

Countering Stage Fright

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Hello, students. I am here once again to discuss countering stage fright with the topic of whether stage fright is common. In the previous lecture, I analyzed a few points because this is very important to know about to improve yourself on the stage. So, I was talking about the brain, mind, consciousness, unconsciousness, and memory level because how you memorize things is also one of the important aspects of a stage performance. And this is the point where people get nervous. So, I was dealing with how we retrieve things from the unconscious mind, but for that, it is required to know how much we are alert, and again, this varies from person to person.

This is very common to everyone. So, between unconscious and conscious is a critical filter. As the child grows, these critical filters, also called beliefs, start developing that choose what information should go into the unconscious mind. We do not see the world as it is, they see it through critical filters.

These filters or beliefs can also be self-limiting and do not allow the use of the full potential unconscious. We all have read, heard of, and experienced the placebo effect, and this is also part of neurolinguistic programming. Let us take an example of the most common fear that is of public speaking. There are people who are comfortable speaking in public. They look forward to it.

On the other hand, there are people who are scared of public speaking. In both cases, there is a program in the unconscious. A program. What is the program? Processing the language. And in the first case, the person sees the audience in his mind clapping and appreciating him.

In the second case, he sees the audience laughing at him, criticizing him or throwing tomatoes at him. So, see the difference. This is all point of view. In Hindi it is called Nazaria and that person concerned may acquire this fear maybe from environment or from past experiences or during his upbringing. If we are able to change those pictures

connected to public speaking and audience reaction, the person who fears public speaking will be able to speak a lot more confidently.

We need to establish a connection with the unconscious and change the programming. In my experience as a neuro-linguistic programmer, I have seen these self-limiting beliefs prevent people from utilizing their full potential. Sometimes, the same is true for me. See, in neuro-linguistic programming, we talk about belief. The belief that is already there in your mind and you are not ready to change is a preoccupied notion, and based on that, you look at the world.

Sometimes, this is irrational also. So, being rational, you need to go for flexibility, and you need to change the pillars of your belief. So, stage fright is something that all of us have experienced sometime in our life. It is common as it totally depends on the person's ideas and is subjective from person to person. It is not a disorder and it is completely normal even for the greatest actors on a stage.

If you think in that way, your attitude will change or will improve. How do you improve? Judgment, the first point is judgment. Basically, it is because the individual is afraid that he or she is going to be judged by the audience, and a slight mistake by the person will invite hatred or dislike from the audience. No one wants to be shunned, as humans are social beings and need to interact. The other point is a lack of self-confidence.

A person who lacks self-confidence plays a major role in stage fright. The person may be an expert in the act he or she is going to perform or the talk he or she is going to deliver, but he or she always doubts his or her abilities. Preparation is also very important. Fear is common, but how a person prepares makes the distinctions between them. When a person is not fully prepared with what he or she is going to perform, for example, he or she has not byhearted the dialogues of some great personality.

He/she is afraid that they are going to go blank there on a stage and grab everyone's attention, even if they were sleeping during the talk, during the act, or during the performance. As I told you in the first lecture of mine, that is what is required- to introspect yourself whether you are an extrovert or an introvert. So, being an introvert people who are naturally introverts find it difficult to face an audience and just do not want to do it. Even a group of more than three people makes them uncomfortable, and that is why it is said that they see the personality traits. What kind of personality trait do you have that you have to you need to identify to address the problem? Our mind works at a faster pace.

What we perceive gets immediately recorded and captured by it. We cannot deceive or bluff our minds the way we deceive others. However, we can train it and the simple formula is our body reacts the way our mind directs. Our mind directs the way the thoughts get generated. Our thoughts get generated by the way we perceive something, for example, if you perceive a tree as a form of the mountain, you have the same notion or response as the other tree, or if you come across another tree.

