

## **[New!] Speak Without Fear**

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**BY IVY NAI STADT** HARPERRESOURCE, 2004 211 PAGES, \$24.95

Ever get the jitters when asked to get up before an audience to give a speech, or even present an award? You are not alone and, in our participatory democracy, the chances are you will be called upon. You may have to address the local Rotary Club or Kiwanis, or perhaps some church organization. You may be asked to emcee a wedding or give a eulogy at a funeral. Then, too, you could be directed by the boss to explain a new program to the employees, etc. With many people, stage fright takes over in these situations and they die a thousand deaths.

This book could be your Bible as it addresses the problem of stage fright and other difficulties connected with public speaking. It reminded me of Speech 10 when I was in college.

Author Ivy Naistadt knows whereof she speaks, if you don't mind a pun. She started her professional life as a stage actress, singer, and sometimes dancer on Broadway. Literally, she knew stage fright firsthand and delved into its causes, and then shared this knowledge with others, eventually becoming a speech consultant these past 15 years. Her clients include IBM, The New York Times, Hershey, etc.

While only a few can deliver spell-binding talks like Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, John F. Kennedy, or Martin Luther King, nearly everyone can become a competent speaker, perhaps even a Ralph Kramden! One should note that, even when a speaker has a terrible delivery, he or she still can hold the audience by the content of the presentation. As a speaker, Henry Kissinger was as exciting as watching the grass grow, but everyone listened, for he had something to say.

You might recognize yourself as one of the following types of neophyte speakers. There is the Avider, who will do anything to get out of being dragged to the podium. The Anticipator is a worrywart who continually is revising the text to make it "better." Those who get so pumped up that they are out of breath by the time they reach the stage are called Adrenalin people. Lastly, we all recognize the Improvisor, whose spontaneity fails in the clutch, and there are the ensuing regrets for not taking more time to prepare.

This book is a helpful primer. It takes us through the notion of how to give a decent talk, from start to finish, bringing to mind the old adage, "If you don't strike oil in the first five minutes, stop boring." The advice given will assuage many of your worries and help you get through to your audience. Naistadt begins by sharing her own experiences and then that of her clients. One should heed the maxim that "If something can go wrong, it will." Embarrassing moments are likely to occur, such as a man coming to the podium with his fly open, or a woman breaking the heel on her high-heeled shoe, so one should prepare for the worst. It is helpful to have some witty remark that overrides the faux pas. A good example is that of a sports announcer crediting a football player for a touchdown. The player had a long and difficult-to-pronounce name and the announcer bungled it several times. With presence of mind, he commented, "That was easier done than said."

It sometimes happens that a page is missing from your manuscript. The author's advice is to carry an outline of your talk in your pocket as backup. Sound advice also is not to prepare any gestures, as spontaneity, rather than fakery, usually is better as it conveys authenticity. Be yourself, she tells us. Have a good opening, know where the middle of your talk is, and make a concise, clear ending. Never say, "In conclusion ..." as the audience may applaud you prematurely! As a last word of advice, Naistadt tells the would-be speaker to rehearse the talk out loud. It's important to hear one's own words, just as the audience will...

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American Thought Editor

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