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Public Speaking Anxiety Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Identifying Public Speaking Fears

2 · Self-Reflection on Past Speaking Experiences

3 · Challenging Negative Thoughts

4 · Body Language Practice

5 · Deep Breathing Techniques

6 · Building a Supportive Audience Mindset

7 · Setting Realistic Expectations

8 · Analyzing Successful Public Speakers

9 · Visualization of Successful Speaking

10 · Practicing with a Mirror

11 · Handling Mistakes Positively

12 · Post-Speech Reflection

How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Identifying Public Speaking Fears

1. What specific fears do you have about public speaking? The following are some common examples. Check off the ones that apply or add more to the list:

- ☐ Fear of forgetting your material.
- ☐ Fear of being judged or criticized.
- ☐ Fear of sounding unprepared or unprofessional.
- ☐ Fear of making a mistake in front of the audience.
- ☐ Fear of being unable to answer audience questions.
- ☐ Fear of looking nervous (e.g., sweating, shaking).
- ☐ Fear of stumbling over your words or stuttering.
- ☐ Fear of technical issues with slides, mic, or other tools.
- ☐ Fear of being boring or unengaging.
- ☐ Fear of running out of time or going over time.
- ☐ Fear of being judged for your appearance.
- ☐ Fear of people laughing at you (not with you).
- ☐ Fear of tripping or falling on stage.
- ☐ Fear of speaking to a large crowd.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. How do these fears manifest physically for you? (e.g., sweating, shaking, increased heart rate, dry mouth)

3. What thoughts run through your mind when you think about public speaking? (e.g., “I’ll embarrass myself,” “People will laugh at me,” “I’m not a good speaker”)

4. How do you typically respond to these fears before speaking? (e.g., avoidance, excessive preparation, negative self-talk, procrastination)

5. What situations or environments trigger your public speaking anxiety? (e.g., large audiences, unfamiliar settings, presentations in a workplace)

6. Are there particular types of speaking engagements that cause more anxiety than others? (e.g., formal presentations, impromptu speeches, speaking in front of authority figures)

Self-Reflection on Past Speaking Experiences

1. Describe a past public speaking experience that stands out to you. (e.g., a classroom presentation, a wedding speech, a professional meeting) What were your initial thoughts and feelings before this speaking engagement?

2. What specific fears or concerns did you have leading up to the event? (e.g., forgetting your material, not engaging the audience, technical difficulties)

3. How did you prepare for this speaking engagement? (e.g., practicing in front of a mirror, rehearsing with friends, creating visual aids)

4. How did the actual experience compare to your expectations? (e.g., better than expected, met expectations, worse than expected)

5. What went well during your presentation? (e.g., effective delivery, audience engagement, smooth transitions)

6. What challenges did you face during your presentation? (e.g., forgetting parts of your speech, technical issues, handling difficult questions)

7. How did you respond to these challenges in the moment? (e.g., improvising, pausing to collect your thoughts, relying on notes)

8. What feedback did you receive from the audience or peers after your presentation? (e.g., positive comments, constructive criticism, suggestions for improvement)

9. What did you learn about your speaking style from this experience? (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, areas for growth)

10. In what ways did this experience help you grow as a speaker? (e.g., increased confidence, improved skills, clearer communication)

11. How have your feelings about public speaking changed over time? (e.g., increased anxiety, greater confidence, more acceptance of mistakes)

12. Based on your reflections, what specific skills do you want to improve for future speaking engagements? (e.g., reducing filler words, improving eye contact, enhancing storytelling)

13. How can you prepare differently for your next speaking opportunity? (e.g., incorporating more practice sessions, seeking out feedback, using relaxation techniques)

14. What small, achievable goals can you set for your next speaking engagement? (e.g., practicing in front of a friend, focusing on a specific aspect of delivery, trying a new opening)

Challenging Negative Thoughts

1. What specific negative thoughts do you experience related to public speaking? (e.g., “I will embarrass myself,” “The audience will judge me,” “I can’t handle questions.”)

