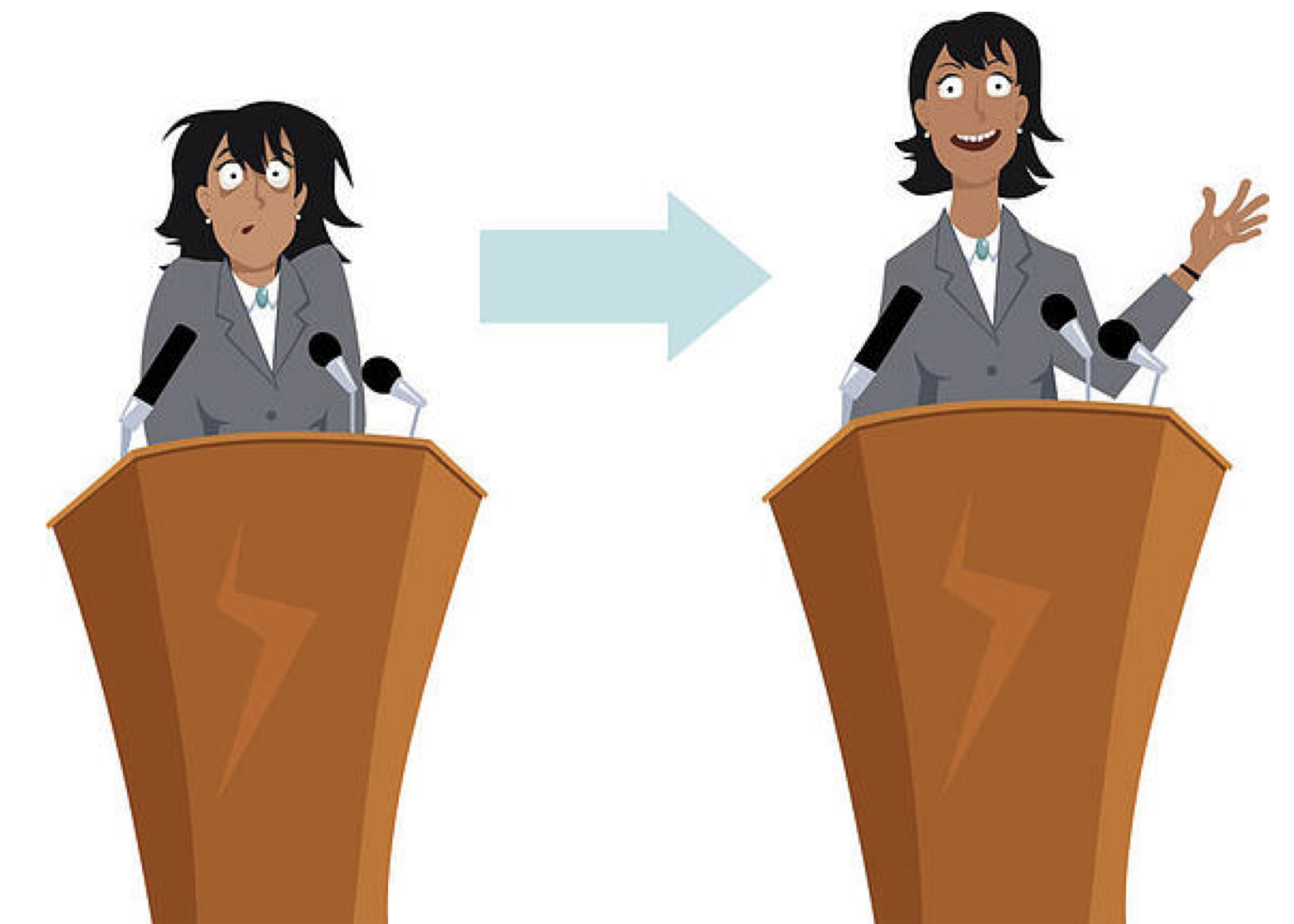


Public Speaking Apprehension in the College Classroom: How to Reduce These Fears and Promote Successful Communication Practices

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Public Speaking is a core communication skill that, when executed successfully, affects the overall impact of a speaker and how their message is perceived by their intended audience. Despite its importance, this social skill often instills feelings of fear, anxiety, and doubt. This research sought to find information regarding Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA)-specifically amongst students in a classroom setting. For this project, research was conducted in order to determine the what type of classroom lessons/exercises were positively correlated with lowering PSA amongst students. Below are three lesson components that-when incorporated into an introductory oral communication lesson plan-were known to positively lower PSA and promote success amongst students.



Goal:

To develop an introductory oral communication curriculum using techniques that could assist in lowering public speaking anxiety in students

Public Speaking Anxiety

Public speaking anxiety (PSA) is defined as the intense worry and fear that a person experiences when delivering or preparing to speak to an audience. Public speaking anxiety is sometimes referred to as stage fright or communication apprehension.

Systematic Desensitization

Systematic desensitization is a treatment for phobias in which the patient is exposed to progressively more anxiety-provoking stimuli and taught relaxation techniques. This treatment could be incorporated into the curriculum through exposure therapy.

Lesson in Action:

Courses should start with simple public speaking tasks and slowly move onto bigger and more advanced projects.

Also, students should be encouraged to talk often about these exercises, their projects, ideas, and sources in order to promote repeated exposure therapy.

This gradual shift allows students to reduce anxiety by slowly exposing them to public speaking situations and encourages them to become familiar/comfortable with their presence in front of people.

Cognitive Modification

Cognitive modification is approach to cognitive-behavioral therapy that focuses on changing negative self-talk and life narrative to positive self-talk. This treatment can be incorporated through training students to recognize negative attitudes about public speaking and replace them with positive speaking experiences and strengths-focused feedback.

Lesson in Action:

Instead of focusing on negative self-statements such as “They are going to think I’m stupid”, students should be encouraged to replace them with non-anxiety provoking coping statements such as “I’ve done my homework on my topic”.

This approach focuses on helping a student with PSA to understand his/her fears, evaluate them and find ways to overcome them by changing their thoughts.

Skills Training

Skills training is specific training regarding educating students on the dynamics of public speaking. Skills training is incorporated in order to expand their knowledge of different tools and skills involved with public speaking.

Lesson in Action: Lessons should contain educational content regarding different types/component of speeches, why public speaking is important, and tools and skills needed for “successful” oral communication.

Giving students the necessary tools allows them the comfort of building their skillset and confidence regarding public speaking.

**74 % of people
suffer from speech
anxiety**