This exercise is adapted from “A Brief, Self-directed Written Cognitive Exercise to Reduce Public Speaking Anxiety in College Courses,” Patricia Marten DiBartolo and Kristine Molina (2010). Communication Teacher, 24:3, 160-164.

Often when people are feeling anxious, they are thinking about something negative happening. By examining your negative thinking, you may be able to feel calmer and more prepared to speak in class.

First, please rate how anxious you are about speaking in class using 0 to 100 scale, with 100 being “the most anxious.”

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Now write down the prediction that is causing you the most distress in thinking about your speaking in class (e.g., “I’ll make a mistake,” “They’ll know that I’m anxious,” etc.). That is, what are you most afraid might happen?

_________________________________________________________________

Try to estimate the likelihood of your expectation actually coming true on a 0 to 100 scale where 0 means it is not at all likely to come true and 100 means it is definitely likely to come true.

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Okay, now imagine that the expectation does come true. How horrible would that be on a 0 to 100 scale where 0 means not at all horrible and 100 means extremely horrible?

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So now let’s try to put the possibility of talking in class into perspective. Let’s compare how horrible it would be if your expectation came true in comparison to other unpleasant things that may have happened to you in your life.
A1. Has it ever happened that you failed a course?  Yes  No

A2. How horrible on that 0 to 100 scale was that or would it be if/when you failed a course?

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B1. Has it ever happened that you lost a loved one?  Yes  No

B2. How horrible on that 0 to 100 scale was that or would it be if/when you were to lose a loved one?

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Now thinking back to your expectation for talking in class, even if it is unpleasant, you do get anxious, or your most feared prediction did come true, how horrible is it really on a 0 to 100 scale when you put it in perspective in your life?

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How do you think you could actually cope on a 0 to 100 scale if your expectation happened? (0 is unable to cope, 100 is able to cope)

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Come up with a phrase or a coping thought that you can use *during class* that will help you to remember what you’ve worked on during this workshop and in this exercise. Even if your most feared prediction were to come true, what could you tell yourself to help cope?

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