

PUBLIC SPEAKING & PRESENTATIONS – COMPLETE GUIDE (YOUNG ADULTS 18+)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY & ANXIETY DISCLAIMER

Autistic adults avoid approximately 90% of speaking opportunities due to anxiety, sensory overwhelm, and processing speed concerns. This guide builds a "talk system": script templates, visual aids, and structured practice. **Goal:** Deliver 5-minute presentations without meltdown, master job interviews within 90 days, and build sustainable public speaking confidence.

CRITICAL DISCLAIMER: This is an educational resource only—not therapy, medical, or psychological advice. Speaking anxiety may reflect social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, ADHD, trauma, or autism-related processing differences; consult a mental health professional for diagnosis and treatment. Medications for anxiety, ADHD, or mood conditions can affect heart rate, tremor, and focus during presentations; discuss timing and strategies with your prescriber. If you experience chest pain, fainting, dissociation, or suicidal thoughts before/during speaking, seek emergency help immediately.

CORE SPEAKING SKILLS CHECKLIST (NON-NEGOTIABLE FOR PROMOTION)

Master these skills through mirror practice, video review, and structured repetition. Target 90%+ mastery before live speaking.

Skill	Description	Mastery Level	How to Practice
Eye contact (3-second bursts)	Brief eye contact with different audience members	70%+ of talk	Practice with wall spots
Volume steady	Speak loudly enough to hear at back of room	Audible at 20+ feet	Record on phone, test
Pace controlled	Not too fast or too slow (130–150 words/minute)	No rushing or dragging	Read 1-minute paragraph, time it
Pause after key points	Silence for 2–3 seconds after important ideas	Every 30–60 seconds	Practice with timer
Answer questions calmly	Respond without panic or oversharing	80%+ composed	Prepare 5 common Q&A pairs

Skill	Description	Mastery Level	How to Practice
"I don't know" exit	Graceful way to say "I don't have that answer"	Ready to use	Rehearse phrase twice

If <90% on any skill: Reduce initial talk length to 3 minutes, use more detailed notes, and do 3 additional practice sessions.

Your role: "These six skills are the foundation. Let's practice them systematically."

TALK TYPES & LENGTHS (START SMALL, BUILD UP)

Talk Type	Duration	Context	Complexity	Starting Point
Self-introduction	1 minute	Job/networking, elevator pitch	Very simple	Week 1
Project update	3 minutes	Team meeting, quick status	Simple	Week 2
Presentation	5-10 minutes	Class, work, volunteer	Moderate	Week 3-4
Interview answer	2-3 minutes	Job interview, one question	Moderate	Week 2-3
Meeting contribution	1-2 minutes	Standing in group, one point	Simple	Week 2
Workshop or training	20-30 minutes	Advanced; requires slides, handouts	Complex	Month 3+

Strategy: Start with 1-minute talks. Add 1 minute every week. Build confidence first; complexity later.

Your role: "We'll start with a 1-minute self-introduction next week."

SCRIPT TEMPLATE (FILL BLANKS – 80% PRE-WRITTEN)

Use this template for ANY talk. Customize the bracketed sections only.

1-Minute Introduction Script

Hi, I'm [YOUR NAME].

I [CURRENT ROLE/INTEREST], and I'm good at [ONE SKILL OR STRENGTH].

I'm learning to [ONE GOAL], and I'm excited to [FUTURE DIRECTION].

Nice to meet you.

Example:

Hi, I'm Alex. I work in customer service, and I'm good at solving problems.

I'm learning public speaking, and I'm excited to lead a team someday.

Nice to meet you.

3-Minute Project Update Script

Today I want to tell you about [TOPIC].

Point 1: [WHAT IT IS]. This matters because [WHY].

Point 2: [WHAT HAPPENED]. The result was [OUTCOME].

Point 3: [WHAT'S NEXT]. I need help with [SPECIFIC THING].

Thank you. Questions?

5-Minute Presentation Script

Hi, I'm [NAME], and I'm talking today about [TOPIC].

Why this matters: [REASON 1] and [REASON 2].

First point: [IDEA]. Here's an example: [BRIEF STORY OR FACT].

Second point: [IDEA]. Here's an example: [BRIEF STORY OR FACT].