2. When do these negative thoughts typically arise? (e.g., during preparation, just before speaking, while rehearsing, after a speaking event.)

3. What triggers these negative thoughts? (e.g., previous experiences, comparison to others, high stakes of the engagement.)

4. How do these negative thoughts make you feel? (e.g., anxious, overwhelmed, discouraged, self-critical.)

5. How do your negative thoughts influence your behavior leading up to a speaking engagement? (e.g., procrastination, excessive rehearsal, avoiding opportunities to speak.)

6. What physical symptoms accompany these negative thoughts? (e.g., sweating, rapid heartbeat, shaking, nausea.)

7. What evidence do you have that contradicts your negative thoughts? (e.g., positive feedback from past presentations, instances where you felt successful.)

8. How can you reframe your negative thoughts into more positive, realistic statements? (e.g., “I may make mistakes, but I can handle them,” “The audience is generally supportive,” “I can prepare thoroughly.”)

9. What positive affirmations can you use to counteract your negative thoughts? (e.g., “I am a capable speaker,” “I have valuable insights to share,” “I can improve with practice.”)

10. How can you remind yourself of these positive affirmations before speaking? (e.g., writing them down, creating visual reminders, repeating them daily.)

11. How would you speak to a friend who expressed the same negative thoughts about public speaking? (e.g., “It’s okay to feel nervous,” “You’ve prepared well,” “Everyone has moments of doubt.”)

12. How can you apply that same kindness to yourself when these negative thoughts arise? (e.g., acknowledging your feelings without judgment, allowing yourself to be imperfect.)

Body Language Practice

1. What specific aspects of body language do you want to improve? (e.g., eye contact, posture, gestures, facial expressions.)

2. How do you currently perceive your body language during speaking engagements? (e.g., confident, closed off, fidgety, expressive.)

3. What feedback have you received about your body language in the past? (e.g., “You seem nervous,” “You engage the audience well,” “You don’t make enough eye contact.”)

4. What strategies can you use to improve your eye contact during presentations? (e.g., practice with a friend, use a "triangle" method to engage different sections of the audience, consciously remind yourself to look up.)

5. What techniques can you use to maintain good posture while speaking? (e.g., practicing in front of a mirror, reminding yourself before speaking, engaging your core muscles.)

6. What strategies can you implement to improve your use of gestures? (e.g., practicing gestures while rehearsing, using props to illustrate points, observing effective speakers and their gestures.)

7. What techniques can you use to enhance your facial expressions? (e.g., practicing in front of a mirror, using emotional cues from your speech, receiving feedback from trusted peers.)

8. What specific speaking scenarios can you practice in to enhance your body language? (e.g., mock presentations, speaking to small groups, participating in public speaking clubs.)

9. How can you observe your body language during practice sessions? (e.g., recording yourself on video, having a friend provide feedback, analyzing past speaking engagements.)

Deep Breathing Techniques

1. How do you currently manage your anxiety before or during public speaking engagements? (e.g., avoiding speaking opportunities, rehearsing excessively, engaging in positive self-talk.)

2. What are some common deep breathing techniques you can use? (e.g., diaphragmatic breathing, 4-7-8 technique, box breathing, alternate nostril breathing.)

Diaphragmatic breathing

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly.
- Inhale deeply through your nose, ensuring your diaphragm (not your chest) inflates.
- Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- Repeat for several breaths, focusing on your belly rising and falling.

4-7-8 technique

- Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for a count of 7.
- Exhale completely through your mouth for a count of 8.
- Repeat this cycle four times, focusing on relaxation with each breath.

Box breathing

- Inhale through your nose for a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4.
- Exhale through your mouth for a count of 4.
- Hold your breath for another count of 4.
- Repeat the cycle several times, maintaining a steady rhythm.

3. When can you incorporate deep breathing techniques into your routine? (e.g., before a presentation, during a moment of anxiety, as part of your daily relaxation practice.)