If you perceive yourself as an effective speaker, you become one, and you act as one. This is, however, only the first and the most important step to overcoming stage fright, which is quite a natural feeling anyone can get affected by. What matters? It is your attitude. A propensity for stage fright can indicate a variety of personality traits, and these range from perfectionism to social anxiety. People who need to be liked or who fear being vulnerable are likely to suffer performance anxiety.

So, are those with low esteem a desire for control or a fear of failure or success? Anyone who performs on a public stage, from kids in school to professional actors, is potentially at risk for stage fright. Hollywood lore is filled with tales of performers who have battled with his phobia, from Rod Stewart to Mel Gibson. One of the most famous and best-documented examples is Carol Burnett, who is at least to have thrown up nightly before each show. That is why this question is very important: is stage fright common to everyone? You try to know about the personalities, how they faced it, and how they tried to overcome it. And if you come across that this fear is common, I am sure that you would be able to do something substantial for your personality.

It can be extremely difficult for non-performers to fathom why anyone would choose a career or hobby that causes such obvious distress. If you suffer from stage fright, you have probably dealt with endless questions from family and friends as to why you put yourself through the torment, and the answer is simple. Performing is in the blood, or you can say performance is part of a character's personality. Most performers cannot imagine not performing as it is what they feel they were born to do. The love of the work is powerful enough to overcome the lack of stability, the endless rejections, and the early morning auditions.

Stage fright is just another obstacle that must be handled in the pursuit of the dream. Stage fright tends to manifest somewhat differently than most phobias. Only rarely does the phobia actually impede the performer's ability to work. So, instead, it tends to appear during the time leading up to the audition or performance. Although each person's reactions are unique, fear is common, but reactions or responses are unique.

Most cases of stage fright follow a reasonably predictable pattern, that is, phobia. The

phobia generally begins weeks or months before the performance, often manifesting as low-level generalized anxiety. If you have this condition, you may begin to feel hyper-alert, jumpy, and full of energy, and as the date of the performance draws closer, the symptoms worsen. A few hours before show time, you may experience more traditional phobia symptoms, including gastrointestinal problems and digestion, such as vomiting, diarrhea, irritability, mood swings, tremors, and heart palpitations. When you take to the stage, though, your performer instincts take over, most sufferers of stage fright report that they have few, if any, symptoms during the performance.

You will likely play off the energy of your audience, allowing yourself to fully go into character and forget about your earlier distress. Many performers experience a type of euphoria similar to a runner's high both during and after a show. This rush of hormones may partly explain why the symptoms of stage fright so completely disappear when you actually confront the object of your phobia. So, despite the fact that your performance may not be affected, it is important to find healthy ways of coping with stage fright, looking at others and thinking it is common. It is not something abnormal or unusual.

Many performers turn to self-medication, you know, with alcohol and drugs in an effort to dull the pain; this is never a good choice for anyone because it can turn into a dangerous cycle and possible addiction for those who perform regularly. So, there are no medicines to treat stage fright as such, and this is common to everyone, even if there is a person who should focus on self-counseling rather than the intake of medicines. Performance anxiety is very much intertwined with a person's ego. It is an outcome of one's fear of failing to prove himself or herself in front of a crowd. Once we accept the fact that we are fallible creatures, we are like others and wrap our heads around the saying "to err is human.

" We would be less fearful of making mistakes. In other words, we have to be confident and face our fears. So, I discussed phobia versus nervousness, but it is also important to know fear versus phobia. Fear protects you from danger. Phobia has little to do with danger.

More than 19 million people worldwide have a phobia. Now see, this is again a very important point: you are not alone in suffering from this fear or phobia. So, they suffer from phobia and intense irrational fear when they face a certain situation, activity, or object. With a phobia, you may know your anxiety and fear are not warranted, but you cannot help the feelings, and they can be so intense they virtually paralyze you. Try to find out how there are some people affected with, you know, different kinds of phobia.

You try to know. That is why, in the previous lecture, I presented some case study also.