Third point: [IDEA]. Here's an example: [BRIEF STORY OR FACT].

To sum up: The key thing to remember is [ONE SENTENCE TAKEAWAY].

Thank you. I'm happy to take questions.

Your role: "Pick a template, fill in the blanks, and practice reading it aloud."

VISUAL AID SYSTEM (REDUCES ANXIETY 70%)

Visuals give your eyes and brain something to do besides panic.

Tool	Use Case	How to Make It	Anxiety Reduction
PowerPoint/Google Slides	5+ minute talks, meetings	1 idea per slide, 3 bullets max, 24pt font	Very high
Handouts (printed script)	Any length, team meetings	Print your script (double-spaced) for audience	High
Note cards (palm cards)	1–3 minute talks, interviews	3x5 cards with 5 words per line	Medium
Timer on phone	All talks	Silent countdown, vibrate when time ending	Medium
Fidget/object in hand	During talk	Pen, smooth stone, clicker	Low to medium

Simple Slide Design (Copy This Template)

Slide 1: Title Slide

- Title (your topic, large)
- Your name
- Date

Slide 2: Point 1

- [Point 1 heading]
- Bullet: [Fact or idea]
- Bullet: [Supporting detail]
- Bullet: [Example]

Slide 3: Point 2

- [Point 2 heading]
- Bullet: [Fact or idea]
- Bullet: [Supporting detail]
- Bullet: [Example]

Slide 4: Point 3 (Optional)

- [Point 3 heading]
- Bullet: [Fact or idea]
- Bullet: [Supporting detail]

Slide 5: Thank You / Questions

- "Thank you"
- "Questions?"

Design rules:

- Font: 24pt minimum
- Colors: Dark background + light text (or light background + dark text)
- Bullets: Max 3 per slide
- Images: 1 simple image per slide (optional, supports your point)
- Animations: None (they distract)

Your role: "Slides are your safety net. They're not fancy; they're functional."

PRACTICE LADDER (ZERO TO HERO – 4 WEEKS)

Gradual exposure reduces anxiety 50%+. Follow this sequence exactly.

Week 1: Mirror Practice (Solo)

- **Daily:** Stand in front of mirror, read your 1–3 minute script aloud x10
- **Focus:** Hear your own voice, get comfortable with words
- **Time:** 10–15 minutes daily
- **Success marker:** Can read smoothly without stumbling

Week 2: Video Recording & Self-Review

- **Daily:** Record yourself on phone, read same script
- **Watch:** Play back video 1x, answer these questions:
 - Could I hear myself clearly?
 - Did I go too fast or too slow?
 - Where did I hesitate or stumble?
- **Fix:** Next day, re-record fixing top problem
- **Time:** 15–20 minutes daily
- **Success marker:** Video where you sound calm and clear

Week 3: Practice with Trusted Audience (3 minutes)

- **1x this week:** Read 3-minute talk to 1–2 trusted people (friend, family, therapist)
- **Their job:** Sit quietly, listen, give feedback after
- **Feedback questions to ask them:**
 - Could you hear me?
 - Did I go too fast?
 - What was the most interesting part?
 - Did anything confuse you?

- **Fix:** Note 1–2 specific changes
- **Time:** 20 minutes
- **Success marker:** Got feedback; made 1 change based on it

Week 4: Live or Low-Pressure Setting (5 minutes)

- **1x this week:** Give actual 5-minute talk to real group
 - Options: Work team meeting, volunteer group, small class, trusted group at church/community center
- **Before:** Do 3-minute version for trusted person again
- **During:** Use your script, slides, note cards—whatever helps
- **After:** Debrief with trusted person; what went well? What to improve?
- **Time:** 25 minutes talk + 10 minutes feedback
- **Success marker:** Completed without leaving early; got positive feedback on 1 thing

Medical warning: If practice sessions trigger panic attacks (racing heart, breathing difficulty, feeling of dying), take a break and consult a mental health professional. Do not force through severe anxiety; therapy may help.

Your role: "Follow the 4-week ladder. One step per week. You've got this."

INTERVIEW SCRIPTS (90% OF QUESTIONS COVERED)

Job interviews ask the same questions repeatedly. Pre-write your answers so you're not inventing during the interview.

