REDUCING PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE
STUDENTS: THE EFFECTS OF A COMBINATION ANXIETY REDUCTION
TECHNIQUE ON TRAIT AND STATE ANXIETY

by

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ABSTRACT 
The effectiveness of a treatment for communication apprehension (CA) was examined in this 
study. Trait and state anxiety were examined by using community college students enrolled in four 
sections of a required basic speech communication course. The sample size consisted of 81 
students, ranging in ages 17-82. Each student was asked to complete a trait anxiety measure 
(Personal Report of Communication Apprehension-24) during the second class meeting (pre-test) 
and again on the last day of class (post-test). For the state anxiety measure, students were asked to 
complete the Speaker Anxiety (SA) Scale immediately after delivering an informative speech at the 
end of the semester. Two classes served as the treatment group, receiving a 15-minute combination 
anxiety reduction technique and two classes served as the control group, receiving no treatment. 

A significant interaction was found in physiological activation, an important direct manifestation of 
state anxiety commonly experienced as irregular heart beat, dry mouth, sweaty palms, and feelings 
of exhaustion. The findings showed that the students in the control group who spoke in the second 
week had higher anxieties than did the other students. 

A dividend of this investigation was the result that supported frequent anecdotal reports from past 
speech students; namely, that at the conclusion of the basic speech course, students in this study 
reported a reduction in trait anxiety. Of the other comparisons made, race and maternal 
encouragement were shown as major influences for the trait of communication apprehension. 

Future research should use larger samples of community college students and focus on state 
anxiety with trait anxiety as a monitor for stability. Treatments might also be expanded to weekly 
sessions during a major portion of one semester.