

4

Resource 18 Four Activities to Practice Anxiety-Coping at Home

A common public speaking fear is being able to deal with unexpected situations on the spot.

Through practice and familiarity, these activities help you anticipate and become accustomed to the scenarios that scare you.

1

Random word deck

A major public speaking fear is being able to speak spontaneously without getting stuck. Create a deck of random words (or use the words from a game of Apples to Apples) that include one-word topics or themes that might come up for you in life, work, or school. You can also just come up with topics that are silly and fun! When you are looking to practice spontaneous speaking, draw a card from the deck and then speak for one minute about that topic without any preparation. This can be done on your own, in the car with family, or with a partner.

2

Random question bag

When the issue is less about speaking about topics and more about fielding unexpected questions, it is helpful to practice responding to questions in general. Take 10 to 15 blank slips of paper and write down random questions about a range of topics. It can be helpful to have an entire group of people contribute to the random question bag to get a full range of unexpected questions. Draw a question out of the bag and then answer the question, in three parts: 1) state your immediate answer to the question; 2) give a concrete example of what the question brings up in your mind; 3) connect the question to additional follow-up questions. This can be a good class routine or even just something to practice at the dinner table at home.

3

Feared questions list

The next time you have to give a presentation or speak in a situation that will include audience questions, make sure you leave time to anticipate difficult questions. In a notebook or separate document, create a list of your top 5 most feared questions. This might include questions you know you don't know the answer to, ones that seem unrelated or irrelevant, ones that require complex responses, or ones that leave you feeling vulnerable. Just creating the list is useful on its own, but as an added challenge, hand your list to a trusted friend and have them choose ones to ask you so that you can practice responding to your worst-case scenario questions.

4

Anxiety journaling

In a journal or separate document, write about specific public speaking situations that make you especially nervous. Maybe it is forgetting your train of thought, maybe it is looking awkward, maybe it is being boring -- regardless of what the situation is, write about all the awful feelings you expect to feel in that situation. After that, write what you will do in that situation to make it better. Be as concrete as possible! Maybe you will move onto a different idea when you lose your thoughts, or maybe you will tell a personal story when you feel like you are being boring. It is good practice to create specific plans of action to train your brain to think of them when you get to the real thing.