



## Positive Self-Talk Reduces Public Speaking Anxiety

### What is this Research About?

Communication apprehension can range from mild nervousness to dropping a course out of fear of public speaking. Classes that require students to speak publicly can result in high anxiety levels. In this study, the researchers explored positive self-talk as a promising way to mitigate communication apprehension. The researchers surveyed students about their public speaking anxiety before and after giving a speech. The researchers compared students who were randomly assigned to repeat a positive, self-affirming statement before giving a speech, with a control group who did not repeat a positive statement to determine if positive self-talk would decrease public speaking anxiety.

### What did the Researchers Do?

The researchers studied students enrolled in courses that included a public speaking component. Students in the experimental condition participated in small group recitation of a positive self-talk statement before giving their speech. Students in the control condition did not recite a positive self-talk statement. The researchers used a validated measure of public speaking anxiety to measure student's anxiety levels before and after the speech. They also interviewed a subset of students in the experimental positive self-talk condition.

### What did the Researchers Find?

Using the Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety Scale, the researchers found an average reduction in anxiety of 11.60% for classes that implemented positive, self-talk as opposed to an average 8.30% reduction in control cases. During the interviews, students universally described the positive self-talk statement as helpful in reducing the amount of public speaking anxiety they were feeling. One student stated that he, "felt less anxious and [he] felt a bit confident in giving presentations." One reoccurring theme was that students felt more mentally prepared and less anxious as they approached giving their speech after repeating the positive statement.

# SoTL

## Snapshot

A synopsis of a scholarship of teaching and learning journal article

### → How to Implement this Research in Your Classroom

Small group recitation of positive self-affirmation statements before public speaking has a beneficial influence on the confidence and anxiety levels of students. Positive self-talk made students feel more comfortable with their peers and more mentally prepared speaking publicly. Instructors can implement this research in classrooms by guiding students through these group self-affirming phrases before a speech or presentation to reduce student communication apprehension. The positive self-talk phrase used in this study was: "My speech is ready. Everybody in class understands what this is like. I'm ready to give my speech. My classmates support my efforts. This is going to be the best performance that I can do. I'm ready to do my speech!" (p. 7).

### → Citation

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### → Keywords

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