This G.I.F.T is designed for use when introducing and discussing nerves, apprehension, and nervousness in public speaking situations. This exercise requests that students privately submit what their personal fears and hang-ups are when it comes to public speaking. The professor or moderator collects these paper submissions and then anonymously reads each submission to the class as they listen for trends and patterns. The class then decides on the top 5-7 most mentioned fears and the moderator writes them on the board or overhead. The pedagogy here is that all students have similar fears and concerns, so much so that they can be narrowed to 5-7. Overwhelmingly these fears are related to process anxiety. The professor or moderator then shows the students the tips and techniques for combating these fears.

GOAL: The goal of this exercise is to show students they have similar fears and anxiety about the public speaking situation. It also shows students that a lot of their fears rest in PROCESS ANXIETY and not performance anxiety.

RATIONAL: To show students they are “not alone” in speaking apprehension, and how it can be easier than they think to work through it.

CONNECTION to CONCEPTS: Process Anxiety is a major factor in student apprehensions about public speaking. When the professor shows the solutions to the students’ fears and concerns, those solutions end up being: practice, picking a good topic, starting early, doing audience analysis, and more. All related to process anxiety. This shows students that if they work hard on the process side, the performance side should be less nerve-racking.

Directions:

This activity usually takes around 20 minutes to complete. The students need pen and paper and the professor needs a board and marker or chalkboard.

1) **Begin with an introduction to nerves and public speaking.**
   A. I usually mention the Jerry Seinfeld quote about how the number two fear in America is death and the number fear is public speaking…therefore people would rather be in the casket than giving the sermon at their own wake. Students like this.

2) **Ask students to take out a sheet of paper. Ask them to write down FIVE things that make them nervous about public speaking.**
   A. If they love public speaking, then ask them to put what others may not like. Also, ask them to put what they DO like (if they’re fearless).
   B. NO NAMES on this sheet of paper
   C. Give them a few minutes to complete the task.

3) **Ask the students to pass their response sheets to you.**
4) **Ask them to take out their notes (or notebooks) for the day’s notes.**
5) **Tell them you are going to read everyone’s fears out loud.**
A. Tell them that they will probably hear the same ones over and over.
B. Write those down, as we are going to make a list of the TOP 5-7 fears of this class.

6) **Read all students’ fears out loud.**
7) **When finished, call for what they heard most frequently mentioned by you.**
   A. Write these responses on the board.
   B. Mark on the LEFT side of the board so students can make a table in their notes. Later when you “correct” or give “tips” to solve these problems, write them on the RIGHT side of the board.

8) **After you have written what you think is a pretty decent list on the left side of the board, tell the students that these are almost all PROCESS ANXIETY nerves and they can easily be attacked (tell them you will table the performance anxiety for a little later).**

9) **Tell them these are really easy to fix if you give some effort. Depending on your teaching style you can usually have the students help you “solve” the problems on the right side of the board.**
   A. For example, “Fear of being boring, boredom, or looking dumb” always comes close to the top.
   B. I ask them what THEY think will fix this.

10) **As you get suggestions from students (and your experience and your specific text), start to draw and arrow to the right with the solutions.**
   A. For Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS ANXIETIES</th>
<th>SOLUTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) I’m boring, boring audience---------</td>
<td>1) Pick good topic, audience analysis, practice 6X to be lively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Lose my spot------------------------</td>
<td>2) Practice 6X, Stop, regroup, keep going, no apologies, time seems slow up front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Being judged------------------------</td>
<td>3) Start early, practice, ethically do your work and be excited about it, look good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Slipping up, stuttering-------------</td>
<td>4) Practice hard words, know your slip-ups, stop, regroup, keep going when you do slip up, no apologies or fillers. Practice 6X.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11) **Once this table is complete (and in their notes), point out that all of these problems can be fixed by starting early and picking a good topic—a topic to be proud of.**
   A. Tell the students that you obviously know they are busy, but if they are really nervous about these things they MUST start early to break the cycle.
   B. Really encourage them to do audience analysis.

12) **To wrap this exercise, tell them that these things are related to PROCESS ANXIETY, (remember you tabled butterflies, sweaty palms, and sweat).**
   A. Depending on your text you can then lead them to process anxiety in the text.
   B. Usually the canons of rhetoric help to fight process anxiety.

13) **At this point, I usually switch to physiological responses to speech and performance anxiety. In a complete wrap and in sheer metaphor I take the stack of their fears and WALK THEM TO THE TRASH. I then say, “We’ve discarded your fears from this point on”**.
   A. Some laugh as I can be cheesy. This may not work for you.