

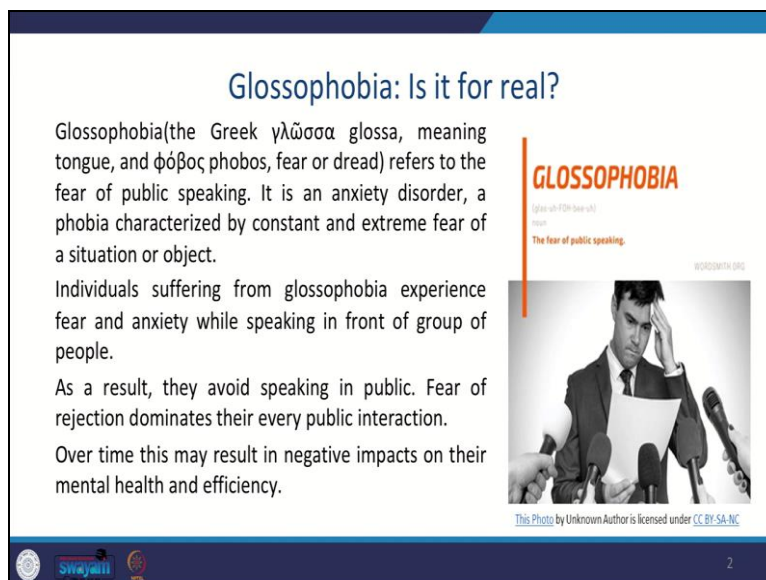
**Public Speaking**  
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**Lecture: 13**  
**Glossophobia**

Good morning friends and welcome back to NPTEL online lectures on Public Speaking. Dear friends, you might have by this time realized that now our course is gaining momentum and we are day- by- day getting more information and more caution about public speaking. And today in this regard, we are going to talk about Glossophobia. Of course, the term glossophobia may surprise you and at times also make you curious enough as to what glossophobia is.

But then if you recall some of the days of your past when you had to give a speech or a talk or a presentation whether it be impromptu or it be with the help of certain aids or whatsoever then naturally you might have come across a different sort of feeling a different sort of emotion. And many of you might have felt quite frightened and that is why this fear which actually may affect your talk in most of the cases. Today we are going to talk about the same fear which we call glossophobia.

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**Glossophobia: Is it for real?**

Glossophobia (the Greek γλῶσσα *glossa*, meaning tongue, and φόβος *phobos*, fear or dread) refers to the fear of public speaking. It is an anxiety disorder, a phobia characterized by constant and extreme fear of a situation or object.

Individuals suffering from glossophobia experience fear and anxiety while speaking in front of group of people.

As a result, they avoid speaking in public. Fear of rejection dominates their every public interaction.

Over time this may result in negative impacts on their mental health and efficiency.

**GLOSSOPHOBIA**  
The fear of public speaking.

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Now this term glossophobia actually is a Greek one and it comes from the word *glossa*. It is actually a combination of two words *glossa* and *phobos*, meaning thereby tongue-- *gloss* actually is speech which is the result of tongue and this *phobos* means fear. So, if we take the

entire word what we exactly mean by glossophobia is the fear of public speaking. In the previous lectures we have talked about various aspects.

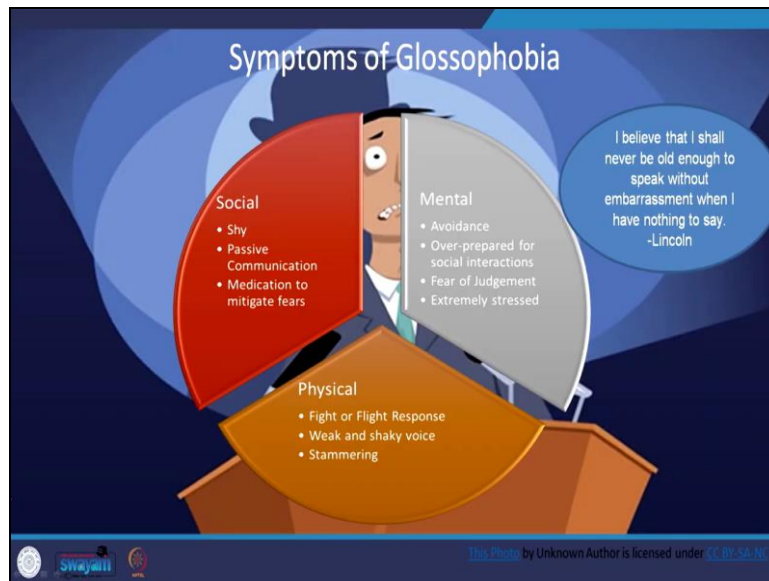
And on some occasions we have also talked about how when somebody is going to give a speech or a talk or a presentation or whatsoever one actually comes across different stages but despite all when the real time comes one actually gets very much you know frightened. So, this glossophobia in its literal meaning is anxiety of speech it can also be called anxiety disorder. It is actually a phobia or a fear which is characterized by constant and extreme fear of a situation or of an event.