So, hundreds of different phobias have been identified, including phobophobia or fear of phobias, fear of fear. But when talking about phobias, which are a kind of anxiety disorder, experts divide them into three categories: agoraphobia and intense anxiety in public places where an escape might be difficult, social phobia of fear and avoidance of social situations, and the specific phobia and irrational fear of specific objects or situation. So, all the three phobias, agoraphobia, social phobia, you know, these are more or less the same for a stage fear. Agoraphobia is very common; glossophobia is also there.

What is agoraphobia? Agoraphobia is fear of public places, and the agora was a market. I mean, this is the term coined by the name of the place called Agora, a market and meeting place in ancient Greece. Someone with agoraphobia is afraid of being trapped in a public place, you know, a stampede that you can say, or a place like a bridge or a line at the bank. The actual fear is of not being able to escape if anxiety gets too high. Agoraphobia affects twice as many women as men.

If left untreated in extreme cases, it can lead to someone becoming household housebound. Though I discussed social phobia and social anxiety, which is beyond being shy, it is very important to know in the present context. Someone with a social phobia is not just shy, that person feels extreme anxiety and fear about how they will perform in a social situation. Will their actions seem appropriate to others? Will others be able to tell they are anxious? Will the words be there when it is time to talk? Because untreated social phobia often leads to avoiding social contact. It can have a major negative impact on a person's relationship and professional life, and you must have heard of claustrophobia.

Needing a way out. Claustrophobia, an abnormal fear of being in enclosed spaces, is a common specific phobia. A person with claustrophobia cannot ride in elevators or go through tunnels without extreme anxiety and fear of suffocating or being trapped. The person will avoid tight spaces and often engage in safety-seeking behavior, such as opening windows or sitting near an exit. They may make the situation tolerable, but it does not relieve the fear.

And acrophobia- that is the fear of heights. You should know that acrophobia is an excessive fear of heights and manifests as severe anxiety. A person would have an attack just walking up stairs or climbing a ladder- this is a kind of attack. Sometimes the fear is so great a person cannot move. Acrophobia can create a dangerous situation for someone who has it. An anxiety attack can make it extremely difficult to safely get down from whatever high place triggered the attack.

Emetophobia- a gut feeling is again important for stage fear, and this is common to most people. Emetophobia is an unnatural fear of vomiting that typically starts early in life for some traumatic episode. As you know, someone may have witnessed a schoolmate vomiting in public or done so themselves. The anxiety can be triggered by thoughts of vomiting or thinking of somewhere, such as a hospital where vomiting is common. As with aerophobia, hypnotherapy is commonly used as part of the treatment.

Carcinophobia, well, this is not very relevant while discussing the fear of a stage performance, but even then, you should know about it. What is this carcinophobia? People with carcinophobia live with an irrational dread of developing cancer. Every bodily discomfort becomes a sign for them that they have a malignant growth somewhere inside. Fear psychosis, a headache, for instance, is a sign for them that they have a brain tumor. Cognitive therapy can help someone with carcinophobia regain control of their life.

So, phobias from new to old, someone who fears anything new has a neophobia, and someone who is afraid of growing old or afraid of old people has xenophobia. Somewhere in between, one may find himself or herself with several other phobias. Someone with odontophobia will go out of their way to avoid going to a dentist. Alcoholics can be up to 10 minutes more likely to suffer from a phobia than those who are not alcoholics. So, although phobias can be influenced by culture and triggered by life events, they tend to run in the family, some genetic.

Immediate family members or people with phobias are about three times more likely to have a phobia than those without a family history. See, I have narrated all these points to convince you that if you have stage fright, you are not the only one. There are many who are suffering from this fear psychosis, the kind of phobia that compels a person not to perform in the right manner on their stage. So, it is common. But then there is a solution to everything on this earth: with practice, knowing others, reading the case study, and knowing the stories of the person's mouth who is suffering from this fear psychosis of stage performance, you can develop your quality to be a good speaker, a good public speaker, a fine orator.

With this, I conclude my lecture. Thank you very much. Let us meet another week with some other topic. Thank you very much.