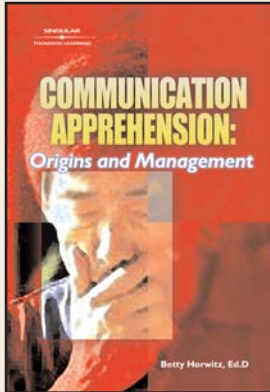


## Communication Apprehension



*By Betty Horwitz, Ed.D.*

We all know that the fear of speaking plays havoc with all the aspects of communication, but we often are at a loss of what to do with these cases. Dr. Horwitz's book provides substantive information on the origins of this phobia and gives multidiscipline management strategies for the problem. Speech clinicians, educators, and other voice professionals will benefit from this valuable work, presented in a highly readable fashion and well documented with case studies.

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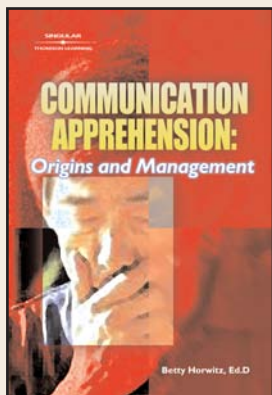
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## Communication Apprehension



By Betty Horwitz, Ed.D.

Communication Apprehension is a clinical term for the problem more commonly known as stage fright: the anxiety triggered by public speech and performance. Horwitz's new book on this topic provides an organized, compassionate and comprehensive reference specifically designed for speech clinicians. It presents stage fright as a communication disorder within the realm of anxiety disorders, and offers a variety of treatment strategies. This book is a welcome addition to the literature on counseling in communication disorders. Speech pathologists who work with actors, singers, and professional speakers will find it as useful as Rosen and Sataloff's now – classic Psychology of Voice Disorders (Singular Publishing Group, 1997).

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Horwitz begins with an overview of communication anxiety, combining general material on physiological arousal and social phobia with specific defining characteristics and demographic indicators. The author states that “communication apprehension is a legitimate concern for communication disorder specialists,” and she affirms that SLP's are qualified to treat many aspects of this disorder, with appropriate training and with backup by psychological

professionals. Literary references and case studies of both performing artists and lay speakers add color and humanism to the clinical material.

The next few chapters present perspectives from the fields of human development, psychology (chapter contributed by Donald Moss, Ph.D.), and physiology (chapter by Richard Gevirtz, Ph.D.). Horwitz's discussion of the developmental origin of fear combines insights from neuropsychology, behavioral conditioning, social psychology, and Kagan's research on individual temperament. She again balances scientific material with illustrative case studies, and warns that “ignorance about the nature of social anxiety, and the act of communication performance, contributes to the problem.”

Chapter 3, Moss's deeper background on anxiety disorders, will be helpful to speech clinicians who have not otherwise studied this topic in detail. The DSM-IV taxonomy and diagnostic criteria for anxiety are delineated along with its most common genetic, neurochemical, and experiential causes. Special attention is given to the dynamic of anxiety building on itself – “the cognitive escalation” and avoidance behaviors that can turn on difficult event or personal predisposition into a disabling state of paralysis. Moss then outlines common treatments for anxiety including cognitive therapy, relaxation practices, and structured behavioral change. He offers guidelines for applying and integrating these therapeutic approaches, and for the strategic use of anti-anxiety medications.

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Gevirtz's brief chapter on the physiology of stress and arousal focuses on neurochemistry and "endocrine dysregulation." While less directly useful to speech clinicians than the rest of the book, this section confirms Horwitz's view of speech therapy as an integrated mind-body process.

Horwitz then presents a lengthy discussion of clinical strategies to help patients manage communication anxiety, with small-group treatment as the primary model. As she explains, "the presence of other group members dispels the mistaken notion that people with communication disorders are unique ... [The group setting] provides a stressful environment necessary to desensitization of speakers' fears, as well as an opportunity to receive objective feedback" from a variety of points of view.