Many people who suffer actually from glossophobia they experience fear and anxiety while speaking in front of a group, in front of a crowd. As a result, they often tend to avoid speaking in public. They always try to find out ways as to how they can get rid of it and this fear of speaking in public this actually results in a negative way. Now you might be curious enough to know what is actually anxiety and why this anxiety is caused and how it can impact.

Anxiety is actually derived from the Latin word *angor*--- *angor*, which actually is a noun and *ango* is the verb form. So, anxiety is a psychological and cognitive aspect of worrying as has been said by psychologists. And you will come to know that even many celebrated and many famous speakers some of them we have already referred to namely even you know Cicero, Marcus Julius Cicero. He himself had confessed that he trembled still at the beginning of a speech. Now when such celebrated speakers can also experience such a sort of fear why cannot individuals like us come across such a sort of situation. Now this disorder which is mainly concerned with anxiety is also called Panophobia. Now as a beginner who actually wants to deliver a talk or a speech or a presentation you might be curious enough and eager rather to know.

What could be the symptoms how could you know that somebody is suffering from glossophobia is not it.

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So, the symptoms are just at the mention of giving a talk many of you may feel or that you are rather shy ah your communication becomes passive and then you think of what to do. So, this glossophobia may have several aspects like social, mental, physical even you know physically you may also feel certain changes. You can feel certain changes within your body even though it may occur only for a slight moment but one can feel. Now there have been several researches in this area and it is said that when a person comes across such a situation mentally he tries to avoid or he actually tries to over prepare or he also is under the impression that people might be judging him. He actually feels extremely stressed, physically what happens? Physically at times one's throat may go parched- dry, the hands may tremble. There can be a difficulty in abdominal control fine the voice may also become muddled; the voice may become shaky. One may tend to stammer at times and then you often feel like flight or fight response. Dear friends, you have already come to know by this time that many celebrated speakers even like Abraham Lincoln who was one of the best orators and even today we read his speeches.

So, he also had confessed, before the beginning of a speech he always used to say--- “I believe I shall never be old enough to speak without embarrassment when I have nothing to say.” Now, look at this confession, look at this admission that he said when can he be old enough to speak without embarrassment. What is actually the meaning? The meaning is that even seasoned speakers may also come across such a situation of embarrassment. Such a situation of fright we can also call this a sort of stage fright.

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## Glossophobia: Its Range and Reach



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- Glossophobia is a common form of anxiety
- More than 75% of population have this form of anxiety
- This anxiety can range from slight nervousness to paralyzing fear and panic attacks

"He who fears death will never act as becomes a living man". – Seneca

Now glossophobia is a common form of anxiety as we have been saying and you know in some countries I think even 80% people come across this glossophobia. They often tend to escape. More than 75 or 80% of population come across this form of anxiety and the anxiety can range from slight nervousness to paralyzing fear and panic attacks. Now, think of a situation when somebody is going to deliver a talk and somebody feels frightened.

And what can be the result the result is despite ah the sort of efforts that he or she might have made he or she will not be able to make a good impression. One of for the greatest philosophers named Seneca says---“ He who fears death will never act as becomes a living man.” So, somebody who actually fears death cannot become a man. Meaning thereby if you really want to give a speech or a presentation all you need to do is--- you need to have a control over glossophobia.


I think most of you might while I am delivering this talk, might be thinking of those times when you also came across such a situation.

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## Diagnosing Glossophobia

People suffering from glossophobia may show the following indications while preparing for public speaking:

- Faltering with Words
- Indecisive about Content
- Unfamiliarity with the Receiver
- Unfamiliarity with the Situation
- Poor Listening
- Emotional instability



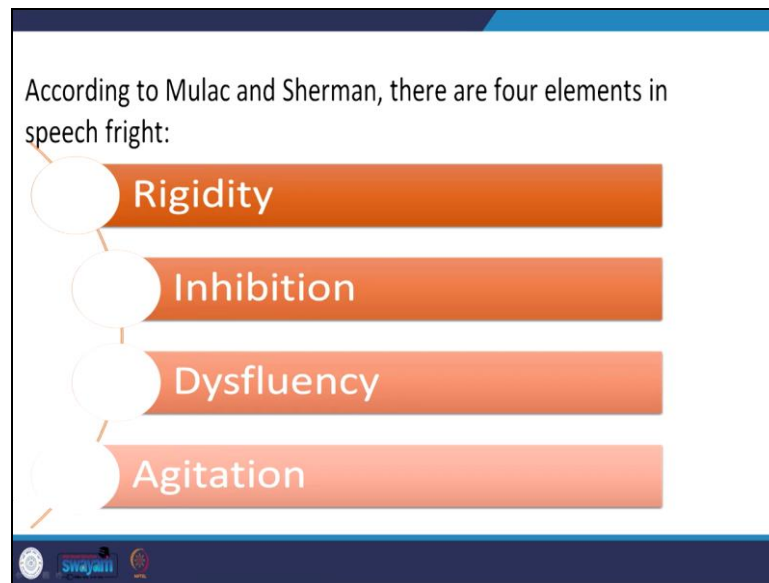
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Now people suffering from glossophobia may so, certain indications certain hints you can come across even when they are preparing for public speaking I mean so, many questions start haunting them and what happens. Now, when they start preparing their talk or presentation and even if they have done that, when the time comes for the real presentation of the talk they start faltering with words. What do I mean by that?

