

Speak Up!

The best ways to triumph over fears of public speaking

DEEPIKA EMAILED TO ASK: I AM AFRAID OF EXPRESSING MY VIEWS IN FRONT OF A CROWD. WHAT CAN I DO TO OVERCOME THIS?

Speaking in front of an audience can be stressful even for the most confident of people. Many professionals experience anxiety at the prospect of making a public speech: it makes them nervous, creates confusion or even blanks them out. If your work requires public speaking, you must work towards overcoming your anxiety. Here are some simple strategies to deal with it.

■ Practise public speaking

Whenever you are with friends or colleagues in an informal set-up, start conversations about topics that are not related to work and voice your views. When others are discussing a topic, join in and speak confidently. Ask yourself what value your contribution added to the discussions and try to think of better ways to add value to them. Prepare well for your work-related meetings.

■ **Be assertive** Some of us develop a negative belief: 'I am not a good public speaker'. This may be due to a past criticism or put-down when you

tried presenting your views. Such incidences start a negative belief-building cycle. It typically begins with the thought 'I'm not a good public speaker' and when there is an opportunity to speak, it sparks off an internal dialogue, 'Can I do it?' The answer might be a big 'No'. You will hear yourself saying 'I'm not a public speaker'. To block this, use positive affirmations in the present tense and with emotions. Create 'small wins' to start a new belief.

■ **Deal with fear** You may worry about issues like, 'If I say something inappropriate, people will find out that I don't have the expertise'. You need to identify the fear that is holding you back and then address it.

■ **Visualise** yourself speaking up in front of small and large groups. Imagine others appreciating and complimenting you for your contribution. This will make you comfortable in sharing your thoughts in difficult situations. ■



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VISUALISE YOURSELF SPEAKING UP IN FRONT OF LARGE GROUPS

