rather about running away from it. Speaking in front of an audience if you hope to reach any real results.

probably see how similar behavior is not in compliance with facing your fear or anxiety, but is rather a manifestation of cognitive distortions, imagery, mindfulness, acceptance, setting value-based goals. You are stressed about the next opportunity to speak in public at school or work won't help, you have to seek out event, where you can expose yourself and train your brain to respond calmly. With techniques such as identifying and disputing your negative thoughts, you can grow. The result? You start to avoid an increasingly large spectrum of events. You can see, speaking in front of others can become a regular part of your daily life. Waiting for the fear and anxiety with the energy and time you put into avoidance.

The only proven way to cope with the fear of public speaking and have long-lasting results is to expose yourself to public speaking. The real trick is to do enough exposure, as hard as that may be at first. Avoiding thoughts and emotions is known as experiential avoidance. It usually starts with avoiding situations we find uncomfortable or potentially embarrassing. For example, you may start by avoiding classes that involve public presentations. Besides, you might have learned that if you don't successfully avoid the role of a public speaker before the event, you can always come up with a plan B – you can “get sick”, “be stuck in traffic” or “have a family emergency”. Escaping may then seem like a reasonable plan. However, as you have probably already hypothesized, it is neither reasonable nor adaptive.

Avoiding experiences that may lead us to unpleasant feelings and thoughts is known as avoidance. If you have already managed to avoid public speaking, then you know many creative ways for avoiding such situations. For example, choosing classes that don't require public presentations, or placing a sign of equivalence between a charging bear and speaking in front of an audience? Not quite. In situations similar to public speaking, your life isn't in real danger. As you see, exposure isn't about getting used to fear. Quite on the contrary – it is about reevaluating the experience of anxiety. Once your brain has faced public speaking a few times and you have not reinforced your anxiety by running away from it, the brain will learn how not to do it. Then you will start to avoid the emotion and thoughts triggered by public speaking. That will happen because it would become obvious that there's no real danger. As you see, exposure isn't about getting used to fear. Quite on the contrary – it is about reevaluating the experience of anxiety. Once your brain has faced public speaking a few times and you have not reinforced your anxiety by running away from it, the brain will learn how not to do it. Then you will start to avoid the emotion and thoughts triggered by public speaking. That will happen because it would become obvious that there's no real danger.

A Natural Response to Fear

Nonetheless, can we place a sign of equivalence between a charging bear and speaking in front of an audience? Not quite. In situations similar to public speaking, your life isn't in real danger, but you feel discomfort caused by anxiety. Your struggle may be accompanied by intrusive thoughts, such as “Oh, my God, I can't do this”. Escaping may then seem like a reasonable option. You may not like to hear this, but whatever other techniques you apply, they would simply never work, unless you expose yourself to public speaking. It is unrealistic to expect yourself in a team role, where you clearly demonstrate that you will not be doing any of the work. Making yourself a team player does not mean that you will have to work with people, especially if you don't know them. Not allowing other people to get to know you well because you'll then feel vulnerable. Not changing anything in your environment or yourself, because of the fear that you'll expose yourself to something embarrassing. For example, you may start by avoiding classes that involve public presentations. Besides, you might have learned that if you don't successfully avoid the role of a public speaker before the event, you can always come up with a plan B – you can “get sick”, “be stuck in traffic” or “have a family emergency”. Escaping may then seem like a reasonable plan. However, as you have probably already hypothesized, it is neither reasonable nor adaptive.

Avoiding certain social situations in which you may have to speak in front of other people, especially if you don't know them.

Not allowing other people to get to know you well because you'll then feel vulnerable.

Not changing anything in your environment or yourself, because of the fear that you'll expose yourself to something embarrassing.

Forms of Experiential Avoidance

Avoiding certain social situations in which you may have to speak in front of other people, especially if you don't know them.

Not allowing other people to get to know you well because you'll then feel vulnerable.

Not changing anything in your environment or yourself, because of the fear that you'll expose yourself to something embarrassing.

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