Faltering with words means they are not able to say exactly the word that they had decided, that they had thought of. Then they are also not decisive about the content. They had a lot of material but now if they are suffering from glossophobia they become very indecisive very uncertain and you know even though in most of the situations we do not know who the crowd members are. But then what happens is we actually show ourselves as if we were quite unfamiliar with the receiver, meaning thereby with the crowd with the situation I mean these can be a certain as regions for giving rise to glossophobia. Sometimes, it can also result in a sort of poor listening because this speaker since he does not have that much of confidence and he is not able to speak that assertively, he is not able to provide what actually the audience members are waiting.

So, what happens is he actually becomes emotionally very instable. He is not able to control his own emotion. So, he is frightened and this fighting may cause, at times, ah not only fear but anger but at times even sadness and he may sometimes or the other think of how to get rid of how to get away with such a situation. But if such a situation is there should we really think of fleeing, should we really think of going back? I think this will give a very bad impression. So, it is better to fight it. That is why it is said do not panic.

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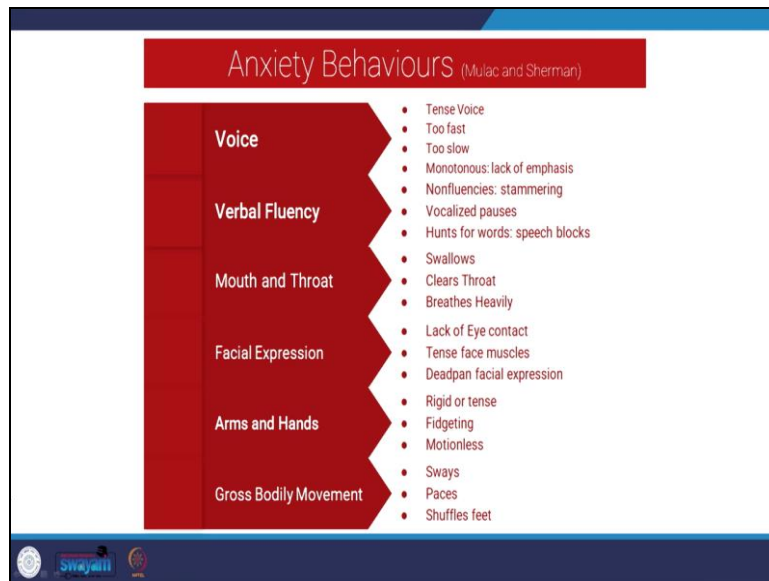


Now there is a research paper by Mulac and Sherman who actually provides in that thought provoking paper that there can be four elements in stage fright what are those four elements if a person is under this stage fright or he has got this speech anxiety he may become very rigid. He may come across a sort of rigidity. He may also have some amount of inhibition fine because he thinks that since all the pair of eyes are on him. I mean these may be wrong also my different this is your feeling this is actually your fear. Maybe audience members do not have the time enough or to think of writing you off as a very poor speaker. And then there can be a dysfluency you can become very agitated and all these symbols are written you know when we shall be discussing non-verbal, I will tell you how all our emotions are written over our bodies.

You may not realize it but then the audience members who are sitting just next to you they may pinpoint it my dear friends. So, why to come across such a situation is not it better that we prepare beforehand and we actually take precautionary measures. So, as to avoid such a situation there are certain there are certain areas are that Mulac and Sherman in their paper have provided certain categories as to how.

You know because when you suffer from glossophobia, there is actually a sort of disorder and then this disorder is a sort of physiological, it is also a sort of emotional one. Now what happens? The areas are now voice what will happen to your voice the voice will either become tense, very tense.

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You may either speak very fast or you may speak very slow you may appear to be very monotonous fine or you may appear to be very agitated. Your words will start stammering. The verbal fluency will have a sort of setback, fine. You will time it again start giving vocalized pauses, ah, ums, oh, fine. And these are all negatives you can also start hunting forwards there are certain blockages in your speech.

The mouth, as I have been saying, you will find a sort of dryness in your mouth in your throat, the throat will be parched. Time and again you will keep on you can watch even you can also yourself experience such a sort of speaker clearing his throat time and again or breathing heavily. These are actually the symptoms are the heartbeat becomes very fast. If one can have a look at a person who is suffering from glossophobia, one may find that the facial expressions are also very poor.

