



# I *Can* SPEAK

CONQUERING FEAR AND  
BUILDING CONFIDENCE IN HIGH-STAKES  
SPEAKING SITUATIONS.

DR. M. PAULA DAOUST

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Conquering fear and building confidence  
in high-stakes speaking situations.

**Dr. M. Paula Daoust**  
BehaviorTransitions.com



**I *Can* Speak: Conquering fear and building confidence in high-stakes speaking situations.**

Dr. M. Paula Daoust

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[www.BehaviorTransitions.com](http://www.BehaviorTransitions.com)

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**Dr. M. Paula Daoust is available to speak at your business or conference event on a variety of topics. Call (785) 633-6078 for booking information.**

**Written by a Leading Expert  
with 30 Years' Experience**



**Dr. M. Paula Daoust** has a doctorate in Behavior Psychology and is an expert in helping people find and maintain their peak performance. She is also a certified hypnotherapist and seamlessly blends these tools into her coaching to help people easily achieve lasting change. Over 25 years, she has taught hundreds of master-level students how to be more persuasive and influential, and how to successfully manage conflict.

**Dr. M. Paula Daoust** is the expert other leaders look to for help in finding their peak performance. She has taught workshops and spoken at events all over North America on subjects such as conflict, change management, storytelling, influence and power, anxiety and stress at work, and peak performance.

**Do you want Dr. M. Paula Daoust to be the motivational speaker at your next event?**

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# 1

## Introduction

Do the butterflies take flight in your stomach at the thought of delivering a presentation, going to a job interview, or being called to answer in an important meeting? These are challenging situations that can leave you feeling stressed and looking for a way out if you are like many of us. But, it doesn't have to be like that. When you are confronted with situations in which all eyes are on you, you can feel confident and calm, and you can think and speak clearly.

I can remember when my eighth-grade teacher announced that everyone would write and deliver a five-minute speech. The three best speeches would then have the honor of competing with the other classes during the next school assembly which would include the entire student body, all the faculty and many parents. At recess, my best friend, Ellie, told me she was going to be selected for the competition and not only that, she was going to win. Although I say we were best friends, in reality we were rivals, always working to out-do the other. So, I had no choice but to throw myself into this challenge. I wasn't about to let Ellie walk away with this achievement, uncontested.

I worked hard at preparing my speech and did a pretty good job. As a result, despite my butterflies, I was selected to compete in the assembly. However, to my frustration Ellie was also chosen to compete, and I knew she didn't write her speech. Her older sister had written it for her! Ellie had cheated on this assignment. It irritated me to no end that she would have the same opportunity to compete at the school event.

Regardless, I practiced my speech and made four little cue cards. I underlined key words and memorized my lines. I was ready for the big day. When it was my turn to speak, I strode onto that stage and looked out at the audience. I had never done anything like this before and now I was staring at over 100 people in a cramped auditorium. All eyes were on me. The lights felt hot and I felt my temperature rise. The butterflies in my stomach had become bumble bees

and they were stinging. I swallowed hard and began speaking. I was about half-way through my speech when, horror-struck, I realized that my cue cards had somehow gotten out of order. I was lost. I tried to gather myself and find the right card but then my knees began to shake. I thought I was going to fall over the edge of the stage and right into my teacher's lap. I did the only thing that I could think to do at that moment: I ran off stage. Have you ever had an experience like this? Perhaps you didn't run away, but you wished you could?

Later, after all the speeches were done, I sat on the edge of the stage, swinging my legs and hoping that, somehow, the judges would overlook the fact that I didn't finish my speech. Perhaps they would see what a great job I had done up until that fateful moment. Of course, they didn't. And to make things even worse, Ellie won the contest. In my heart, I firmly believed that if I had finished that speech, I would have won. That day, I made up my mind that I would never run off a stage again and, more importantly, I would become a great speaker. Or, at the very least, I would become comfortable speaking in situations in which the stakes were high and all eyes were on me.

