ICEBREAKER: 
Imagine It!

FOCUS: 
To develop creativity and increase participants’ comfort with acting in front of a group

PURPOSE: 
• To help participants relax before working on their public presentation skills
• To create an atmosphere of creativity and fun

MATERIALS: 
None

SETTING: 
Open area (inside or outside) with little or no furniture or obstacles

TIME: 
5–10 minutes

PROCEDURE: 
1. Set the stage by being enthusiastic yourself!
2. Have group members sit or stand in a circle.
3. Start by passing around an imaginary object such as a baseball, a flower or a basketball. Items that require action to use are the best.
4. As the “object” is tossed, rolled or handed around, each person should change the object to something else.
5. Encourage the participants to act out the motions completely, even exaggerating motions; the more dramatic they are the better. This can help participants loosen up and relax their muscles before they try to do something more difficult like give a demonstration or speech.
6. If the kids are enjoying the game, try acting out imaginary scenes like picking and eating an apple or learning to ride a bike.
7. When you’re ready to quit, have the group talk about how they felt being “actors.” Connect this to public speaking by explaining the importance of using natural hand gestures and expressions during a presentation. For more advanced groups, try acting out emotions, expressions or action words – things that are not tangible.
ACTIVITY:
Let’s Talk About Nerves

FOCUS:
Increase public speaking skills

PURPOSE:
• To help kids identify what makes them scared of public speaking
• To help kids learn to plan for and around stage nerves
• To help kids feel less afraid of the nervous symptoms they feel

MATERIALS:
☐ “What Are You Afraid Of?” handout (on pg. 50; one per person)
☐ Pens or pencils
☐ “What I Learned” self-evaluation form (on pg. 8; one per person)

SETTING:
Comfortable area where the group can sit in a circle

TIME:
20–30 minutes

PROCEDURE:
1. Introduce the topic by telling a personal story about a public speaking experience. The story should contain something you learned about yourself as a result.

2. Ask the kids if they also have some fear of speaking in front of groups. Explain that some fears and symptoms of nervousness will go away with practice. However, they need to learn what they might be afraid of and how they can work around it and still be able to share their ideas.

3. Hand out pencils or pens and the “What Are You Afraid Of?” handout to each person. Give them 5 to 7 minutes to write down some of the fears they may have and to check off some of the symptoms this stress causes.

4. Bring the group back together to discuss their answers.

TALKING IT OVER:
1. Allow at least 10 minutes for discussion, depending on the size of the group. Share the following information with the group. (For tips on reducing stage nerves or stage fright, refer to the “Overcoming Stage Nerves” skill sheet on page 34.)

Here are some fears that people have noted about public speaking:
• Boring the audience to sleep
• Burping uncontrollably
• False teeth coming loose
• Tripping on the way up to the stage

2. Ask the group the following questions:
• What other fears can you think of? (Encourage the group to brainstorm as many as they can.)
• Are you surprised at all the things people fear about public speaking? (Explain that when they can identify a fear very specifically they can work on overcoming it.)
• What might you do to prevent some of these fears from coming true? (For example, to help keep from boring an audience to sleep, you could read your speech to a friend to see how it sounds.)

3. Ask the group to come up with at least one solution or problem-solving technique for each fear they listed. Encourage them to be creative and not to worry about whether the solution will work for every public speaking situation.

4. Ask for volunteers to talk about the nervous symptoms they’ve had before or while speaking in public. (You could open with
something like, “I always seem to get... sweaty hands... cold feet... an upset stomach... when I know I have to get up and talk in front of others.) After they’ve compiled a list of symptoms, encourage them to come up with some ways they can reduce the symptoms (for example, to remedy or minimize an upset stomach, eat only a light meal before speaking).

5. Give the group a final opportunity to talk about experiences they’ve had with speaking or reading aloud and how they felt.

6. Remind your group that being scared or nervous is not a good reason to avoid public speaking. Being able to express their ideas and share information is very important. Even though public speaking may be hard now, the more they do it the easier it will become.