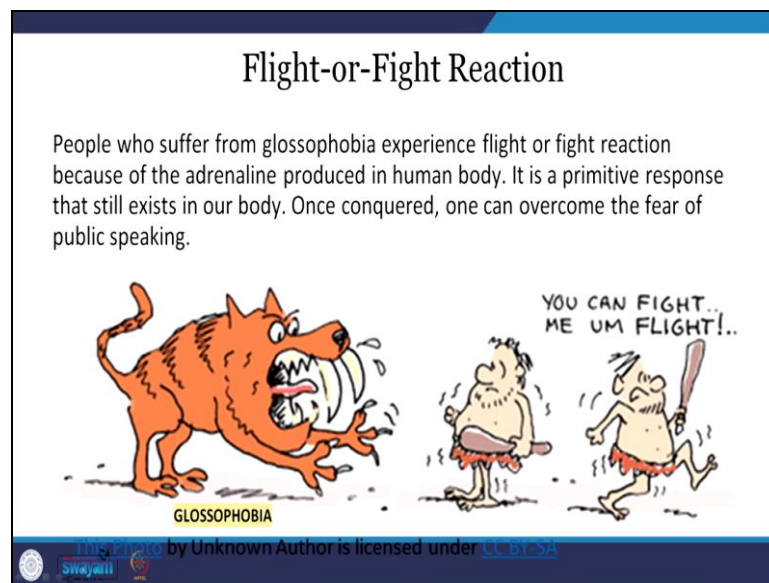
He is not able to maintain a sort of eye contact with the audience members. The hands the jaws the muscles become very tight fine you appear either like a dead pan in terms of your facial expressions or you appear to be very agitated. Then, a sort of stiffness will also appear if you have felt. I wish many of you do not feel it. It is better to be prepared beforehand than to come across such a sort of situation.

So, your arms and hands will become rigid you also feel fidgeting. No motion now, no force fine. You will become motionless and your entire body will experience this as a sort of person who is under the attack of this glossophobia. So, he will keep on pacing swaying the

feet will be shuffling throughout. So, there is a sort of physiological reaction when somebody suffers from glossophobia.

And in this situation what one decides one actually decides either to fight or to flight. So, flight or fight response.

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So, those people who suffer from ah this glossophobia actually have a flight or fight reaction. Why does this happen? You will find that during such moments the adrenaline surge in your body will actually be pumped. But my dear friends, what is the positive side if you have an optimistic mind you can find that this adrenaline surge will pump extra energy in your body.

If you can use that extra energy in your body this primitive response which actually exists in our body if you can conquer it, you are the conqueror you are the winner, you are the triumphant person. So, are you able to do this because you are suffering from such a sort of anxiety, the need of the hour is to get well. And how get well from day one start preparing. Preparing to control over such a sort of situation and it is not impossible.

It is very much possible you only need to have a sort of determination, you can flight or you can fight .The better way is to fight. Initially for one or two speeches if you start fighting then after third or fourth or fifth or sixth you will have a sort of confidence you will gain ah that sort of confidence a sort of positivism that from the next time onwards you will not be able to come across such a situation.




But people often say that despite the hard efforts that one makes before every speech or talk, one actually comes across such a situation. Now, it should not make you much troubled when you have a look at the famous speakers who also experienced this. The celebrated speakers--- one name I have already told you Lincoln, even the philosopher Seneca, I have told you ah even these people have also felt that.

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**Famous Public Orators with Glossophobia**

Some of the famous people with Glossophobia are:

- Renée Zellweger
- Nicole Kidman
- Abraham Lincoln
- Mahatma Gandhi
- Sigmund Freud
- Thomas Jefferson



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But Rainy Gelwegger Nicole Kidman, Lincoln, I have already told you even Gandhi had come across such a sort of embarrassment. Sigmund Freud also, you know the great psychologist, all of you might be knowing and then Thomas Jefferson----- all these people have suffered the tedium the boredom of this glossophobia. If it is so, I think you are not the loner. In a survey in US 80% of people prefer death to speaking in public fine.

But then how can we overcome there are several techniques that also I can tell you if you really want to overcome such a situation. I mean why does this happen. Let us try to find out the region. All of us as human beings want to survive and this survival strategy as William James the great psychologist says.

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### A Psychologist's Observation

“Our natural survival devices take over to prepare us for an emergency. Our muscles tense for better agility, our heartbeat and breaths quicken to provide large supplies of fuel, our glands secrete fluids to sharpen our senses and give us emergency energy.”

-William James

Anxiety (also called solicitude) is a psychological and physiological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional, and behavioral components. These components combine to create an unpleasant feeling that is typically associated with uneasiness, fear or worry.

-Seligman, M.E.P., Walker, E.F. & Rosenhan, D.L. (2001). *Abnormal psychology*, (4th ed.) New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. ...



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That “our natural survival devices take us to prepare for an emergency energy”, and that is why ‘our muscles get tensed for better agility’. That is why you get excited over, excited, fine agitated. And you know when your heart beat is fast you will find the breaths also are longer and the ‘large supplies of fluid’ are actually generated within you. So, is not it a good thing to be nervous or to come across a stage fright at times.

