

in balance

CAREER PATH

THREE STEPS TO ... GET OVER YOUR FEAR OF PUBLIC SPEAKING

I am the last person to deny how agonizing the fear of public speaking can be. But I've learned, personally and through my work with many coaching clients, that the more we let go of our need to conquer the fear, the more it eases naturally. To heal the roots of why we're afraid, it's best to work on three levels. BY JANET ESPOSITO

1 BODY We must slow the body down at the moment the fight-or-flight reaction wants to speed us up. This means we need to deliberately move more slowly, speak more slowly, and respond more slowly. Deepen your breath, letting go of tension with each exhalation. You may want to associate the breathwork with counting, calming phrases like "let go," or visual imagery, such as a wave gently rolling in and out. Say to yourself, "I know these feelings are unpleasant, but it's OK. I know they won't hurt me; they're simply uncomfortable."

2 MIND Research shows that people who relate to a stressful event as a challenge release epinephrines and norepinephrines. These hormones lead to a more empowered and even euphoric feeling. Don't brace yourself for calamity; focus your attention on what you want to create. When you catch yourself feeling anxious, reach for a better-feeling thought (e.g., "If I lose my composure, I can regain it"). If you find this difficult at first, keep inching your way over, being slightly less negative and more positive.

3 SPIRIT When we're driven by our ambitions, we're more strongly identified with our ego than with our heart. Imagine leading with your heart. Look at individual people in your audience and feel compassion. Think about the burdens many of them are carrying in their lives. Consider the anxiety and fear that we all share as part of being human. Focus on your true purpose in speaking and performing, and remind yourself this is not about you; it's about the information, inspiration, or enjoyment you can provide for others.

JANET ESPOSITO, MSW, is the president of *In the SpotLight*, LLC, a company that helps people overcome stage fright. This excerpt is adapted from her book *Getting Over Stage Fright* © 2009 Love Your Life Publishing.

THE BEST ADVICE I EVER GOT

Deepak Chopra is the author of more than 50 books, including *Reinventing the Body, Resurrecting the Soul*. He appeared recently on the series *Global Spirit* on linktv.org.

THE BEST "Be immune to criticism and responsive to feedback." It helped me break out of conformity.

THE WORST "Don't rock the boat." It kept me under the hypnosis of social conditioning for a long time.

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

meraki (may-RAH-kee) *adj.*

Modern Greek: To do something with soul, creativity, or love; to put yourself into what you are doing.