The model eight-week group class includes cognitive reframing of communication anxiety, biofeedback-supported stress management, guided imagery, and homework. All class members are required to comment on the information and exercises presented, with built-in escalations of exposure such as speaking from one's seat, then standing in front of the group. The benefits of scripted vs. unscripted speech assignments are outlined, and sample materials are provided in the appendix.

Nearly all of Horwitz's treatment approaches are adaptable for one-to-one rather than group sessions, and the author further suggests applications relevant to the wider fields of voice and fluency disorders. As she concludes, "patients with questionable or seemingly intransigent complaints may be considered uncooperative or unmanageable. Understanding the mind-body connection is vital for speech clinicians who often confront problems caused or exacerbated by unconscious anxiety."

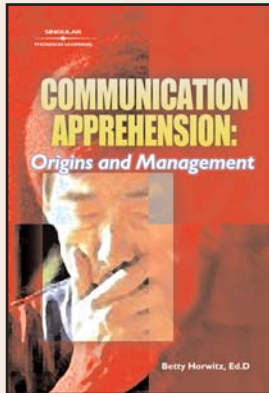
This book provides a rigorous yet practical approach to long-mystified topic. It will especially serve SLP's who treat performing artists and business speakers, but should be considered as a textbook in graduate courses on counseling in communication disorders. It may also quietly help clinicians themselves manage their fears of presenting in public.

**- ADVANCE for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists**  
**April 22, 2002**

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## Communication Apprehension

By Betty Horwitz, Ed.D.



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Communication Apprehension by Betty Horwitz is an interesting, well-written and clinically relevant guide to the understanding, assessment and treatment of performance anxiety. The book's title refers to performance anxiety as "the hidden communication disorder" – anxiety "suffered by an individual of either actual or anticipated communication..." Dr. Horwitz argues that speech and language pathologists are uniquely qualified to address this disorder and presents a wealth of information designed to help clinicians approach the issue with confidence.

Several years ago, I attended a conference at a prestigious rehabilitation facility, on the topic of mild brain injury. Part way through the workshop, an experienced clinician expressed serious concern that we were venturing into areas not specifically related to speech language pathology and that we might be denied reimbursement or, worse, be verging on unethical practice outside our area of expertise by incorporating these techniques into our treatment protocols.

In my own area of practice, rehabilitation of mild traumatic brain injury, my colleagues (psychologists, physicians) often spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to isolate the cause of a client's complaints – depression, pain trauma or brain injury – to determine who should treat the patient at the expense of implementing effective treatment by integrating aspects of all relevant approaches.

Communication Apprehension: Origins and Management presents a convincing and important argument for the interdisciplinary approach to a specific disorder: performance anxiety. In so doing, Dr. Horwitz examines the complex interaction, often described as the mind-body connection, underlining performance anxiety. Dr. Horwitz renames this issue, "communication apprehension" perhaps to make it more accessible and acceptable as a legitimate area of practice for speech pathologists. This linguistic device should encourage practitioners to think more holistically about our field.

Dr. Horwitz gently reminds us that we are trained that speech/language are overlaid functions in the basic survival functions of breathing, valving and shaping (laryngeal, articulation) – and urges us to explore complicating factors of anxiety and hyperarousal which may pose obstacles to successful treatment. Cognition is clearly mediated by language. Dr. Horwitz's book points out the fact that emotions also have a cognitive/linguistic base which must be acknowledged and understood in order to be treated effectively. How one uses language to explain one's reactions or feelings can be instrumental in how receptive to change a person may be. Identifying these often subtle factors can determine whether or not treatment will be effective. Dr. Horwitz observes that "communication apprehension is a pervasive, multifaceted phenomenon that must be

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viewed from many perspectives if it is to be understood and overcome” (p. 23). She later observes “unfortunately there is very little crossover between the fields of speech language pathology and applied psychophysiology” and her book convincingly encourages practitioners in both fields to expand their knowledge base in the interest of improving treatment outcomes.

