

# Public speaking: speaking up

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People fear public speaking more than they fear being buried alive.

Teenagers and schools need alternatives for public speaking. We fear public speaking for many reasons whether it's the lack of preparation for a speech, past failures or the fear of being judged. Glenn Croston, a biologist believes that the intense fear of public speaking comes from evolution.

When humans were threatened by larger predators, living as a group was a survival skill and any form of separation would most likely lead to death.

From my experience, public speaking was always dreadful. My fear of public speaking came from my fear of being judged. An example of this would be during maths, when my teacher called on me to answer questions, I would panic, my heart would race and I would feel as if all eyes were on me. It made me feel stupid and it gave the feeling of wanting to go to sleep and never waking up.

I'd then make dumb mistakes in which I felt like a joke. Speeches, no matter what I do, I can't help but panic, tremble uncontrollable and even come close to crying. Some of my teachers understand the anxiety around it and pursue alternatives such as giving the speech during lunch with no audience.

Throughout my time in secondary school, my confidence has dropped due to this. Public speaking is considered the highest out of all known and recognised fears/phobias according to data that was conducted in September 2016 by the National Institute of Mental Health. It affects 3 in 4 people with an estimate that 75% of people suffer some degree of anxiety or nervousness before/during public speaking. A poll had also revealed that more people fear public speaking than death or being buried alive.

“ To the average person, if you have to go to a funeral, you’re better off in the casket than doing the eulogy” -Jerry Seinfeld Teenagers are known for their self-consciousness. Therefore, it’s not necessarily giving the speech but rather the fear of being judged and laughed at. When the teacher calls on you to present/answer, it makes you panic which leads you to feel as if your brain has just left. This can then lead to you saying the wrong answer despite knowing what it is, which often makes you feel foolish and embarrassed. I believe that teachers calling on students during class is wrong as the teacher and the students often have two different views. Teachers may believe that the student wasn’t paying attention but the sudden calling upon tends to make the student panic therefore answering incorrectly.

Another idea of mine is a video with text/voiceovers. Teachers often push students to do speeches as it’s meant to help them but it could be doing the opposite. The stuttering, stumbling and mispronunciation of words can affect them and lower their confidence and self-esteem as they feel judged. I understand parents and teachers want what is best for their children/students as public speaking is a skill necessary in our society as jobs and day-to-day lifestyles tend to be dependent on socialising. Public speaking is a skill that has much potential and opens up job opportunities and can help build relationships with others, whether they’re clients, acquaintances or strangers. Teachers and students don’t always see eye to eye and public speaking is one of them. Teachers should be offering support instead of pushing students to do something they are not comfortable with

and instead allow them to become more comfortable with public speaking at their own pace.