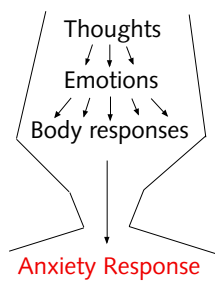


Speech anxiety

You're prepared to give a talk. You're on time, well organized, and possess complete confidence in your knowledge of the material you're about to deliver. You get up on the stage, and you freeze like a deer in the headlights. Or, even worse, you're worried about freezing, well before you even get up there, and a panic response has taken over your entire body.

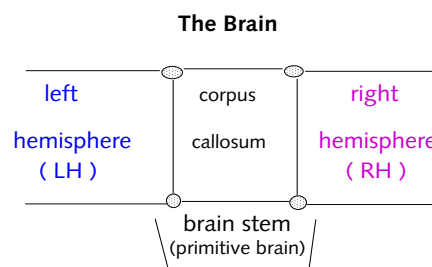


For many people, public speaking can be a terrifying experience. The anxiety response symptoms are well documented – dry mouth, sweaty palms, shaking hands, pale (drained) skin, blanking mind, numbing body, shallow breathing, pounding heart, dizziness, quivering voice, weak knees, and butterflies in the stomach, to name a few. The fear and anxiety we feel is an accumulation of the thoughts we have, the emotions they elicit, and the resulting somatic or body responses that are generated.

A brief look at the brain and the nervous system will reveal where our fear response originates, where our rational brains have gone, and how to get these two elements – our minds and our bodies – back, balanced and working together.

Brains

Our brain comprises two hemispheres, connected by the corpus callosum and the brain stem housing our primitive brain. The left hemisphere (LH) and the right hemisphere (RH) both contain sensory, motor and association areas, but for certain functions the two hemispheres are asymmetrical.



LH dominance

- language / speech
- hand / motor control
- linear thinking
- logical functions
- organizational functions
- analytical functions

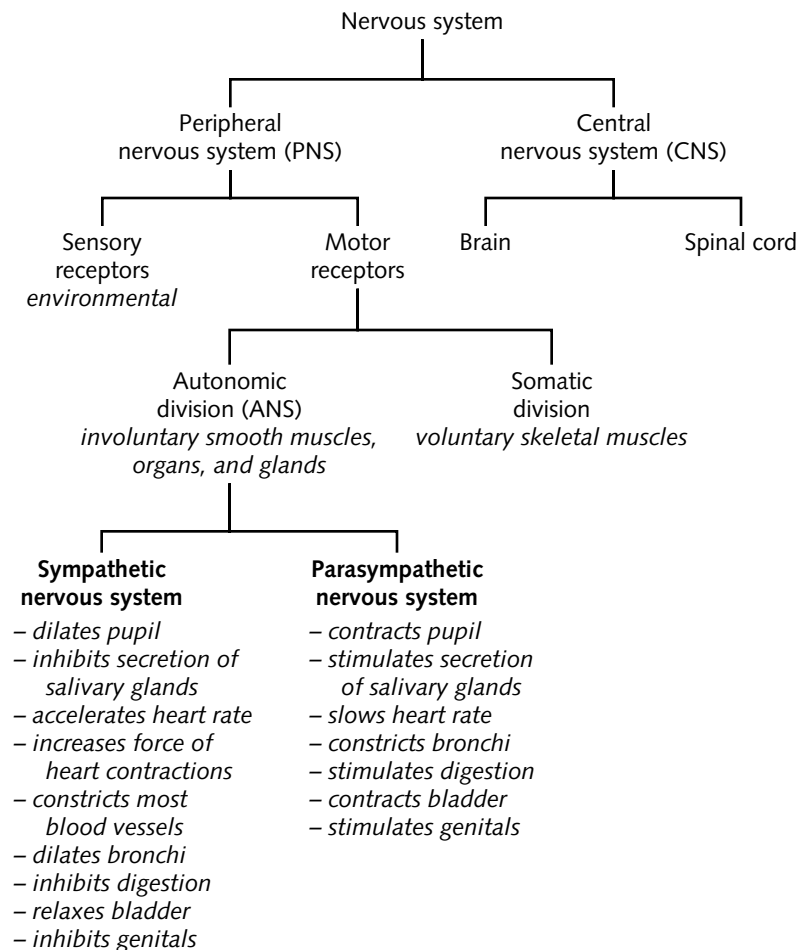
RH dominance

- music
- visual-spatial perception
- holistic tasks
- emotional functions
- experiential functions

The LH is dominant for language/speech, hand and motor control, linear thinking, and logical, organizational and analytical functions. The RH is dominant in music, visual-spatial perception, holistic tasks, and emotional, experiential, and representational functions. Our RH has more functional connection to our primitive brain. Basically, the left brain does the thinking, and the right brain does the feeling.

