



Helping individuals and companies
break out of their comfort zones
to become more successful

Training | Coaching | Speaking
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Drown Out That Negative Voice in Your Head

If your stomach churns just at the thought of speaking in front of a group of people, you're not alone. In fact, Americans rate public speaking as their number one fear - even ahead of death (hence the old joke that you would rather be in the coffin than giving the eulogy)!

Think about what's going through your head right at that moment when you're getting ready to open your mouth, whether it's at a staff meeting at work or in front of the local YMCA parents' group. Yes, I admit that I hear voices in my head - and I bet you do, too.

Take a moment, close your eyes and really listen for that voice - what is it saying?

When I ask clients to share what that voice in their head is telling them right before they speak, they invariably come out with a whiny, annoying voice spewing negatives like "you're going to make a fool of yourself" or "who do you think you are?"

That voice goes by many names. Creativity expert Julia Cameron calls it "The Censor." I call it the "Joy-Sucker" because it sucks the joy out of your work and your life. The Joy-Sucker undermines your confidence and makes you less able to convey your knowledge and experience to your audience. In its worst manifestations, it may even cause you to forget your own name!

The Joy-Sucker may come from old beliefs about ourselves or perhaps a comment made by an unhelpful friend, teacher or ex.

Instead of allowing the Joy-Sucker to sap your confidence, I recommend replacing it with a positive affirmation or **Mantra**. **Mantra** is a term borrowed from meditation and yoga and means a word or phrase that you repeat to yourself to focus your mind and energy. Your **mantra** should be

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personally meaningful to you and should be a phrase that you can believe. You can use a song title (Aretha Franklin's "RESPECT" comes to mind), a line from a poem or anything that makes you feel powerful and confident. "You go, girl" is my personal favorite (accompanied by a mental fist in the air).

Once you have created a **mantra**, try it out in real-life situations. When you're getting ready to speak, listen for the Joy-Sucker and replace it with your **mantra**.

Remember that the Joy-Sucker has had years of practice, so it's okay to try several **mantras** before you find one that is powerful enough to drown it out.

You'll know the **mantra** is working when you feel your anxiety decreasing and your confidence increasing (a little bit at a time). As you build your confidence, you'll be able to tap into your knowledge and experience related to the topic at hand - and you'll be on your way to becoming a more polished public speaker!

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