Public speaking anxiety is a common and complex reaction involving fear, apprehension, tension, and nervousness. The below techniques can be used to help reduce public speaking anxiety. Peer consultants at the Public Speaking Center are also available to help.

1. Systematic Desensitization is a three-step process that involves relaxation, visualization, and speaking (see next page for details)
   - Step 1: Progressive Relaxation Activities
   - Step 2: Progressive Visualization Activities
   - Step 3: Progressive Experiential Activities

2. Cognitive Restructuring
   - Create negative self-talk list
     - “I will forget my speech and look foolish.”
   - Identify irrational belief
     - “I won’t forget the whole speech, especially since I’ll practice.”
   - Develop coping statement
     - “It’s Ok to forget a few parts of the speech—I can look down at my notes.”
   - Practice coping statement

3. Skills Training
   - Practice specific skills in isolation and then together.
   - Set specific goals as you work on each skill.

4. Other Tips
   - Prepare thoroughly
   - Use limited notes
   - Memorize your main points
   - Practice
   - Use visual aids
   - Use positive self talk
   - Organize the night before
   - Consider seating in the room
   - Check your appearance
   - Quietly sigh
   - Eat enough and appropriate food, avoid caffeine, and get enough sleep

For more on dealing with speaking anxiety, see pages 275-277 and 408 in the Real Communication textbook, available in the Public Speaking Center.
Systematic desensitization is a three-step process that involves relaxation, visualization, and speaking. Try one or all of the below steps and adapt them to meet your needs.

**Step 1: Progressive Relaxation Activities**
- Get comfortable
- Breath deeply and fill up lungs
- Breath from your abdomen/stomach (below your chest); chest, diaphragm, abdomen should get larger when you inhale

**Step 2: Progressive Visualization Activities**
- While in a comfortable, relaxed state, visualize the scenarios below
- Visualize the audience and/or yourself speaking; have confidence
- You are talking to your best friend on the telephone
- You are talking to your best friend in person
- You are introducing yourself to a new acquaintance
- You are talking to a clerk in a department store
- You are talking to a small group of people whom you know well
- You are at a social gathering where you don’t know many people and expected to mingle
- You are going to ask someone you meet there to go out for a drink or coffee
- You are going on a job interview
- You have been asked to introduce yourself to a large group of people
- You are giving a speech to a large group of people
- You are getting ready to give a speech, but you realize that your visual aids won’t work
- You are asked to speak to 100 people and you prepare a presentation

**Step 3: Progressive Experiential Activities**
- Engage in speaking activities in increasingly larger groups:
  - With another person or a small group: pick two words that describe you and explain why.
  - With more people: If you had one month to live, what would you do during that month and why?

Peer consultants at the Public Speaking Center are available to lead students through the process of systematic desensitization.