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The Worst-Case Scenario

Liya Panayotova, Psychologist, [liyap.com](#) 11K reads

Don't let this headline frighten you. Having the ability to imagine the worst possible scenario of your public speaking, which you can recognize it as an imagery exercise, is a great way to explore what you are really afraid of.

Experiencing anxiety at the idea of having to speak in public, as is the case with other types of phobic fears as well, usually, happens because you are picturing a particular scenario. Often, we don't realize what lingers behind our notion of fear, and we might forget to consider the fact that the horrific plots we picture, are not too realistic.

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An Example

Here is what a worst-case imaginary scenario might look like:

I am on a stage and should begin to speak any minute now, but as I look to the audience, all I see are cold, unfriendly, judgmental stares, expecting to dissect everything I say and do, to find mistakes. I start to speak, and suddenly I realize I can't do it. My voice is too shaky, and I stutter, I am a sweaty, nervous mess that cannot control her body, so everyone can clearly see what's happening. To calm down, I say that I just need a minute and grab a bottle of water. Some members of the audience start to laugh, while others are leaving the room. I'm trying to continue, but I can't. All I prepared for my speech has somehow vanished, rendering my mind completely blank. The only thing I can think about is how I'm going to collapse, embarrassed and frightened. Finally, it feels impossible to handle the situation anymore, and I decide to say to everyone that I have to go, then run towards the door and go out, feeling like

the biggest coward in the universe.

Are Your Worst Fears Plausible?

Although negative circumstances can indeed occur, it is highly unlikely that they would be this disastrous, and that you would leave in the middle of your speech, or that people from the audience would be this rude and judgmental. However, even if you haven't articulated your worst-case scenario, your reaction might be that you tried, failed, and should never expose yourself to such torture again. Asking yourself, "What is the worst that can happen?", and coming up with a similar plot to the one described above could help you see that realistically, it is probably impossible for your worst fears to become realized, which can have a very soothing and empowering effect.

Reality Is Not as Catastrophic

If you imagine the worst possible outcome and live it out in your mind, you'll likely be more prepared for the real one, which wouldn't be as catastrophic as what you've imagined. Besides, considering your worst fear can help you come up with strategies and plans of what you can do, in case reality throws an obstacle your way.

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