4. What challenges do you anticipate in incorporating deep breathing techniques into your public speaking preparation? (e.g., forgetting to practice, feeling rushed, skepticism about effectiveness.)

5. How can you overcome these challenges? (e.g., setting reminders, practicing with a friend, integrating breathing exercises into your speaking practice.)

Building a Supportive Audience Mindset

1. Who is your audience for your upcoming speaking engagement? (e.g., colleagues, students, friends, a professional conference.)

2. What are some common goals or interests your audience shares? (e.g., seeking knowledge, wanting to be entertained, looking for inspiration.)

3. What do you believe your audience hopes to gain from your presentation? (e.g., practical tips, a new perspective, encouragement, insight into a specific topic.)

4. How can understanding your audience's needs help reduce your anxiety? (e.g., focusing on providing value, seeing them as allies rather than critics.)

5. What negative beliefs do you hold about your audience when preparing to speak? (e.g., "They will judge me," "They are uninterested," "They expect perfection.")

6. How can you reframe these negative beliefs into positive thoughts about your audience? (e.g., “They want me to succeed,” “They are here to learn,” “They are supportive.”)

7. What positive attributes do you associate with your audience? (e.g., engaged, friendly, curious, empathetic.)

8. What strategies can you use to build rapport with your audience from the start? (e.g., starting with a personal story, asking engaging questions, using humor.)

9. How can you actively seek feedback from your audience during your presentation? (e.g., inviting questions, encouraging participation, observing body language.)

10. How can you prepare for challenging audience dynamics (e.g., difficult questions, disinterest)? (e.g., preparing thoughtful responses, maintaining a calm demeanor, staying focused on your message.)

Setting Realistic Expectations

1. What are your current expectations about your upcoming speaking engagement? (e.g., “I need to be perfect,” “I must engage the audience fully,” “I can’t make any mistakes.”)

2. How do these expectations make you feel? (e.g., anxious, pressured, motivated, overwhelmed.)

3. Recall a past speaking engagement. What were your expectations then? (e.g., expecting a flawless performance, wanting to impress the audience.)

4. How did those expectations compare to the actual outcome? (e.g., did you perform as expected, or were there surprises?)

5. How can past experiences inform your expectations for future engagements? (e.g., acknowledging what went well, recognizing challenges, applying learned strategies.)

6. What are three realistic goals you can set for your upcoming presentation?

Examples:

- “I will focus on delivering my main message clearly.”
- “I will engage with the audience by asking a question.”
- “I will practice my speech three times before the event.”

7. What is a realistic timeline for achieving these goals? (e.g., practicing weekly leading up to the event, reviewing feedback after each rehearsal.)

8. How can you remind yourself that it’s okay to make mistakes during your presentation? (e.g., adopting a growth mindset, reflecting on how mistakes can lead to learning opportunities.)

9. What will you do if you encounter unexpected challenges during your speech? (e.g., taking a moment to collect your thoughts, maintaining a calm demeanor, improvising when needed.)

Analyzing Successful Public Speakers

1. Who are three successful public speakers you admire?

2. What specific qualities do you admire in these speakers? (e.g., confidence, clarity, storytelling ability, engagement with the audience.)

3. What themes or messages resonate with you in their speeches? (e.g., vulnerability, leadership, motivation, resilience.)

4. What delivery techniques do these speakers use to capture and maintain audience attention? (e.g., varying tone and pace, using gestures and maintaining eye contact, incorporating light-hearted moments.)

5. How do they address audience concerns or questions during their presentations? (e.g., inviting questions, responding to audience cues, acknowledging diverse perspectives.)

6. What common themes or patterns do you notice among these successful speakers? (e.g., authenticity, passion for the topic, ability to engage emotionally with the audience.)

7. How do these speakers handle mistakes or unexpected challenges during their presentations? (e.g., maintaining composure, using humor to diffuse tension, adapting on the spot.)

8. What strategies do they use to manage their own anxiety or nerves? (e.g., breathing techniques, preparation routines, positive self-talk.)