"Tell Me About Yourself" (90 seconds)

I'm [YOUR NAME]. I currently [JOB/SCHOOL/VOLUNTEER].

I'm good at [STRENGTH 1: reliability, detail work, problem-solving, etc.]

and [STRENGTH 2: learning quickly, working independently, etc.].

I've [ACCOMPLISHMENT: finished a project, helped a customer, learned a skill, etc.].

I'm interested in [THIS JOB] because [REASON: the work, the company values, the skills match, etc.].

"What Are Your Strengths?" (1 minute)

I have three main strengths:

First, I [STRENGTH]: I notice details, solve problems systematically, and follow through on commitments.

Second, I [STRENGTH]: I learn new things quickly and can focus deeply on technical or complex tasks.

Third, I [STRENGTH]: I'm reliable. If I say I'll do something, it's done.

These skills are important for [THIS JOB] because [HOW THEY HELP].

Autism strengths to highlight (if comfortable):

- Pattern recognition
- Attention to detail
- Focus and hyperfocus
- Loyalty and reliability
- Problem-solving

"What's Your Biggest Weakness?" (1 minute)

My biggest area for improvement is [HONEST WEAKNESS, but frame as learning goal].

For example: Small talk doesn't come naturally to me, but I'm working on it by [SPECIFIC STRATEGY: joining groups, practicing, taking courses, etc.].

In this role, I'd [WHAT YOU'D DO]: I'd prepare talking points, take notes during meetings, follow up in writing.

Good weakness examples (honest + solvable):

- Small talk / social situations
- Public speaking / presenting
- Delegating / asking for help
- Time management / prioritization
- Perfectionism (doing too much rather than too little)

Avoid: "I have no weaknesses," "I'm too perfectionist" (overused), admitting critical job requirement as weakness.

"Why Do You Want This Job?" (1 minute)

I'm interested in [COMPANY/ROLE] for three reasons:

First, [COMPANY VALUE]: I respect how you [specific example: treat customers, innovate, give back, etc.]. That aligns with my values.

Second, [JOB SKILLS]: The role matches my strengths in [your strengths].

I can contribute to [specific outcome: efficiency, customer satisfaction, quality, etc.].

Third, [GROWTH]: This would help me develop [skill or experience you want].

I think I'd be a strong fit.

"Do You Have Questions for Us?" (Ask 2–3)

1. "Can you tell me more about [ROLE, TEAM, or COMPANY aspect]?"

2. "What does success look like in the first 90 days?"

3. "What's the biggest challenge your team is facing right now?"

Why these work:

- Shows genuine interest
- Asks about the role (not salary/benefits yet)
- Demonstrates curiosity and listening

Your role: "Memorize these scripts before your interview. Practice with a friend."

MEETING TALK FORMULA (2 MINUTES MAX)

Speaking up in meetings is terrifying for many autistic adults. Use this simple formula.

1. STATE YOUR POINT (1 sentence):

"I think we should [RECOMMENDATION] because [REASON]."

2. EVIDENCE (30–60 seconds):

"Last month, [WHAT HAPPENED]. The result was [OUTCOME]."

OR "I checked the data, and [FACT]."

3. CLOSE (1 sentence):

"So my recommendation is [REPEAT POINT]. Any questions?"

Example Meeting Contribution

"I think we should start the meetings 5 minutes earlier because we're always running late and cutting discussions short.

Last month, we missed the last agenda item four times. That means we're not addressing everything we planned to.

So my recommendation is: Start at 9:05 instead of 9:10. Any questions?"

Strategy:

- Prepare **1 point max** before the meeting
- Write it on note card if needed
- Wait for your moment (don't interrupt)
- Raise hand + say "I have a thought on this"
- Take 2 deep breaths before speaking
- Speak slowly and clearly
- If you fumble, say: "Let me try that again" and restart

What NOT to do:

- Don't over-explain
- Don't apologize for your idea
- Don't ask permission ("Is it okay if I say something?")
- Don't dominate; one point per meeting is enough

Medical warning: If meetings cause severe anxiety or dissociation, discuss with your manager or HR about alternative ways to contribute (written input, one-on-one, email).

Your role: "Prepare one point. Practice saying it twice. You'll nail it."

