CHAPTER 4- DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE: COPING WITH YOUR FEARS ABOUT PUBLIC SPEAKING

Learning Objectives

- Define and explain the term "communication apprehension."
- Identify situational causes of public speaking anxiety.

Outline

I. Communication Apprehension as a Common Reaction

   A. Apprehensive People
      Highly apprehensive individuals fear communication in most any situation; this is called traitlike apprehension. Individuals low in trait apprehension seek out communication situations. Most individuals are moderately apprehensive.

   B. Apprehensive Cultural Groups
      The norms for communication apprehension vary worldwide. Some cultures, such as Japan and Micronesia, are naturally apprehensive about communication; others, such as Puerto Ricans or Filipinos, are much less apprehensive.

II. Causes of Public Speaking Anxiety ("Stage Fright")

   A. Feeling Conspicuous and Inspected
      Being singled out, with the attention of an audience directly on the speaker, causes communication anxiety.

   B. Undergoing Evaluation
      The sense of being appraised as a speaker heightens communication anxiety.

   C. Relying on English as a Second Language
      Communication apprehension may be especially high when a speaker speaks before an audience whose primary language is different from his or her own.

III. Dealing with Communication Apprehension

   A. Reducing Your Fears
      1. Cognitive restructuring

   B. Managing Your Stage Fright
      1. Select a familiar topic
      2. Focus on the audience
         Most highly anxious speakers focus more attention on themselves than on the audience or other environmental factors associated with the event. An audience-centered approach to public speaking is likely to remove some of the most basic fears of public speaking. Approach the speech like an extended conversation.
      3. Overprepare
      4. Visualize a positive experience
         Visualization techniques require speakers to see themselves as successful. These techniques can accentuate the positive aspects of a speech.