Nervous systems

Our nervous systems can be divided into two parts: the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral nervous system (PNS). The CNS consists of the brain and the spinal cord.



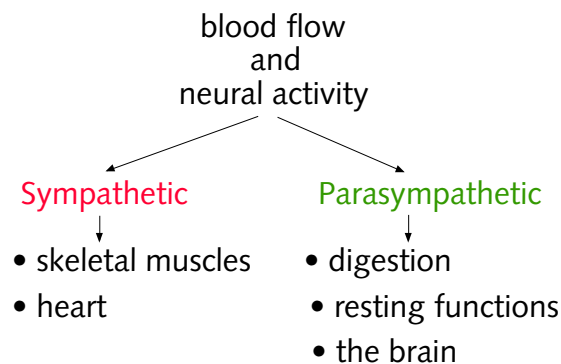
The PNS has sensory receptors that detect body changes, internally or externally, and report those to the CNS. The PNS also has motor receptors and controls the voluntary muscles with its somatic part (somatic division), and the involuntary muscles, glands, other organs, blood vessels, and lymph vessels with its autonomic division.

This autonomic division, controlled by the primitive brain, is the one we're the most interested in when we're examining a fear and anxiety response. Called the autonomic nervous system (ANS), it can be divided into the *sympathetic* and the *parasympathetic* nervous systems.

When the parasympathetic nervous system is active we are relaxed, at rest; our heart rate is calm and steady, and our breathing is slow and deep. On the other hand, when the sympathetic nervous system is active our body prepares for an emergency, and the "fight or flight" response is in effect, our heart beat is fast and strong, and our breathing is shallow and rapid. Many of the anxiety response symptoms can be present at once.

Blood flow patterns, which are an indication of neural activity, are dynamic. They change depending on our physiological and psychological conditions. In a sympathetic, anxious state, our blood flow and neural activity are increased to the large skeletal muscles and the heart.

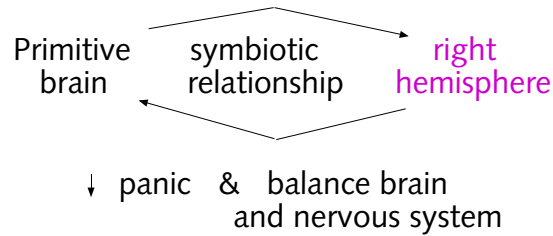
Consequently, in sympathetic overdrive, when we're experiencing panic and fear of public speaking, very little blood is going to the brain – and thinking clearly becomes extremely difficult.



Help

A few speakers interpret their increased heart rate and queasy stomach as positive signs of being "charged up" and "emotionally ready" for their speech. Their sympathetic nervous systems energize them and their unpleasant physical symptoms remain fairly subdued. Lucky dogs! For most of us an over-sympathetic response is our plight. Our panic is pervasive. However, a strong symbiotic relationship between our primitive brain and our experiential, feeling, right brain suggests that we may have a built in tool that can help us diminish the panic.

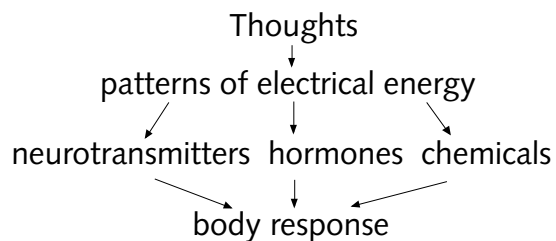
Paradox tapping technique



I would like to explain and demonstrate a technique that incorporates this relationship. You might choose to try it if you suffer from speech anxiety. In the late 1980s, psychologist Roger Callahan combined elements of quantum theory, kinesiology and acupressure, (the "offspring" of acupuncture) in order to treat people with phobias and traumatic stress disorders. He called his technique Thought Field Therapy (TFT). More recently, Gary Craig, an engineer, refined the technique and renamed it the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). Kristi Magraw, a body-oriented psychotherapist has further refined the technique. It is my interpretation of Kristi's teaching and understanding of the technique that I will be presenting and we prefer to call it the Paradox Tapping Technique, (PTT).