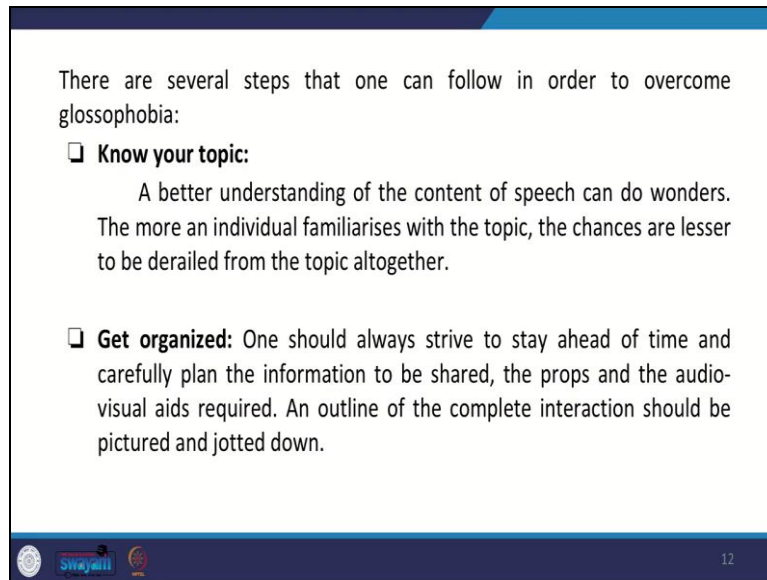
Because when you have this speech anxiety this speech anxiety is purely psychological my dear friends purely psychological. Psychological and physiological we have already discussed how the entire body parts come across such a sort of reaction. So, Seligman says that these components create an unpleasant feeling which is typically associated with uneasiness fear or worry.

But there are no predicaments which we cannot overcome you can always overcome by different. Nowadays we are living in such an age that there are several counselling sessions yoga training sessions medications fine there are different medicines also available but how long can these medicines work. It is up to my dear friend, that within yourself you can think that you can because you know at times it.

So, happens you come across a sort of catastrophizing what is this catastrophizing you always are under the grip of a fear that I am going to vent away is not it. So, this is a sort of catastrophizing. What will happen if I forget all my content my dear friends nothing but preparation and persistence are the best antidotes to such a problem. Prepare and you will find in your preparation lies the perfection.

When you prepare there are certain tips to be given always one should have more material than is required otherwise one may run short of when one is under the impression. Apart from all these, there are several other things that one can do in order to overcome glossophobia.

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There are several steps that one can follow in order to overcome glossophobia:

- ❑ **Know your topic:**  
A better understanding of the content of speech can do wonders. The more an individual familiarises with the topic, the chances are lesser to be derailed from the topic altogether.
- ❑ **Get organized:** One should always strive to stay ahead of time and carefully plan the information to be shared, the props and the audio-visual aids required. An outline of the complete interaction should be pictured and jotted down.

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We have already come to know about the region, we have also come to know about the symptom then how to get ourselves armed so that we do not get unarmed when we are before the audience the very first thing is--- **know your topic** much in advance you know your topic you have done a lot of preparation. The content of speech-- prepare it in such a beautiful manner that in the very first opening words. You are going to win them you are going to overcome your own passion overcome your own feelings of nervousness. The more a person familiarizes himself with the topic the chances are that he is not going to be written off, he is not going to lie down. Now, another thing is while you are preparing please **organize yourself**. I have been saying in the previous lectures as well that before you go to deliver the talk it is always better that you organize yourself.

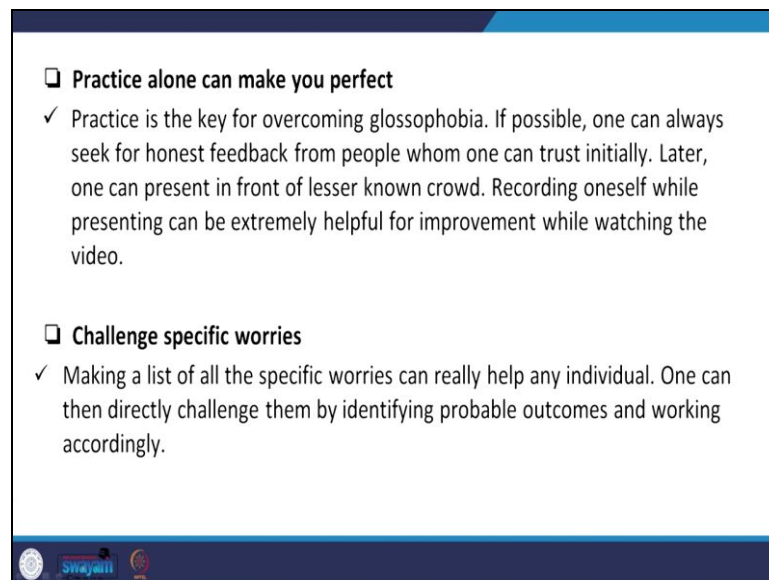
Systematic organization, fine? One should always feel there are other techniques also go to the venue beforehand fine familiarize yourself with the audience members, do not start speaking just when you reach there. Create a sort of credibility there was one lecture on credibility where we say how you can create a sort of rapport with the crowd. You have sufficient material with you, my dear friends.