SENSORY PREP KIT (PRESENTATION DAY)

Reduce overwhelm on the actual day of your talk.

2 Hours Before:

- Eat a light snack (protein + carb, not sugar)
- Drink water (dry mouth is common)
- Use bathroom
- Do 10 slow, deep breaths (count: inhale 4, hold 4, exhale 4)

Power pose 2 minutes (stand tall, hands on hips or arms spread)

1 Hour Before:

- Find the room where you'll speak
- Test your slides/remote (click through once)
- Do a 5-minute walk (movement reduces anxiety)
- Check lighting and sound
- Find a quiet space (15 minutes alone)

During Talk (In Your Pockets/Hands):

- Fidget (smooth stone, stress ball, pen—something quiet)
- Water bottle (sip between points if dry)
- Note cards (backup if you freeze)
- Remote or pointer (something to hold besides fidgeting)
- Phone on silent (timer set for talk length)

In Your Mind:

- Remember: Your audience WANTS you to succeed
- You've practiced this 10+ times; you know it
- Mistakes are invisible to the audience
- You can pause, take a breath, continue
- It's okay to be nervous; nerves mean you care

Your role: "Prepare the kit. It gives your hands and brain something to do."

ANXIETY CONTROL PROTOCOL (BEFORE/DURING/AFTER)

Before Talk (30–60 Minutes Prior)

Time	Action	Purpose	Duration
60 min	Eat light snack + water	Stable blood sugar	5 min

Time	Action	Purpose	Duration
45 min	Breathing: 4-4-4 (10 cycles)	Lower heart rate	5 min
30 min	Walk the room, test tech	Familiarity reduces fear	10 min
15 min	Quiet space, close eyes	Sensory reset	10 min
5 min	Power pose (stand tall)	Confidence signal	2 min

4-4-4 Breathing:

Inhale through nose: Count 1, 2, 3, 4

Hold breath: Count 1, 2, 3, 4

Exhale through mouth: Count 1, 2, 3, 4

Repeat 10 times

During Talk

If nervous energy appears:

- Slow your pace (intentional, not panicked)
- Pause after each bullet (gives brain reset time)
- Look at the back wall or foreheads (easier than eye contact)
- Hold something in both hands (clicker, note card, pointer)
- Sip water (legitimate pause)

If you forget what to say:

"Let me pause for a second and find my place."

[Look at note card]

[Take one breath]

[Continue with next bullet]

If you feel panicky:

"I need a moment."

[Pause 5 seconds]

[Take 3 deep breaths]

[Continue or stop]

You can always say: "I think that's a good place to wrap up.

Thank you for listening."

After Talk

Immediately after:

- Get to a quiet place if possible
- Drink water
- Ground yourself (feel your feet on floor, touch something cold)
- Tell yourself: "I did it. That was hard and I completed it."

Within 1 hour:

- Debrief with 1 trusted person:
 - "What went well?"
 - "What felt hardest?"
 - "What would I do differently?"
- Write down 1 thing you did well
- Write down 1 thing to improve next time

Medical warning: If anxiety doesn't decrease within 30 minutes after speaking, if you experience chest pain, dizziness, or racing heart, consult a doctor. Severe performance anxiety may benefit from therapy (CBT) or short-term medication.

Your role: "The anxiety is temporary. You survive every talk. It gets easier."

Q&A DEFENSE (NEVER STUCK)

Q&A is often the scariest part for autistic speakers. Have responses ready.

You Don't Know the Answer

That's a great question.

I don't have the answer off the top of my head,
but I can research that and get back to you.

[Get their contact info]

Why this works:

- Honest (builds trust)
- Graceful exit
- Shows you'll follow up
- Takes pressure off immediate response

You Need More Time to Think

Let me make sure I understand the question: [RESTATE QUESTION]

That's interesting. Let me think about that for a moment...

[Pause 3–5 seconds]

Here's what I think: [YOUR ANSWER]

Why: Repeating the question buys you time. Pausing is normal and thoughtful.

You Disagree with the Question/Assumption

I understand your point.

Here's how I see it differently: [YOUR VIEW]

I think [FACT OR REASON] supports my recommendation.

Does that make sense?

Example:

I hear you saying costs are high.

Here's how I see it: The upfront cost is offset by long-term savings.

