

Hello Wembley

Do you suffer from glossophobia? The word glossophobia derives from the Greek word “γλῶσσα” (glōssa), meaning tongue, and “φόβος” (phobos), fear or dread. In other words, a fear of public speaking or presenting to an audience? Some people have this specific phobia, while others may also have broader social phobia or social anxiety disorder.

According to www.forbes.com, roughly 10% of the population loves speaking in public, experiencing no fear and getting a huge buzz from being in front of a large crowd. Another 10% are genuinely terrified. Those are the people who are physically debilitated by even the thought of public speaking. True glossophobics will go to great lengths to avoid speaking in a group situation and will experience nausea, panic attacks and extreme anxiety. The remaining 80% get butterflies and feel nervous, perhaps a little nausea, and may even not sleep well the night before but know that they will manage to get through it and survive.

Adrenaline is responsible for the symptoms. It is unpleasant but not debilitating. Adrenaline is our body’s way of preparing us for crucial moments of action. There are ways in which adrenaline can be used to good effect when public speaking:

1. Focus on the ‘off-stage beat’. Develop a suitable emotion for the event by imagining a story for yourself. All the thinking will soak up the adrenaline and make you calmer.
2. Deep breaths. Adrenaline causes us to breathe short breaths, which in turn increases excitement. To counter this, breathe deeply and slowly, avoid raising the shoulders. Hold the breath and then let it out gently.
3. Take some gentle exercise about an hour before the speech. It will calm the body significantly.

Speaking to a large audience with confidence, keeping the nerves at bay, comes with practice. Winston Churchill, arguably one of the greatest orators of all time, only achieved this status after a lot of hard work. The former British prime minister claimed in his memoirs that he averaged an hour of preparation for every minute of a speech.

Communication in oral form is a vital element of learning at Yateley Manor. The strength of our public speaking and debating is evident, not only in the various competitions we enter



but the quality of presentation that the children display at Open Mornings and assemblies. In one such assembly earlier in the year, one of our Captains of School, Poppy Treacher, led her team in explaining to the large audience the impact of single-use plastic on the environment. In the audience sat a parent who is a GP and he approached Poppy to ask if she would help him with a presentation to NHS employees. The conference took place this week and Poppy presented her work to an audience in excess of one hundred people, comprising GPs, consultants, midwives, paramedics and other healthcare officials. Feedback from her speech was incredibly positive and she may be asked to a follow up event. Congratulations to Poppy - I am very proud of her.

I am also incredibly proud of the entire cast of *Chicken Licken*, the Year 1 play that has taken place this week. The children spoke with clarity and confidence. I was so impressed with the way in which they all commanded the stage when they spoke, moving their gaze around the room under the bright lights. To have so much confidence in front of an audience at that age is remarkable. One might argue that they have not yet developed a sense of occasion and inhibition but I challenge that. As a six-year-old I distinctly remember feeling very uncomfortable standing in front of an audience. Congratulations to all of the children, and of course the staff, for a wonderful performance.

The author Mark Twain once insisted that, “*There are only two types of speakers in the world:*

1. *The nervous.*
2. *Liars.*”

So if you are nervous, you are in good company.

Robert Upton

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