

## U4Ch2. Managing stage fright and overcoming anxiety in public speaking

### PAPER 01 — Communicative Skills

#### Unit 4 · Public Speaking & Presentation Skills

#### Chapter 2 · Managing Stage Fright & Overcoming Anxiety in Public Speaking

## 1 Understanding Stage Fright

Aspect	Key Points	Practical Implication
<b>Definition</b>	Stage fright (glossophobia) is the <i>anticipatory fear</i> of speaking before an audience.	Knowing it is common normalises the sensation.
<b>Physiology</b>	Triggers the body's "fight-or-flight" cascade: ↑ heart rate, dry mouth, shaky hands, blank mind.	Physical techniques can target these symptoms directly.
<b>Psychology</b>	Rooted in fear of negative evaluation, perfectionism, past embarrassment, or unfamiliar settings.	Cognitive strategies address these thought patterns.
<b>Prevalence</b>	Surveys show 70-75 % of adults experience moderate-to-high speaking anxiety.	You are not alone—shared experience reduces self-judgment.

#### Mind-Shift Mini-Mantra

"Nerves are *energy*. I can channel them into *focus*."

## 2 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Reality	Reframe
Only shy people get stage fright.	Extroverts can suffer equally; adrenaline is universal.	Skill, not personality, governs control.
Good speakers feel no anxiety.	They <i>manage</i> it with practice.	Aim for <b>mastery of nerves</b> , not elimination.
Visible symptoms ruin credibility.	Audience often misreads signs as passion or enthusiasm.	Focus on message over microscopic self-analysis.
Memorising every word removes fear.	Rigid scripts increase slip-up panic.	Internalise key ideas, allow natural wording.

## 3 Comprehensive Toolkit for Anxiety Management

### 3.1 Long-Term Conditioning (Weeks-Days Before)

Technique	How To Do It	Outcome
<b>Systematic Desensitisation</b>	Gradually expose yourself: speak to mirror → friend → small group → larger audience.	Nervous system habituates; fear curve flattens.
<b>Cognitive Re-framing</b>	List catastrophic thoughts → write realistic alternatives ("They'll judge me" → "They want insights").	Reduces rumination, builds self-efficacy.
<b>Content Mastery</b>	Over-prepare research; rehearse with varied question drills.	Confidence in knowledge weakens fear trigger.



Technique	How To Do It	Outcome
<b>Lifestyle Support</b>	Regular exercise, consistent sleep, limited caffeine/alcohol pre-event.	Balanced neurochemistry moderates anxiety peaks.
<b>Visualization</b>	Daily 5-minute mental movie of successful delivery: vivid sights, sounds, applause.	Brain “pre-lives” success; lowers novelty shock.

### 3.2 Immediate Pre-Presentation (60-5 Minutes Before)

Step	Goal	Specific Actions
<b>Venue Familiarization</b>	Shrink unknowns.	Walk stage, test mic & clicker, note audience sight-lines.
<b>Body Warm-Up</b>	Release muscle tension.	Shoulder rolls, neck stretches, “power stance” for 2 min.
<b>Breath Control</b>	Lower heart rate & steady voice.	Box breathing: inhale 4 s → hold 4 s → exhale 4 s → hold 4 s (repeat x5).
<b>Positive Self-Talk</b>	Replace doubt loops.	Cue phrase on phone wallpaper: “Message > Nerves.”
<b>Hydration &amp; Voice Prep</b>	Prevent dry mouth/cracks.	Sip lukewarm water; gentle hum on descending scale.

### 3.3 On-Stage Execution

Trigger Sign	Counter-Move
Mind blank	Glance at keyword card; pause, breathe, re-state thesis.
Voice quiver	Slow pace, elongate exhalation, emphasise consonants.
Hand shake	Gesture with purposeful open palms; hold remote lightly.
Rapid heartbeat	Plant feet hip-width, shift weight slowly, resume box breath.
Audience frown	Ask an engaging question, affirm feedback: “Is the pace good so far?”

#### “Reset Button” Mini-Routine (≈10 seconds)

1. Pause.
- 2) Smile & sip water.
- 3) Scan friendly face.
- 4) Continue with next bullet.

## 4 Structured Rehearsal for Anxiety Reduction

1. **Content Rehearsal** — speak *through* outline thrice without slides.
2. **Integrated Rehearsal** — add slides, gestures, transitions; time it.
3. **Stress Simulation** — reproduce pressure: bright lights, camera, small audience, mild distractions (door open/phone buzz).
4. **Feedback Loop** — solicit two “keeps” and two “improves” from listeners.
5. **Micro-Improvement Drills** — practise 1-minute ad-lib on random slide to build spontaneity muscle.

## 5 Cognitive-Behavioural Quick Fixes

#### Distortion

#### Replacement Question

- “If I stumble, I’ll look stupid.” → “When others stumble, do I judge harshly—or empathise?”
- “I must cover everything.” → “What are the 3 outcomes my audience truly needs?”
- “They’ll notice my nerves.” → “Can they read my heartbeat? Unlikely.”

Write distortions on left side of card, rational responses on right; review pre-talk.



## 6 Leveraging the Audience as Allies

- **Eye-Contact Triangle** - Left → Centre → Right sections; 3-second sweeps foster inclusion and calm.
- **Early Engagement** - Ask a rhetorical question or quick show of hands within first minute; converts listeners into participants.
- **Feedback Beacon** - Identify a nodding, friendly face; return to them when anxiety spikes.

## 7 Post-Presentation Reflection (Growth Loop)

Step	Tool	Purpose
Immediate debrief	Voice memo of feelings & perceived hiccups	Captures raw data before memory fades
Audience feedback	Quick poll / colleague notes	External viewpoint balances self-critique
Video review	Annotate timestamps of strong & weak moments	Objective evidence of progress
Action plan	1 keep, 1 stop, 1 start for next talk	Incremental improvement sustains momentum

## 8 Self-Practice Corner

1. **Anxiety Journal** - Track physical symptoms during daily mini-speeches (e.g., explaining a news item to the mirror). Note trigger ↔ response.
2. **Five-Face Drill** - Rehearse while alternating gaze among five objects; trains even eye contact.
3. **Disruption Exercise** - Deliver a paragraph while a friend creates mild distraction (shuffle papers); practise staying composed.
4. **Physio Reset Timer** - Set phone alarm hourly on prep day; perform 1-minute box breathing + stretch.
5. **Positive Reel** - Compile 30-second video montage of your best speaking snippets; watch pre-event.

## Chapter Takeaways

- Stage fright is *physiological and psychological*—acknowledge, don't deny.
- Blend **long-term conditioning**, **pre-talk rituals**, and **on-stage counter-moves** for full-spectrum control.
- Rehearsal under simulated stress inoculates you against real pressure.
- Objectively re-frame anxious thoughts; your audience wants you to succeed.
- Convert nerves into *dynamic energy*—they are evidence you care about delivering value.