So, there is nothing to worry and one thing that all of us must adhere to in today's age is **rehearse, rehearse, rehearse**, practice, practice, practice. That can only make you perfect. A man who practices time and again and you have several opportunities several facilities. Now you practice before a mirror you practice with the help of your android phone you practice your voice you practice your pronunciation you practice your content.

You also practice the time management and then if you keep on doing that, I think there is no way that you will feel nervous. It is actually the best way to overcome glossophobia. If possible one can always around oneself call one's friends deliver his talk or presentation and seek the honest feedback and work on those feedbacks. If you are a rigid person who believes that what my friends say is not correct, perhaps you are not going to improve yourself, you are not going to improvise.

Challenges come in different forms. But then make a list of all the challenges that may come and how is it possible? It is possible only when a speaker anticipates, meaning thereby things beforehand. You are familiar with the topic you should also start thinking about the questions that can be asked you can also think about the sort of people who will be the part of your crowd or the audience members and if such a question is there, what could be your answers.

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- **Practice alone can make you perfect**
  - ✓ Practice is the key for overcoming glossophobia. If possible, one can always seek for honest feedback from people whom one can trust initially. Later, one can present in front of lesser known crowd. Recording oneself while presenting can be extremely helpful for improvement while watching the video.
- **Challenge specific worries**
  - ✓ Making a list of all the specific worries can really help any individual. One can then directly challenge them by identifying probable outcomes and working accordingly.

So, if you keep on anticipating if you keep on making a list of all the worries perhaps that can help you a lot. One can then directly challenge them by identifying probable outcomes and working on them. I think all the seasoned speakers whom you see today, why they appear confident is---- that they have been doing it over the years. You are just a novice you have

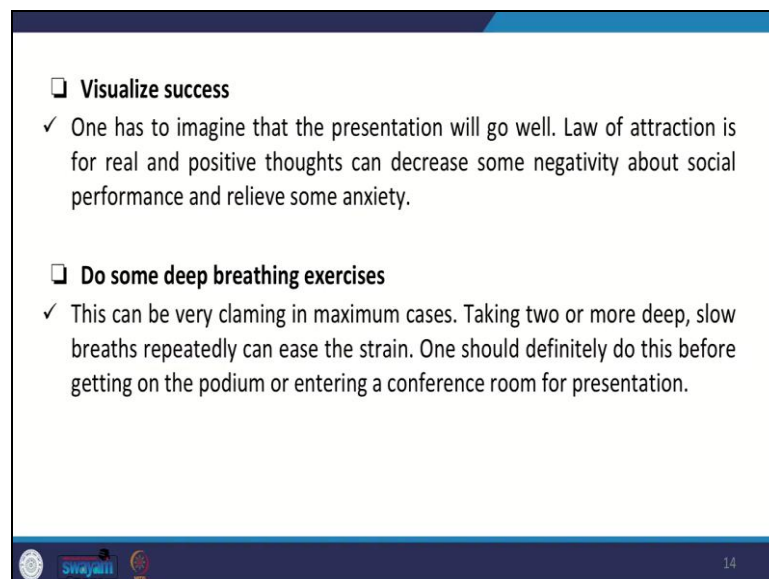
just begun and one thing that one should always keep in mind when one comes across a sort of glossophobia.

Think of an imaginary situation. Think of a sort of happy moment last time when you had I think this will actually help you avoid such an unpleasant situation. Visualize your success fine, visualize your success in psychology. This is called appraisal, appraise yourself think that the audience members are clapping on every sentence that I speak that I can see the sort of hope and optimism in their eyes what a sort of speaker I have become.

My dear friends, it does not cost anything a man the way he thinks he can become. So, why can't you also become. So, you have to imagine that the presentation will go well and people at the end of the presentation will swarm around you with all the plaudits and praises and all the applauses. Another thing nowadays ah there have been many people who suggest that one should often go for training sessions.

Yoga training sessions also some people will advise you that it just to keep your concentration but then you can also do some breathing exercise you are familiar with how many people say with your breath also you can control your passion, you can control yourself your emotions. So, this can also help you in calming and quietening the maximum number of cases.

