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The

# **Confident Speaker**

Beat Your Nerves and Communicate  
at Your Best in Any Situation

**Harrison Monarth and Larina Kase**

# THE CONFIDENT SPEAKER

*Beat Your Nerves and  
Communicate at Your Best  
in Any Situation*

HARRISON MONROE

AND

LARINA KASE

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To my mother, Roswitha Krems, who was my best friend and the love of my life.

*H. M.*

To my parents, to whom I owe my creativity, courage, and confidence.  
To my sister, Nicole, who has helped me in more ways than she knows.

*L. K.*

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# Introduction

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THE MOMENT YOU'VE dreaded is here. The murmur is slowly dying down as seats are taken, voices become hushed, and one pair of eyes after another begins to focus on you. Some faces are smiling in expectation, while others stare blankly at you, waiting for the show to start. You feel your throat closing, your heart pounding out of your chest, and your tongue drying up in your mouth.

You try to smile, but your face feels as if it's paralyzed. Your rehearsed opening statement seems to have vanished from your memory, and all you can focus on is the feeling of panic that once again has taken complete control over your body and mind.

We've all been there—from the Fortune 500 CEO addressing shareholders, to the student giving an oral presentation to a full auditorium of peers and faculty, to the project manager who wants to share her ideas at a company meeting but is afraid to draw attention to herself by speaking up.

To one degree or another, these are stressful situations, yet many of us who *have to* speak as part of our profession somehow manage to push through the distress, for better or worse. That is, unless the naked terror this fear of speaking produces takes the upper hand. Because we cannot express ourselves confidently when it counts, some of us stare the roadblock in our careers dead in the face.

This panic of speaking in public, however, doesn't just affect those climbing the corporate ladder or the entrepreneurs who have to hustle for business. It can unhinge anyone who interacts with others for a purpose. It affects some people so much that they avoid any type of meaningful social contact that requires self-presentation to groups of any size.

It is for all the sufferers of this terrible fear that we wrote *The Confident Speaker*. We know your plight because we've worked with thousands of people who suffer from the same symptoms, which keep many of them from engaging in life's social interactions and from taking advantage of professional advancement opportunities.

As social animals, we humans have to communicate confidently and effectively in order to be heard and get what we want. If fear keeps us from doing so, we are relegated to a life on the sidelines.

We want to assure you that what you're feeling is not unusual. We can help you ease your fears of speaking in public and overcome once and for all the kinds of debilitating symptoms that keep you from sharing your ideas with others. We know that you have much to contribute and that you can triumph over your fear.



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# Contents

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*Acknowledgments*   v

*Introduction*   ix

## **Part I: Identifying the Fears**

- 1   When Fear Controls You   3**
- 2   The Top Speaking Myths Revealed   21**
- 3   Getting into Your Personal Fears   33**

## **Part II: Preparing to Beat Your Anxiety**

- 4   “O” Is for Objective and Organization   49**
- 5   Getting Ready to Succeed   69**
- 6   Relaxation and Managing Anticipatory Anxiety   87**
- 7   What to Do and Not to Do Before a Talk   101**

## Part III: Toolbox for the Nervous Speaker

- 8 Change Your Thoughts and Behaviors 125
- 9 Using Your Body, Face, and Voice 147
- 10 Techniques to Increase Confidence 169
- 11 How to Work with Your Audience 184

## Part IV: Using the Tools in the Real World

- 12 Impromptu Speaking 209
- 13 Large-Scale Presentations and Workshops 228
- 14 Social Interactions 245
- 15 Techniques Specifically for Men and Women 261
- 16 Recovering from a Speaking Crisis or Blunder 276
- 17 Finding Speaking Opportunities for Practice  
and Polish 290

*Endnotes* 310

*Index* 319

PART I

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IDENTIFYING THE FEARS

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## When Fear Controls You

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*Sarah woke up suddenly at 4:00 a.m. Oh, no! she thought as her eyes popped open. Today is the day. How in the world will I survive this? Sarah had to give a presentation in front of 50 people that day. As a marketing director with a medium-size company, she had been successful in avoiding large presentations until a recent promotion. Now, she could not fall back to sleep—all she could think about was standing in front of 50 people in five hours with all eyes focused on her. My boss is going to regret the fact that she promoted me, she thought.*

*Five hours later Sarah looked out at the audience from the podium. She felt frozen, as if she could not think of any words and did not know how to move. She felt weak and dizzy. As Sarah tried to gather her notes, her hands trembled, and she was afraid she would drop the pages. After a pause that felt like five minutes, she told herself: “Start talking—they are all staring at you, waiting!” She began to speak and noticed that her*

mouth was totally dry. All she could think about was drinking some water. This is going to be a disaster, she thought. Her eyes scanned the audience, and it seemed to her that people looked annoyed and bored. She shuddered. It had only been two minutes, and already it was torturous. How would she survive, standing up there, trying to talk for 30 minutes?