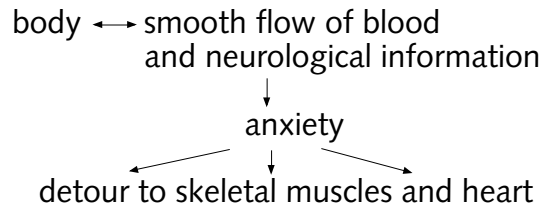
How PTT works

Our thoughts create patterns of electrical energy that cause neurotransmitters, hormones, and chemicals to be released in the body; our bodies respond. We experience this physical translation of our thoughts to our bodies as emotions.



Emotions = physical translation of thoughts to our bodies

When the anxiety response is activated the flow of neurological information and the flow of blood throughout the body are disrupted.



Anxiety response = **sympathetic** overdrive

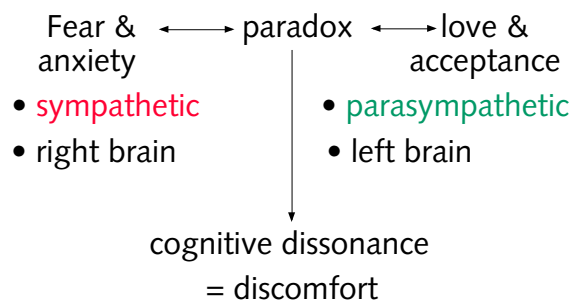
Specific points on our bodies correspond to points on the acupuncture energy-flow meridians. By literally tapping these points we can stimulate blocked neural receptors under the skin. The tap will generate an electrical, biochemical impulse and be transmitted to the brain. Here, the impulse is interpreted and reconfigured to stimulate the initiation of several parasympathetic responses. The tapping provides a kick start to the frozen parasympathetic nervous system.

Increased cooperation and balance between the left and right hemispheres is accomplished through several aspects of the tapping technique. One of the most powerful is the use of a spoken paradox.

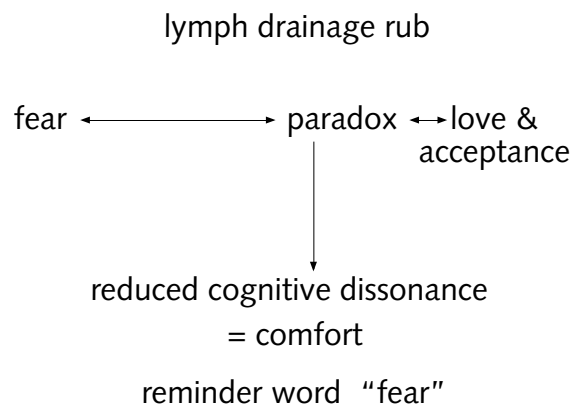
The first step is to think of an emotion you are feeling that you would like to feel less of, in this case, the fear of public speaking. You may be afraid you'll freeze, forget your material, or not be able to answer questions. Whatever the fear is, your job will be to focus on it. Rate it on a scale from 0 to 10 with the goal in mind to lower this rating. Then, devise a phrase that states that, "even though I'm afraid ... (I'll blow it), I love and accept myself deeply and completely."

What you're doing here is using the paradox of the fear and the acceptance to create an obvious focal point of cognitive dissonance. The body is not happy with cognitive dissonance. The negative fear feeling and the love and acceptance that you will express in spoken words are experienced with discomfort when in close proximity.

Spoken paradox



The paradox will shift in favour of the self love and acceptance, which is bigger and more consistent than the transient, situational fear you are experiencing at that moment. The paradox gets further broken down by the tapping technique as it opens up the energy pathways along the acupuncture energy meridians. The blocked energy – frozen or detoured to produce and maintain the fear symptoms – will begin to flow more naturally as you progress through the technique. You'll use the phrase you've devised and a reminder word like "fear" to focus on and push the paradox towards a resolution while rubbing a particular area on the chest just below the collarbone. This will stimulate the lymphatic system to increase its circulation and begin opening the neural pathways.



Another means of balancing the left and right brain functions within the PTT is an exercise of eye movements. The eyes are moved from side to side and then rolled around in big circles, clockwise and counter clockwise. In a highly sympathetic state the rolling movements may seem jerky and disjointed. It's as though the corpus callosum keeps skipping a beat. It may be useful to continue this sequence until there's at least a hint that a smoother motion is evolving. With the restoration of smooth eye movements comes a smoother transfer of information between the hemispheres of our brains.

Following the eye movement exercise, a quick sequence of humming with the right brain and counting with the left uses contrast pressure to continue the break-up of the LH/RH "brain lock".