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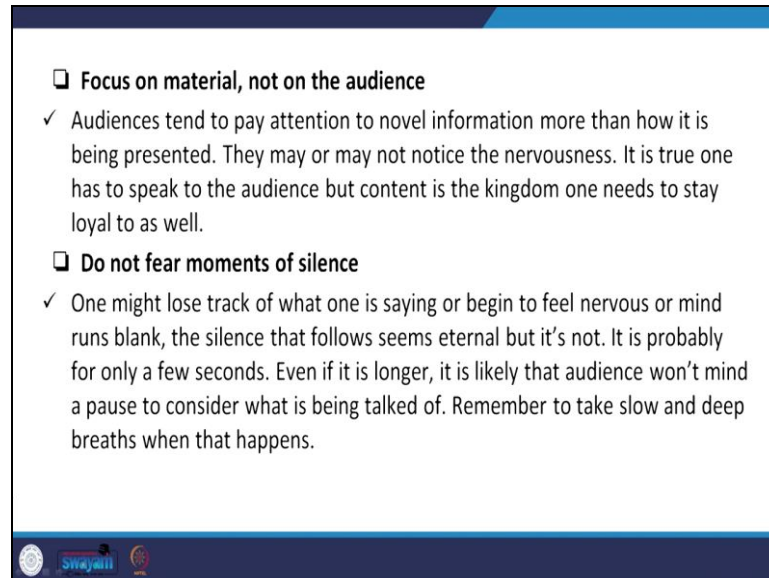


- Visualize success**
  - ✓ One has to imagine that the presentation will go well. Law of attraction is for real and positive thoughts can decrease some negativity about social performance and relieve some anxiety.
  
- Do some deep breathing exercises**
  - ✓ This can be very claming in maximum cases. Taking two or more deep, slow breaths repeatedly can ease the strain. One should definitely do this before getting on the podium or entering a conference room for presentation.

If you can take two or more deep slow breaths, then your strain will be eased and if you can do this beforehand, it is, of course, but then you should not do all these when you are at the

podium. These things should be done before you reach the podium, otherwise you will cut a very sorry figure, my dear friends in front of your audience members. Now audience members do not pay much attention to your facial reactions most of the time.

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- ❑ **Focus on material, not on the audience**
  - ✓ Audiences tend to pay attention to novel information more than how it is being presented. They may or may not notice the nervousness. It is true one has to speak to the audience but content is the kingdom one needs to stay loyal to as well.
- ❑ **Do not fear moments of silence**
  - ✓ One might lose track of what one is saying or begin to feel nervous or mind runs blank, the silence that follows seems eternal but it's not. It is probably for only a few seconds. Even if it is longer, it is likely that audience won't mind a pause to consider what is being talked of. Remember to take slow and deep breaths when that happens.

They are interested more in the content fine. They are interested more in the material than the man. It is only you, it is only me who actually start thinking that what are they thinking why such a harsh look at me, why such a whisper, why such a smirk, why such a smile. Why cannot we turn it the other way oh they are smiling because they find my talk very impressive. Audience actually they are interested in your material.

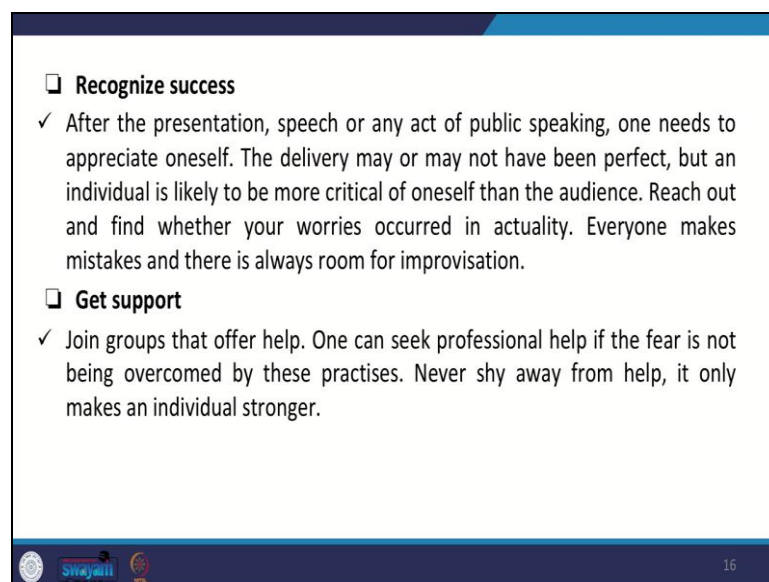
And that is why if you concentrate on your material perhaps this nervousness can be said a goodbye it is actually true that one has to speak to the audience. But remember if the content has been prepared thoroughly and beautifully one actually needs to stay very close to the content. Do not deviate unless and until you are a seasoned speaker unless and until you are a person who has got so, many references.

Because all sorts of people are there in audience group. So, you should not provide such references which you are yourself not sure of. Do not fear moments of silence. As a speaker you might at times realize that perhaps you are becoming very slow or your pauses are becoming very longer, and that may again cause a sort of nervousness. No, my dear friend silent time is the thinking time.

If you become silent for a while you are providing some space or some room for the audience members to think and to connect and to revise, and to refer, and to relate, that is why you need not worry too much about the moments of silence. Even if the silence is longer, it is likely that audience will not mind, because audience members also want a sort of relief from time to time, and that is why pauses are essential. But pauses need not be too longer than it is needed.

I think as a seasoned speaker that you are going to be in the days to come when you will become a successful speaker. But in order to become a successful speaker right from the beginning you have to start craving for success. You have to start thinking seeing yourself imagining anticipating yourself that you are a successful speaker after the presentation or the speech or any act of public speaking one needs to appreciate yourself.