Jon was on his way to a party that an acquaintance from work had invited him to. He was walking very slowly because he did not want to go. He only knew a few of the people who would be there. As if it wasn't bad enough to go in the first place, he was going alone, so he had no one to stand near. "I should have made an excuse to get out of this!" he said aloud to himself. Jon typically avoided office parties because he would have to make small talk with strangers, and that made him highly anxious. While he felt fine about his formal presentations at work, he felt completely incompetent when it came to small talk and socializing. He never knew what to say and when to say it. He feared that he would say something silly or embarrassing or that he would bore people.

Because Jon was successful in his career, he feared that he would be "found out" as a closet speaking-phobe, and he worried that his "charade" would be revealed. His colleagues at work seemed to like and respect him, and he didn't want to ruin the pleasant situation. As he arrived at the party, he was already thinking of ways to get out of there as quickly as possible.

- Do either of these stories describe you?
- Do you fear speaking in front of an audience?
- Does the thought of giving a presentation make you nauseated?
- Do you avoid talking to your boss or other people in authority?
- Do you get anxious and have a racing heart, blushing face, or shaky hands when you speak in front of others?

- Do you think you could be much further ahead in your career and social life if you were able to be comfortable and confident while speaking in public?
- Do you avoid telling stories and being the center of attention in social gatherings?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, this book could significantly change your life.

## Do You Have Speaking Anxiety?

Since you're reading this book, chances are you already know that you have anxiety about speaking in public. You know:

You dread getting up and speaking in front of people.

You avoid situations where you may have to spontaneously say something.

You try to hide so you don't get called on.

When you need to speak, you say something as briefly and quickly as possible so you don't prolong the agony.

You know who you are. And, luckily for you, we know who you are too. We are a team consisting of a professional speaking trainer (Harrison Monarth) and a cognitive-behavioral psychologist and success coach specializing in anxiety and stress (Larina Kase). We have helped hundreds of people like you, and we've both learned how to manage our own speaking apprehension as well.

The reality is, most people have some degree of nervousness about public speaking. When people don't worry about getting up and talking in front of others, it's usually because they have had a lot of practice.

If you do have some level of discomfort, the question becomes: *How severe is your public speaking anxiety?*

Answer the following questions to find out.

Rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all True for me	A little True	Somewhat True	Very True	Extremely True for me

1. I get very anxious when speaking in front of a small group (3 to 10 people). \_\_\_\_
2. I worry about when I will have to talk to strangers. \_\_\_\_
3. My heart pounds when I think I'll have to speak in front of others. \_\_\_\_
4. I typically get nervous when I talk with my boss or someone in authority. \_\_\_\_5
5. Most of the time I avoid giving a speech or presentation. \_\_\_\_
6. I get embarrassed when others watch me speak. \_\_\_\_
7. Usually I avoid telling stories to groups at parties and other social gatherings. \_\_\_\_
8. I would not volunteer to give a toast. \_\_\_\_
9. I worry that my voice will sound strange or that I will tremble when public speaking. \_\_\_\_
10. I would not give a talk if I did not absolutely *need* to. \_\_\_\_
11. I worry that I will forget what to say during a presentation or not have anything interesting to say during casual conversations. \_\_\_\_
12. I have had negative consequences at work, such as not getting a promotion or not getting my point across, because I avoid speaking up. \_\_\_\_
13. Getting up in front of a large audience is one of my biggest fears. \_\_\_\_
14. When I talk, I think that other people are likely to evaluate me negatively. \_\_\_\_
15. I try to avoid answering questions when I give a talk. \_\_\_\_
16. Generally, I do not speak up at meetings. \_\_\_\_
17. If I'm not 100 percent sure of an answer, I will not say anything. \_\_\_\_
18. When I speak in public, I think I'm likely to make a fool of myself or that people will lose respect for me. \_\_\_\_



19. When I know I need to speak, I typically get hot, sweaty, or flushed in anticipation of needing to say something. \_\_\_\_
20. I think it's better if I avoid speaking so people do not see my nervousness. \_\_\_\_

## Scoring

### 80 to 100: Very High Speaking Anxiety

You are likely to be someone who becomes highly nervous about speaking in public and who goes to great lengths to avoid public speaking. *The Confident Speaker* will help you understand and gain control over these significant fears.

### 60 to 80: High Speaking Anxiety

Speaking in public is likely to cause you a significant amount of discomfort. You are likely to avoid many situations altogether and to suffer through some other ones. We will walk you through conquering your worries and developing the skills of an eloquent speaker.

### 40 to 60: Some Speaking Anxiety

Some speaking situations are anxiety provoking for you, while you are likely to feel more comfortable in other situations. This book will help you learn how to harness your nerves and use them to your benefit. Learning specific skills of the spectacular speaker will help you build confidence.

### 20 to 40: Low Speaking Anxiety

While some aspects of public speaking can make you a little uncomfortable, in general you are not too nervous about speaking. You are someone who can benefit from the chapters on more advanced skills, such as capturing an audience, polishing your delivery, and finding opportunities to speak.