Identify your priorities

#### ■ Set goals

By identifying what you want to achieve at the end of the day, you know exactly where to divert your efforts and attention. Goals prevent you from being easily distracted and drifting away from what you want to achieve.

When you have clear goals and personal priorities, you are able to constantly review your plans and adjust them to reflect your changing priorities and experience.

#### ■ Establish personal reminders

When you wake up every morning, look at yourself in the mirror. Think positive thoughts to compel you to take action. They are personal reminders of what you want to be and what you want to achieve on that day.

#### ■ State your intentions

Your intention could be to find joy in your work, to keep yourself open to any opportunities that are likely to take you towards your dreams, or

even just to be grateful for what you have and who you are right now.

### Monitor your progress

#### ■ Watch your energy levels

Everything, including your thoughts, has an energy frequency. It is always important to have high energy levels so you can take positive steps to achieve your goals for the day. You should also find effective ways to recharge.

#### ■ Beware of self-sabotage

Sometimes you are your worst enemy. To succeed in life, you have to change certain behaviours when progressing towards your goals and getting your priorities right.

To do this, you have to make a commitment to banish your negative thoughts and desires, and move forward with fresh intentions. Remind yourself that regressing to former negative habits upsets your new priorities and hinders your development and success in life.

Article by Jacky Lim and Jeffrey Williams, trainers in public speaking, people skills and business communication. They are conducting a People Skills workshop on Aug 1. For details, e-mail [aws100@singnet.com.sg](mailto:aws100@singnet.com.sg) or [zhengwei\\_lim@yahoo.com](mailto:zhengwei_lim@yahoo.com)

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