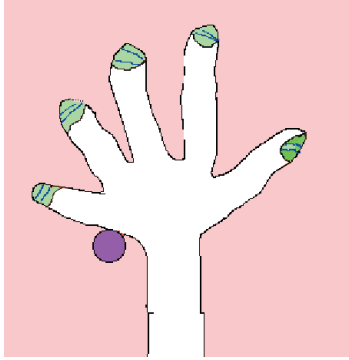
I believe this technique works because it effectively connects our body, shouting about our fear, with our mind, knowing the more permanent truth about our competence.

The Paradox Tapping Technique

• Establishing the Paradox

Devise the pertinent phrase and the reminder word ("Even though I'm afraid ... I love and accept myself deeply and completely;" and "fear"). Rate the emotion.

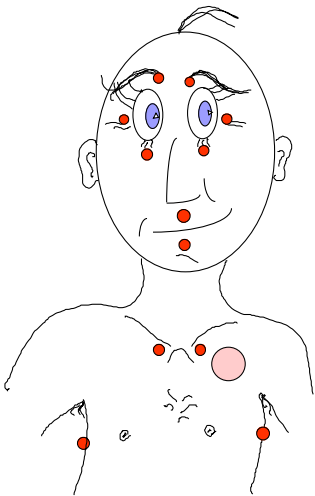
• Preparing the Body



Hold one hand in a fist with the thumb on top. To stimulate an acupuncture point on the other hand, karate chop the thumb knuckle of the fist hand with the fleshy outside edge of the other hand, below the baby finger. Try to keep the karate chopping hand relaxed. Do this seven times on each hand.

With the fingers of your right hand placed under the left collarbone, rub circles towards the centre of the chest while saying "the phrase" three times aloud ("Even though I have this fear...I love and accept myself deeply and completely").

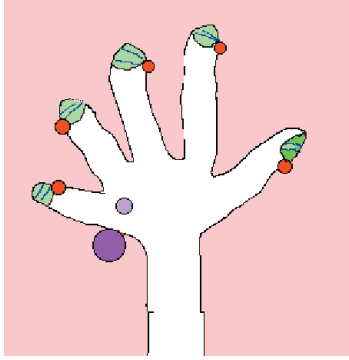
• Tapping Sequence



Tap each location firmly with the middle finger of both hands (supported by the index finger). Tap each seven times while occasionally repeating the reminder word.

1. Inner corner of both eyebrows
2. Outer crease of the eyes
3. Bottom, midpoint of the eyes
4. Above upper lip
5. Below lower lip
6. Both sides of the sternum (front of chest) one inch from the midpoint
7. A hand's width below the underarm

PTT	Establish paradox Phrase and reminder Rate emotion
Body prep.	karate chop (7x) chest circles w/phrase (3x)
Tapping w/word (7x)	inner eyebrows eye crease bottom eye above lips under lips sternum both sides underarms fingernail whaps (4x) karate chops (7x)

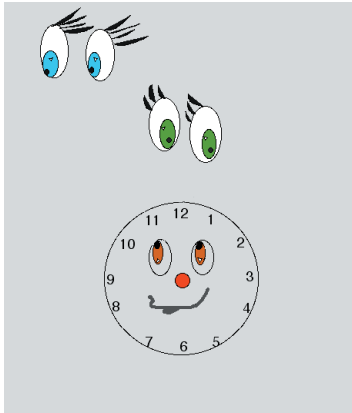


8. Inside bottom corner of each fingernail on both hands – whap with the opposite index finger, four times for each finger (Whap the *outside* corner of the ring finger)

9. Fleshy part of hand (repeat karate chops)

• *Brain Tune-up/Eye sequence*

Use the right middle and index fingers to tap with steady rhythm a point on the back of the left hand, between the baby finger and the ring finger, at the midpoint between the base of the fingers and the wrist. Keep your head steady and move only your eyes.



1. Close eyes then open (five taps for each).

2. Look down to the right (with head steady for five taps).

3. Look down to the left (with head steady for five taps).

4. Circle eyes, full, smooth circles one way about five times, and then the reverse.

5. Hum a tune out loud, count to five out loud, and hum a tune out loud (with five taps for each move).

- *Repeat the karate chops and the tapping sequence*
- *Check feeling on a 0–10 scale*
- *Then move into action*

Tips

The objective is not to get rid of the emotions, (fear) but to facilitate a shift and a balancing of body and mind. The number of points in this technique may seem intimidating. If you take it in small pieces, knowing that any amount of it can break up a brain pattern, learning it will be easier. The counting does not have to be exact, in fact, it's better if it's not. In circumstances when you're really in a hurry, you could just work the paradox and get some benefit. There's no right way to do it, just what feels good.