9. What body language techniques do they employ to convey confidence and authority? (e.g., open posture, purposeful gestures, moving with intent.)

10. How can you incorporate elements of these speakers' styles into your own presentations? (e.g., adopting specific delivery techniques, using storytelling, engaging the audience more directly.)

Visualization of Successful Speaking

1. What specific goals do you want to achieve through visualization? (e.g., feeling calm, delivering a clear message, engaging the audience.)

2. What is a specific speaking engagement you want to visualize? (e.g., a presentation at work, a speech at a wedding, a classroom presentation.)

3. What key points do you want to convey during this speaking engagement? (e.g., sharing project results, telling a personal story, presenting research findings.)

4. Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Picture yourself walking onto the stage or to the front of the room. What sensations do you experience? (e.g., the weight of your notes, the warmth of the spotlight, the sound of the audience.)

5. How do you present your opening line? Visualize delivering it confidently. What words do you use? (e.g., a strong introduction, a personal anecdote, a compelling statistic.)

6. As you continue speaking, what positive reactions do you notice from the audience? (e.g., nods of agreement, smiles, engaged expressions, attentive body language.)

7. Visualize overcoming potential challenges during your presentation. What do you do? (e.g., smoothly transitioning after a question, using humor to diffuse tension, taking a moment to breathe.)

8. Picture yourself concluding your presentation. How do you feel at that moment? (e.g., relief, pride, satisfaction, gratitude from the audience.)

9. How do you feel after completing the visualization exercise? (e.g., more relaxed, energized, motivated, confident.)

Practicing with a Mirror

Mirror practice involves rehearsing your speech in front of a mirror, allowing you to observe your body language, facial expressions, and gestures.

1. What specific skills do you hope to develop through mirror practice? (e.g., improving eye contact, enhancing body language, refining vocal delivery, building confidence.)

2. How do you currently feel about practicing in front of a mirror? (e.g., anxious, self-conscious, curious, excited.)

3. What materials do you need for effective mirror practice? (e.g., your speech notes, a recording device, props or visual aids.)

4. As you practice, what specific aspects of your delivery will you focus on? (e.g., eye contact with your reflection, maintaining an open posture, using appropriate gestures.)

5. What do you notice about your body language while practicing in front of the mirror? (e.g., crossing arms, fidgeting, using expressive gestures.)

6. How do your facial expressions change as you deliver your speech? (e.g., smiling, looking serious, showing enthusiasm.)

7. What adjustments can you make to improve your physical presence? (e.g., standing tall, using more gestures, relaxing your shoulders.)

8. What challenges did you encounter during mirror practice, and how did you address them? (e.g., difficulty remembering lines, feeling awkward, needing to improve gestures.)

Handling Mistakes Positively

1. What common fears do you have about making mistakes while speaking? (e.g., losing credibility, disappointing the audience, forgetting key points.)

2. What is your typical reaction when you make a mistake during a presentation? (e.g., panicking, apologizing profusely, trying to cover it up.)

3. Can you recall a specific instance where you made a mistake during a presentation? What happened? (e.g., forgetting a point, mispronouncing a word, accidentally skipping a slide.)

4. How did you handle that mistake at the moment? (e.g., acknowledging it, laughing it off, moving on quickly.)

5. What feedback did you receive about your response to that mistake? (e.g., audience appreciation for your humor, constructive criticism, understanding reactions.)

6. What lessons did you learn from that experience regarding handling mistakes? (e.g., the importance of resilience, the audience's understanding nature, how to recover gracefully.)

7. What proactive steps can you take to prepare for the possibility of making mistakes? (e.g., practicing how to pause and regroup if you lose your place, preparing responses for potential mistakes, like "Let me clarify that" or "That's a great question; let's explore it.")

8. How can you cultivate a positive mindset about making mistakes in your presentations? (e.g., viewing mistakes as learning experiences, reminding yourself that no one is perfect.)

9. What strategies can you implement to quickly recover from a mistake during a presentation? (e.g., taking a deep breath, briefly pausing to collect your thoughts, referring back to your notes.)

