

## **Transforming Anxieties: Exercises for the Body and Mind**

### ***Exercises for the Body***

#### **1. Increasing Tension/Releasing Tension**

Find a comfortable spot where you can sit, lie down, or lean. Beginning with your feet, tighten and increase the tension in various sections of your body for 5-10 seconds. Then release the tension, focusing your mind on relaxing that part of the body. Move up through your calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen, chest, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, and face. Do this exercise while driving, sitting in class, going to sleep at night, or even watching TV. It will increase your consciousness and awareness of the tension you are carrying. The awareness will prompt you to release it. You can also do this exercise just before you speech is set to begin, such as when you are waiting backstage while another presenter is speaking.

#### **2. Face and Posture Check**

Imagine yourself nervously facing a public speaking engagement. Adopt a body posture and facial expression you might be in at the moment. Keep that position for a moment, and then consciously adopt a facial expression and stance that reflect relaxation and poise.

#### **3. Create an Association in a Pinch**

Imagine a pleasant scene –a meadow, sunset, woods –that makes you feel relaxed. Once you have the image in your mind, make an unobtrusive gesture such as pinching your middle finger and thumb together. The gesture must be something you can do without anyone noticing. Take a moment to do this daily until making the gesture evokes the calming image. Alternatively, when a scene, image, or experience makes you feel relaxed, make the gesture. When you get up to speak publicly, make the gesture. The relaxation will follow.

#### **4. Ground yourself**

Before you begin to speak, consciously plant your feet firmly on the ground beneath you. Feel the ground beneath your feet and let it remind you that you are on a firm foundation. Let what your body feels be a metaphor for your self-consciousness. Another way to ground yourself is to deliberately take note of people and things around you. Note details and characteristics about the objects and people in your immediate environment. Bringing your focus back to the physical around you will dispel anxiety about what may be going to happen.

#### **5. Slow your Motion**

Before you get up to speak, slow down all of your actions. Speak more slowly and deliberately. Doing so will help your body know that you are not really in flight.

#### **6. Breath**

Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your back. Expand to the count of four, and then contract gently. Complete this exercise four or five times until you feel a calming difference.