TRY THIS, TOO:
Ask a local radio, television or sports celebrity to speak to your group about his or her experiences with performance nerves.
LET’S TALK ABOUT NERVES HANDOUT:
What Are You Afraid Of?

Write a sentence or two about the things that scare you about public speaking.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

This is how I feel if I have to talk in front of others: (Check each symptom that you feel.)

☐ My hands shake.
☐ I get a headache.
☐ My shoulders ache.
☐ I get dizzy.
☐ My mouth goes dry.
☐ My neck hurts.
☐ My heart beats faster than normal.
☐ I get sweaty palms.
☐ My stomach is upset and I’m nauseated.
☐ My legs are shaky.
☐ I can’t stop my feet from tapping.
☐ Other: ________________________________
ACTIVITY:
What’s Wrong With This Picture?

FOCUS:
To enhance understanding of basic public speaking skills

PURPOSE:
- To show kids how much they already know about good speaking skills
- To show how public speaking can be fun
- To give kids a chance to speak in front of a group

MATERIALS:
- “Topics” and “Speaking Rules” cards (from handout on pg. 53)
- “Delivering a Vocal Presentation” skill sheet (on pg. 31; one per person – optional)
- Pencils or pens
- “What I Learned” self-evaluation form (on pg. 8; one per person)

SETTING:
Room with an open area like a stage or speaker’s area on one side

TIME:
10–15 minutes

PROCEDURE:
Before the meeting:
1. This activity puts young people in situations where other kids in the group will respond to their presentation skills or give feedback. It should be done only when group members respect each other and are willing to abide by the following guidelines for respectful behavior. If you choose to use this activity, review these points with your group in advance.
   - Listen carefully to other people’s presentations.
   - Provide feedback in a positive way.
   - Don’t be rude, critical or hurtful.
   - Be aware that everyone has differing abilities.
   - Be considerate of other people’s feelings.
   - Follow the Golden Rule: Treat other people the way you would like to be treated.

2. Cut out the “Topics” and “Speaking Rules” cards. If you have a large group, you might need more than one copy of each card. You may want to add a few topics that are specific to your group’s interests.

During the meeting:
1. You might want to hand out copies of the “Delivering a Vocal Presentation” skill sheet so the kids can refer to it during the rest of the activity.

2. Tell the group that they’ll be demonstrating the basic “how-to’s” of public speaking, but in an upside-down way. Tell them that this will give them a chance to show what they know about good public speaking skills.

3. Have each person pick one card from the Topics pile and one card from the Speaking Rules pile.

4. Tell the participants to prepare a 30-second presentation on the topic from their card. Their presentations should break the rules they know about the speaking skill they picked. For example, someone who chose the Speaking Rules card “Eye Contact” and the Topic card “Talk about your favorite dessert” might talk enthusiastically about chocolate brownies while looking at the floor or ceiling the entire time. This activity works best when the participants really exaggerate the rule they’re breaking.

5. Tell them not to reveal what speaking rule they’re trying to break so that the audience can guess which one it is.
6. When the audience guesses what the speaker is trying to do, ask them to identify how good speakers would handle the speaking rule.

7. Continue in this manner until everyone has had a chance to talk.

**TALKING IT OVER:**

Ask the group the following questions:

- Did this activity help you learn anything new about public speaking skills?
- Have you tried or heard about other good tips for speaking to a group?
- Did this activity make it seem easier to try making a longer speech in the future?
- How could you share this information about public speaking with other kids or adults?
WHAT’S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE? HANDOUT:
Topics & Speaking Rules Cards

Topic Card: Describe your dream vacation.

Speaking Rules Card: Audience Consideration

Topic Card: Talk about your favorite dessert.

Speaking Rules Card: Facial Expressions

Topic Card: Talk about your favorite music.

Speaking Rules Card: Hand Gestures

Topic Card: Create a new commercial for one of your favorite products.

Speaking Rules Card: Voice

Topic Card: Talk about someone who has influenced your life.

Speaking Rules Card: Eye Contact

Topic Card: Talk about a book you’ve read.

Speaking Rules Card: Proper Attire