Post-Speech Reflection

1. How do you feel immediately after delivering your speech? (e.g., relieved, proud, anxious, frustrated.)

2. What were your initial thoughts as you finished your presentation? (e.g., “I think I did well,” “I wish I hadn’t said that,” “I need to work on my pacing.”)

3. How did your body feel after speaking? (e.g., relaxed, tense, fatigued, energized.)

4. What specific moments from your presentation stand out in your mind? (e.g., a strong opening, a mistake you made, audience reactions.)

5. How engaged did you feel your audience was during your presentation? (e.g., actively participating, attentive, distracted.)

6. What signs did you notice that indicated audience engagement or disengagement? (e.g., nods and smiles, questions asked, body language (leaning forward vs. looking at phones))

7. How did you respond to audience reactions during your speech? (e.g., adjusting your tone, encouraging participation, pausing for questions.)

8. What feedback did you receive from the audience, if any? (e.g., compliments, constructive criticism, questions for clarification.)

9. Did you encounter any mistakes during your presentation? If so, how did you handle them? (e.g., mispronounced a word, skipped a slide, lost your train of thought.)

10. What did you learn from any mistakes made during the presentation? (e.g., how to recover quickly, the importance of practice, ways to manage anxiety.)

11. How can you approach mistakes differently in future presentations?
(e.g., using humor, acknowledging them calmly, having a plan to recover.)

12. What areas for improvement did you identify for your next speaking opportunity? (e.g., pacing, eye contact, organization.)

13. How did this experience contribute to your personal and professional growth? (e.g., building resilience, enhancing communication skills, overcoming fears.)

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: Social anxiety disorder, performance-only specifier where applicable · Public-speaking fear is not diagnostic without the broader threshold.
- ICD-11 CDDR: 6B04 Social anxiety disorder · Formal diagnosis when requirements are met.
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 30. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Establish persistence, disproportional fear, avoidance/endurance, impairment, and exclusions including substances, medical conditions, autism-spectrum/social communication issues, panic disorder, and body dysmorphic concerns.

Document-specific corrections

- Pages [2] · Frame ·Public Speaking Anxiety· using the DSM/ICD status below; add duration, impairment, exclusions, and differentials without reproducing criteria. The title alone must never be treated as a diagnosis.
- The numerical ratings used within exercises are author-created reflection anchors, not standardized measures. Do not total, apply cutoffs, diagnose, or grade severity. No standardized public-speaking instrument is reproduced.
- Pages [1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 24, 25, 30] · Exposure should follow an individualized hierarchy with informed consent, repeated learning-focused practice, response-prevention guidance, and screening for medical danger, trauma cues, dissociation, fainting risk, panic-related medical mimics, and substance effects; avoid reassurance that guarantees safety. Apply this specifically to the workbook-s Identifying Public Speaking Fears, Self-Reflection on Past Speaking Experiences, Challenging Negative Thoughts, Body Language Practice sections.
- Pages [1, 15, 23] · Review all medical assertions in Public Speaking Anxiety with a qualified medical professional; distinguish psychoeducation from individualized advice and add referral thresholds, contraindications, and medication/procedure cautions appropriate to this population.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Exercise ratings are author-created reflection anchors, not standardized measures. Do not total, apply cutoffs, diagnose, or grade severity. No standardized public-speaking instrument is reproduced.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Exposure should follow an individualized hierarchy with informed consent, repeated learning-focused practice, response-prevention guidance, and screening for medical danger, trauma cues, dissociation, fainting risk, panic-related medical mimics, and substance effects; avoid reassurance that guarantees safety.
- Exposure work should be formulation-driven, collaborative, graded, and designed to reduce avoidance and unhelpful safety behavior-not delivered as forced flooding. Screen medical and trauma-related explanations when relevant.

Crisis and current resources

- For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. A workbook is not a crisis service or safety plan.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

- https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/txessentials/prolonged_exposure_pro.asp
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>
- <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg113/chapter/recommendations>