

HAKULA

The perfect “State” of Calm and Perspective
in which to appear in front of Others.....

Hakula, sometimes called “The Presentation State” is the perfect state for appearing in front of others. It is the opposite of the tunnel-vision-fear state many have experienced, creating a feeling of calm, and enabling the greatest perspective and flexibility of behavior and response.

Pick a spot on the wall, somewhere higher than eye level, around the center of your field of vision. Now, as you focus on the spot, notice that in a matter of seconds, you can see things in your peripheral vision. If you take all your attention and focus totally on that spot on the wall, notice that you can actually see things in your peripheral vision.

You may find that you can now see a full 180 degrees. Staying focused on that spot, raise your hands in front of your face, then draw them round to the sides of your head and notice just how far you can see – you’ll find it is around 180 degrees from one side all the way around to the other.

Now notice that you can shift your attention down onto an object in front of you, and maintain your full peripheral awareness as you speak, present, perform.

This state of focus-with-peripheral-awareness is what we call “The Presentation State”, it was name ‘Hakula’ by the ancient people of Hawaii.

Hakula is perfect for presentations because it shifts the mind into a state where it is ‘contextually all-aware’. In this state, negative emotions such as fear are reduced or eliminated, because whatever we focus on is perceived in a broader context.

Typically we find that if clients think about a problem, and grades it at, say 4/10 importance, then sifts into Hakula, the problem immediately seems trivial. Often the Fear of Presentations can be immediately reduced in this way, thus:

All yourself to go into Hakula by focusing on a spot on the wall, and allowing your awareness to spread to your peripheral vision. Feeling the intense calm of this state, squeeze your left fist for 10 seconds. (This is called an anchor.)

Now return to normal.

Squeeze your fist and think about singing in public, as you do so focus on a spot and go back into Hakula. You will find that now as you think about singing it feels a lot better. Stay in this state for 20 seconds or so.

Always go into Hakula before singing in front of others. When perfected it will allow you to maintain a calm state throughout your presentation, and meanwhile will provide relief from fear.

Exercise 1. Self-Talk

Develop a list of encouraging statements that you would find helpful if you could come to believe them. Some examples are:

“When I sing before an audience, I have more than enough air. It feels as though my air goes on and on and on.”

“My heart rate slows down when I sing in front of a group.”

“I easily can relax my abdominal muscles and breathe deeply and slowly.”

“When I am in front of a group, more and more I am learning to simply let go and relax”.

MUSCLE RELAXATION TO HELP MANAGE PERFORMANCE ANXIETY

Exercise 2. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Tense for about five seconds and then relax for about ten seconds each part of the body listed below. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation. Repeat the procedure a second time. You can vary the muscle groups you wish to work on to suit your needs.

1. **Hands** - Make a fist with your hands, feeling the tension growing in the hands and arms and then let go of the tension completely by letting the fingers spread out. Repeat.
2. **Arms** - make a fist with your hands and bring the hands towards your shoulders, creating tension in the arms. Relax and then repeat.
3. **Shoulders** – shrug the shoulders up towards your ears to create tension. Relax and repeat.
4. **Face** – wrinkle up the face muscles to create tension. Relax and repeat.
5. **Jaws** – tighten the jaws to create tension. Relax and repeat.
6. **Neck** – press the head back against the surface it is resting on to create tension. Relax and repeat.
7. **Back** – arch the back by pushing out the stomach to create tension. Relax and repeat.
8. **Chest** – take in a deep breath and hold it for about 10 seconds to create tension. Relax and repeat.
9. **Stomach** – tighten the muscles of the stomach to create tension. Relax and repeat.
10. **Legs** – stretch out the legs and lift them up a little to create tension. Relax and repeat.

Now give your attention to your **whole body**, allowing it to become absorbed in the overall feeling of relaxation.

When you are ready, allow your attention to slowly return to the room and open your eyes.

USING IMAGERY OR MENTAL REHEARSAL

Exercise 3. building Self-Confidence

1. Remember a time when you performed really well and recall the circumstances of the occasion. Particularly remember how you felt emotionally and physically. Use the memory of this occasion to relive those feelings and sensations you experienced then. Practice bringing this image to mind before your practice and rehearsal sessions, and then try before a real performance.
2. You can also experiment by recalling different images that are appropriate to specific performances. It could be a visual image that reflects the mood of your song, or an image that gives you the physical sensations that help you reproduce the desired qualities in your performances.
3. Bring to mind the image of a favorite artist or someone you admire who exhibits qualities that you would like to achieve in your performance. "Fake it 'til you make it".

Exercise 4. Reducing Anxiety

Mentally rehearse your next performance in a relaxed state. Remember make it go just the way you want it to. Mental rehearsal of your performance while in a relaxed state will go a long way to helping you achieve self-control.

Exercise 5. Increasing Skill

Mentally rehearse specific aspects of your performance you want to make more consistent, such as a difficult passage. You can also rehearse your whole performance in stages if necessary. Remember to rehearse in real time, while imagining, as realistically as possible, that you are in the performance. The best time to do mental rehearsal is when you have some quiet time to yourself. This can be time you set aside during the day or it can be a time when you are not mentally occupied, such as on public transport or walking.

Exercise 6. Imagery for Relaxation

Visualize something that represents loosening up or relaxing, for example, a balloon with a slow leak that gradually becomes softer...a stick of butter in a dish on a table next to a window where the warm sun is shining in and softening it...a bunched-up wad of kitchen plastic wrap placed on a counter and allowed to unfold. Let your body mirror the picture you hold in your mind.

Practice this strategy one or more times a day for at least 4 weeks. Regular practice will help develop a relaxation response with that you can access in those crucial moments when under pressure to perform well.