On a purely technical level, the book is nicely organized with information about developmental, psychological and physiological perspectives illustrated with clinical examples. Each chapter and question is summarized concisely. Dr. Horwitz states clearly what she intends to discuss, covers the material thoroughly and then reviews the chapter to focus on important points.

The chapters on psychological and physiological perspectives by Don Moss, Ph.D. and Richard Gervitz, Ph.D., provide excellent information which should be easily understood even by those with little background in biofeedback. The speech language pathologist will recognize familiar themes crossing disciplines. For example, Dr. Moss speaks of cognitive self-help procedures used in biofeedback and describes other cognitive strategies for managing and mastering anxiety. Speech language pathologists are increasingly familiar with the role meracognitive skills play in the remediation of many disorders. Reading about cognitive restructuring in conjunction with education, which is emphasized throughout the book, underscores the importance of the transdisciplinary approach to communication apprehension.

Similarly, Dr. Gervitz directs our attention to the role of respiration and breathing retraining in treating anxiety disorders. Speech language pathologists typically focus on breathing with clients who have voice problems, neurological disorders and dysfluency. Applying this expertise to anxiety disorders which affect communication is a small step.

Finally, chapter 5, Management Perspectives, actually presents the treatment protocol Dr. Horwitz uses. This chapter is very valuable clinically taking us through the course describing, class by class objectives, homework assignments, material to be presented (with generous references to other chapters in the book) and suggestions for resources for clinicians who may decide to further their education and training in biofeedback. Dr. Horwitz emphasizes the importance of support (hence the efficacy of the group approach), and individualizing the program based on personality issues discussed earlier in the book. In a short paragraph toward the end of chapter 5, Dr. Horwitz makes her most important point when she stresses that therapeutic approaches which do not “uncover or address the source of the problem” cannot hope to be effective and that clients “considered uncooperative or unmanageable” should cause us to reflect on our therapeutic techniques, be flexible and use “failures” to explore alternative approaches.

Principles outlined in Communication Apprehension are applicable to many other areas of speech/language treatment: accent reduction (why are some of our clients more resistant to changes we ask them to make); voice therapy (why we may not be as effective when asking our clients to change lifelong patterns); brain injury (why does cognitive rehabilitation sometimes stall when alternate approaches are suggested).

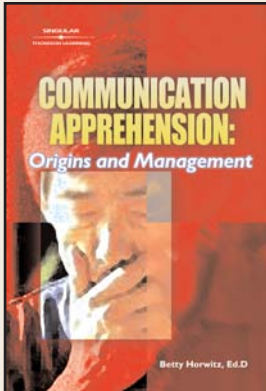
As with any good clinical material, Dr. Horwitz’s book encourages us to evaluate our methods and outcomes, expand our knowledge and in doing so become more effective clinicians.

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Communication Apprehension provides an in-depth investigation into the etiology, nature, and symptoms of this psychosocial anxiety. In addition, suggestions for treatment, mainly from a psychological perspective, are presented.

The author's purpose as stated in the preface is to "demystify the devastating fear of performance...and to help" cope with the problem. The objectives are extremely worthy, and the answers much needed. The objectives are met from a psychological perspective, but the treatment approaches lacked the pragmatic behavioral techniques that are so often efficacious.

The book is written primarily for speech-language pathologists according to the author. In my judgment, the book would be a valuable initial introduction to performance anxiety for practitioners, professional speakers, and self-presenters at any level from amateur to professional. The author seems to be fully knowledgeable, and has drawn from other noted authorities.

The book provides a thorough insight into the causes and conditions of communication apprehension, as well as an in-depth presentation of the cognitive factors, the psychological perspective, and the manifestations of communication anxiety. The last chapter suggests a treatment protocol with a progressive continuum. I found the book to be much more thorough than anything I have seen in this area before. The book refers to many of the "classical" explanations while including multidisciplinary wisdom. Explanation of neurological bases, psychosocial symptoms, and the physiology of the problem are the highlights of the book.

- Doody's Review

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