

Oral Communication Resources

Presentational Speaking

PRCA

The Personal Report of Communication Apprehension

The PRCA is the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension. In filling out the form, an individual indicates the level of anxiety he or she feels about participating in various oral communication situations. The individual's score is computed based on these answers, and is a general score indicating the general level of anxiety related to oral communication.

A "high" score means that you report more anxiety related to oral communication than most people do (based on surveys of people in the United States). The "high" range is from 80 to 120. A "low" score means that you report less anxiety related to oral communication than most people do. The "low" range is any score below 50.

Anxiety about a communication situation is not entirely a bad thing. While it is uncomfortable, the physiological arousal associated with anxiety, up to a point, contributes to greater acuity, greater physical awareness, and general readiness for the demands of the situation. Most effective communicators experience an increased level of anxiety prior to an important communication situation.

Overly high levels of anxiety, however, can inhibit performance. Many individuals with high levels of communication apprehension have experienced the negative effects of these high levels of anxiety. This negative experience, in turn, reinforces the fear of being in such a situation again.

Many people believe that communication apprehension is one of the most common forms of anxiety individual's experience. If you have a score in the "high" range, you are not alone. Most people experience some anxiety in certain kinds of situations.

Some experience it with public speaking but not in interpersonal (one-on-one) settings. Some people feel comfortable in a formal public speaking situation, but feel nervous about speaking in a group discussion. Some feel a generalized anxiety, regardless of the characteristics of the situation. Sometimes anxiety is related to uncertainty about the demands of the situation. We tend to be more anxious about a communication situation if we have difficulty envisioning what we must do, or how people are likely to respond to us. Preparing for the situation can help decrease anxiety, but one must know how to prepare. Higher anxiety is related to not knowing how to prepare for the situation.

There are things one can do to help deal with high levels of communication apprehension. Studies have shown that multiple experiences with public speaking can help decrease public speaking anxiety for some people.

Experiences with different kinds of oral communication situations can also be helpful. For example, communicating in a small group in order to prepare for a more formal presentation can be helpful. Courses that focus on some aspect of oral communication that feels less threatening can help decrease anxiety in those situations perceived as more threatening. One of the best ways of dealing with communication apprehension is to experience situations where one can begin to try out and develop coping mechanisms that help.

[TAKE THE PRCA TEST>](#)

Courses at Hamline that can help with communication apprehension:

- Communication Studies 1110: Public Speaking
- Communication Studies 1650: Argumentation and Advocacy
- Communication Studies 3360: Interpersonal Communication
- Communication Studies 3380: Small Group Discussion

Each of these courses focuses on helping students understand the elements that influence communication in each of these settings. Each of these courses also provides opportunities for students to talk in a variety of contexts.

For more information, or to discuss concerns about communication apprehension, you can contact Dr. Patricia Palmerton.