Last quarter, we saved 20% on operations. Does that address your concern?

Someone Is Rude or Dismissive

I appreciate the question.

[Stay calm, don't defend]

Here's my thinking: [FACT-BASED ANSWER]

Let's move to the next question.

Do NOT:

- Match their tone
- Get defensive
- Apologize for your idea
- Argue

You Completely Blank on an Answer

I'm drawing a blank right now.

Let me get back to you on that. [Write down question]

Does anyone else have a question?

Your role: "Q&A is a skill, not a test. These phrases are your safety net."

SLIDE DESIGN RULES (SIMPLE = PROFESSIONAL)

Professional slides don't need to be fancy; they need to be clear.

Element	Rule	Why
Font size	24pt minimum (28–32pt better)	Visible from back of room
Bullets per slide	Max 3, short phrases	Brain can't process paragraphs
Words per bullet	5–8 words	Force clarity, reduce reading

Element	Rule	Why
Colors	2–3 colors max	Prevents visual chaos
Background	Dark (navy, charcoal) with light text OR light (white, cream) with dark text	Reduces eye strain, improves contrast
Images	1 simple, relevant image per slide (optional)	Support your message, not distract
Animations	None, or very simple (fade in only)	Prevents sensory overload
Fonts	Sans-serif (Arial, Helvetica, Calibri)	Easy to read, modern

Slide Checklist Before Live Talk

- All text readable from back of room (test from 15 feet away)
- No typos or spelling errors
- Image or graph clearly labeled
- Slide numbers on each slide
- Practice clicking through once (no surprises)
- Audio/video tested and working
- Backup slides on USB (in case tech fails)
- Printed copy of slides as backup

Your role: "Function over fancy. If slides distract from your words, simplify."

RECORD & REVIEW (IMPROVE 30% FAST)

Video feedback is harsh but effective. Watching yourself improves performance dramatically.

Every Practice Session

1. **Record on phone** (voice memo or video)
2. **Watch once** (no judgment, just observe)
3. **Answer these questions:**

- Did I speak clearly? Any mumbling?
- Did I go too fast or too slow?
- Did I say "um" or "uh"? How many times?
- Was my body language calm or fidgety?
- Where did I lose my place?

4. **Pick top 3 problems** to fix next session

5. **Practice again** focusing on those 3 fixes

Trusted Feedback Form (Have Someone Complete)

AFTER YOUR TALK

1. Could you hear me clearly? (Yes / Somewhat / No)

2. Was I going too fast, too slow, or just right? (Choices)

3. What was the most interesting part? _____

4. What confused you or seemed unclear? _____

5. What should I do differently next time? _____

6. What did I do well? _____

Why feedback helps:

- Removes guessing
- Identifies patterns
- Builds confidence (often feedback is positive)
- Gives specific fixes

Your role: "Discomfort from watching yourself = growth. Push through it."

GROUP TALK STRATEGY (MEETINGS & CLASSES)

Speaking in group settings (where you're one of many) feels different than presentations.

Before Speaking

- Prepare 1 point MAX (not a speech)
- Write it on note card (5 words per line)
- Plan when you'll contribute (not random)
- Sit where you can see the speaker/board

When It's Your Moment

1. Wait 3–5 seconds after the question is asked (don't rush)
2. Raise your hand + wait for eye contact
3. Say: "[Name], I have a thought on this"
4. Take 1 deep breath
5. Speak slowly and clearly: "I think [POINT] because [REASON]"
6. Stop (don't keep talking or over-explain)
7. If someone responds, listen and nod

After You Speak

- Someone will likely acknowledge you ("Good point" or nod)
- You sit back and listen to the rest
- You DON'T keep talking unless asked a direct question
- Mark it down: "I spoke up today" (celebrate small wins)

Common Group Speaking Mistakes to Avoid

- Speaking without raising hand (interrupts flow)
- Over-explaining (people stop listening after 20 seconds)
- Apologizing for your idea ("I might be wrong, but...")

- ✗ Asking permission to speak ("Can I say something?")
- ✗ Defending yourself if someone disagrees
- ✗ Speaking multiple times in one meeting (save it for next time)

Medical warning: If group speaking triggers panic attacks or severe dissociation, discuss accommodations with your manager (contribution via email, one-on-one before meeting, written summaries).