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- Recognize success**
  - ✓ After the presentation, speech or any act of public speaking, one needs to appreciate oneself. The delivery may or may not have been perfect, but an individual is likely to be more critical of oneself than the audience. Reach out and find whether your worries occurred in actuality. Everyone makes mistakes and there is always room for improvisation.
- Get support**
  - ✓ Join groups that offer help. One can seek professional help if the fear is not being overcome by these practises. Never shy away from help, it only makes an individual stronger.

But I hear ah differ a little bit after every presentation of yours if you are able to record or if you are able to gaze the faces of people, please work on the grey areas where you have left some gaps work on that. So, that next time you can appear to be a better one. Everyone makes mistakes. No. People often say ah that if I make mistakes what will happen. My dear friends, have you not heard failures are the pillars to success.

If you are a novice today, you will be an experienced one today if you can learn from your own mistakes you are going to do better. All the speakers in the world today who are very famous were very bad speakers initially and then get support. There are actually many groups even in your college or institution or in the towns. Because you know public speaking is all a

matter of interaction. A person who always keeps himself aloof isolated cannot become a good public speaker.

So, if you interact more and more with people, you will find if you join some groups where they keep on delivering talks or whatsoever, they can also provide you some professional advice. If the fear is not being overcome by these practices but one should never shy away from help. It is always better to ask people where you actually had certain lapses where you failed where you faltered and from that get some honest feedback work on it my dear friend.

Now before I end this talk, let me tell you that if one decides that one will become a good speaker, if one decides really in an honest manner one will, of course, become a good speaker. What happens is for once you give a good talk or a bad talk and after that you forget you do not continue. My dear friends, one has to be passionate enough to become a good speaker, because a good speaker is one who always learns from his mistakes.

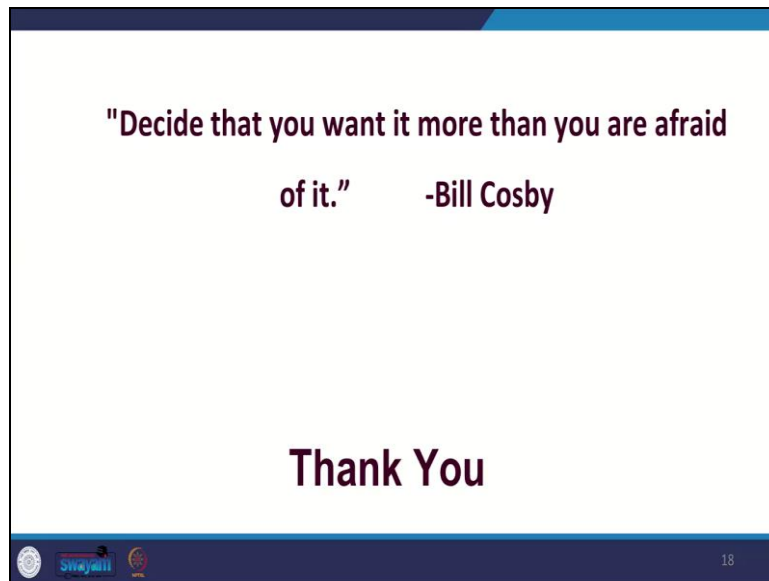
And it is always said that despite all your hard efforts despite all your content which is beautifully prepared, somewhere or the other you will find that because of some reason or the other, something has been lost, something has been left. Why cannot we begin from those losses? Why cannot we gain from these losses why cannot we overcome from these losses it has always been said that practice and practice alone can make you perfect.

And remember one thing one has to be very natural and understand that nervousness is natural. It is very natural we actually become nervous only when a strange situation is there, unfamiliar crowd is there, unfamiliar topic is there. Unfamiliar venue is there, we tend to become but out of that nervousness there should come something beautiful and you can really make it beautiful with your consistent efforts, my dear friend.

If some bouts of nervousness are there, which you can feel you must tell yourself that perhaps I am on the path to progress. I am not going to fail; I will conquer it by all means. Appraise yourself and if you decide that you will conquer you will conquer, my dear friend. So, what needs to be done is you actually need to decide.

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As the famous comedian Bill Cosby says--- “Decide that you want it more then you are afraid of it.” If you start getting frightened of something and avoiding it, it will continue with you my different psychologically speaking. So, it is better that more and more of such situations come and you get habituated to it because that will provide you the ladders to success if realized in the best, honest manner.

Because all of us cannot or are not going to become a good speaker just in one day it takes years and years to become good speakers. And nothing in the world can say that glossophobia cannot be overcome, it can always be overcome provided you are ready to overcome it. I think with this I must come to the end of this talk and I wish you all that you overcome this glossophobia, this anxiety of speech.

So, long as anxiety is, we are working. Out of the pressure comes something beautiful something benign something brave. And as brave people you are going to make it not mar it. Thank you very much have a nice day.