



The Speech Clinic®



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Create new Comfort Zones!

When we are part of an audience we feel pleasantly comfortable. Nothing can threaten us (read about threats in Speaking Tips #6). We sit in the very centre of our safest comfort zone. The problem is that many remain seated there all their lives, jealously listening and watching those speakers or actors who dare challenge destiny by standing on stage so subjected to people's scrutiny. Just the thought of doing it scares the brain, making our adrenalin pump up in torrents.

So we stay where we are and live on in a static invariable zone of comfortable safety. Rather funny actually, considering the fact that we, as children, did nothing but risking our safety in order to satisfy endless curiosity. Not a thought about threats. Thank Heavens we always challenged new adventures – but what happened? Well, every new exciting and frightening experience gradually ceased to be exciting and frightening. They became new comfort zones and we went on creating ever more safe zones. We didn't even realize it. It just happened. It was our development. And in this way we developed bravely and challenging into adults. But then suddenly, somewhere in time, development came to a standstill and we created ever fewer comfort zones. We became satisfied, comfortable and safe with what we were familiar with.

Public speaking feels uncomfortable in the beginning – well, actually always a bit. There are individual challenges like learning to ride a bike or to go skiing. If I fail it is only I who knows about it. But to subject oneself to the scrutiny of an audience feels a lot worse

We easily believe that we should either be born a speaker or not be a speaker at all. But a newly born baby doesn't speak. It yells. It LEARNS to speak. The same goes for us adults. We can learn to become excellent and fascinating speakers who excite and move an audience. But this, of course, does not happen by itself. A concert pianist who is cheered with standing ovations hasn't had a free ride either.

Here are a few basic tips to enable you to feel a bit more comfortable on stage.

1. Buy literature about presentation techniques and read a number of books.
2. Practice unprepared speaking at home (see Speaking Tips #12), with the children too.
3. Join a local Toastmaster Club (see www.toastmasters.se or www.toastmasters.org and click find a club). Extremely useful!
4. Get yourself a personal speech coach (see www.speechtracker.net)

You have to practice! To practice means that you must expose yourself to the risk of failing now and then. Unfortunately it is the fear of such failures that prevents us from moving beyond our comfort zones. We have to grab every opportunity to stand up in front of an audience and speak. Only by reading the reactions of the audience and grasping it's comments can we obtain knowledge about our performance and how we can improve.

Thomas A Edison said': "I have not failed 10 000 times. I have succeeded to find 10 000 ways that did not work". Therefore, whatever you do, you will succeed according to Edison. So don't stay in the audience for the rest of your life. Step up in front of it! You cannot fail

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