Speaking in the spotlight can translate to different situations, but they all have one thing in common. You might be giving a presentation, called on to answer a question in a meeting, anticipating a job interview, talking to an authority figure, or raising a controversial issue to a group. Perhaps you have even found yourself alone at a networking event. There is a common denominator that makes them all difficult. In each of these situations, all eyes are on you. You believe, whether it is true or not, that you are being judged. In all these situations and any other similar context in which all eyes are on you, your fight-or-flight response is in full force. Thinking clearly can become a challenge.

After years of practice and paying attention to what helped and didn't help, I have developed tools that can make a difference for you. Recently I spoke to an audience of over 500 people. I would be lying if I told you that I didn't feel any tension or anxiety, but it was at a level that helped me be more mindful of my presentation details. I was able to focus on serving my audience. I didn't have any butterflies although I did pass on eating any of the food they had offered the attendees. My hands were dry and my knees were steady. I felt in control. I believed in the content of my presentation, and I was excited at the opportunity to share it with those good folks.

The difference between this event and my eighth-grade experience is that I learned how to prepare my emotions and thoughts. I used the tools I will share with you in this book, and because I did that, I had an enjoyable experience. And, based on the feedback from my audience, they did too!

Being comfortable speaking in situations in which the stakes are high is the key to accelerating your career and achieving almost any goal. When you are calm rather than frantic, you will think more clearly, and you can articulate your ideas more precisely. Since most people are uneasy when speaking in a spotlight context, when you improve your comfort with speaking in such situations, you differentiate yourself from the crowd. All things being equal, you will get that job you want, influence your team to accept your ideas, and be regarded as a leader who

can get things done. How nice would it be to feel enthusiasm and excitement at the opportunity to speak to a group instead of feeling dread and fear as the date approaches?

When you read the following chapters and practice the tools described, I promise that when you are faced with a high-stakes speaking situation, you will feel confident, calm, and able to both think and articulate your ideas clearly. Not every tool will be right for you but there will be tools that make a significant difference for you within the following chapters. It is time for you to break free from unnecessary constraints and have the future you deserve.



**Do you have a group that would like to develop better cooperation and collaboration?**

Dr. Daoust can design a keynote presentation, workshop, or seminar series to specifically meet your needs. With over 20 years of experience in instructional design, she can create a learning experience that gets the results you need and want.

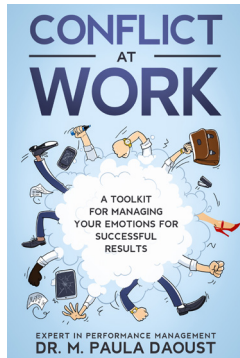
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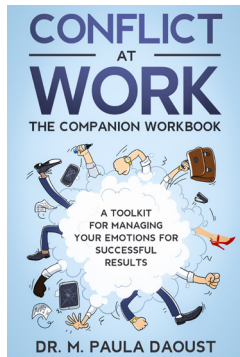


## Other Books by Dr. Daoust



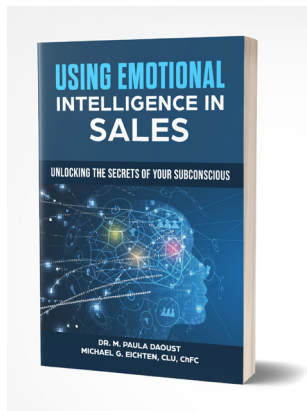
*Conflict doesn't have to be hard. What difference would it make to your life if you could resolve conflicts such that you got what you needed and wanted while simultaneously strengthening important relationships?*

*Based on behavioral science and supported by the latest tools in hypnosis, this book will guide you to the results you want! With over twenty tools to pick from, you can match the right tools for the situation with your own comfort level. Conflict may not be easy but it doesn't have to be hard.*



*Want to take your new knowledge to the next level and become a master at handling conflict productively? This is your resource!*

*This workbook will provide you with the exercises to master the application of your favorite tools. It will also challenge you to think more deeply about conflict and to understand what might be holding you back. Complete the exercises in this book and you will be a very big step closer to getting the results you need and want and strengthening important relationships.*



*Would you like selling to be as natural as having a conversation with a friend?*

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