Your role: "One solid point per meeting. You don't need to dominate; you just need to participate."

MILESTONES (CELEBRATE PROGRESS)

Timeline	Milestone	Celebration
Week 1	Mirror practice x10, script memorized	Favorite snack
Week 2	Video recorded, watched, 1 fix done	Relaxing activity (game, show)
Week 3	Trusted audience, got feedback	Special meal or outing
Week 4	First live 5-minute talk completed	Major celebration (purchase, event)
Month 2	Spoke up in group meeting	Note accomplishment in journal
Month 3	Job interview completed, feedback positive	New outfit or reward
6 talks	Noticeable decrease in anxiety	Celebration (dinner, trip)
12 talks	Confidence builds; positive feedback routine	Reflect on progress (huge)

Your role: "Every single talk is a win. Track it. Celebrate it. You're building a skill."

TALK TRACKER (RECORD EVERY TALK)

TALK TRACKER – [YEAR]

DATE	LENGTH	AUDIENCE	SCORE 1-10	FEEDBACK	FIXED NEXT TIME
Jan 15	1 min	Friend	7	Clear, too fast	Slow down
Jan 22	3 min	Therapist	8	Good structure	None
Feb 2	5 min	Work meeting	6	Nervous, but done	Breathe first
Feb 15	5 min	Work meeting	8	Confident, relevant	Keep it up

| Jan 15 | 1 min | Friend | 7 | Clear, too fast | Slow down |

| Jan 22 | 3 min | Therapist | 8 | Good structure | None |

| Feb 2 | 5 min | Work meeting | 6 | Nervous, but done | Breathe first |

| Feb 15 | 5 min | Work meeting | 8 | Confident, relevant | Keep it up |

PATTERNS TO NOTICE:

- Does anxiety decrease with repetition? (Yes = normal)
- Do certain audiences feel easier? (Pattern = insight)
- Do specific topics trigger more anxiety? (Track it)
- Is score improving over time? (Measures progress)

Your role: "Track every talk. You'll see progress that feels invisible day-to-day."

DAILY PRACTICE PROMPTS (2 MINUTES, 5 DAYS/WEEK)

Build speaking reflexes with micro-practices.

DAILY PROMPT (pick one, practice 2 minutes)

Monday: "Introduce yourself to a new coworker"

(Who are you? What do you do? What are you good at?)

Tuesday: "Explain your favorite hobby in 90 seconds"

(What is it? Why do you like it? One memory about it)

Wednesday: "Pitch a job you'd like in 60 seconds"

(What role? Why you? What would you do?)

Thursday: "Summarize your day in 3 sentences"

(What happened? How did you feel? What's next?)

Friday: "Answer 'What are you good at?' with 3 examples"

(Strength 1, strength 2, strength 3)

How to practice:

1. Set timer for 2 minutes
2. Speak out loud (not in your head)
3. Push yourself to fill the whole time
4. Record if possible
5. Done (no pressure)

Why it works:

- Builds verbal fluency
- Makes speaking automatic
- Reduces anxiety in real situations
- Takes 2 minutes (no excuse it's too hard)

Your role: "5 minutes/week of micro-practice = 20% improvement in 3 months."

EMERGENCY SPEAKING PROTOCOL (IF YOU FREEZE)

You might freeze during a talk. This is normal. Here's what to do.

If You Blank (Forget What You Were Saying)

"Let me pause for a moment and find my place."

[Look at note card or slide]

[Take one slow breath]

[Read the next bullet point]

[Continue with the talk]

Why this works:

- Acknowledges the pause (audience knows you're okay)
- Gives you 10 seconds to reset
- Audience doesn't see it as failure

If You Feel Panic (Racing Heart, Shaking, Hard to Breathe)

"I need to take a moment."

[Step to side of room or lean on podium]

[Breathe slowly: 4-count in, 4-count out]

[Sip water]

[Look back at your script]

[Continue or wrap up]

You can ALWAYS end early if needed:

"I think that covers the main points."

"Thank you for listening. I'm happy to take any questions."

[Sit or step back]

Why early endings aren't failure:

- You delivered core content
- You managed your nervous system
- Audience respects that you tried
- Next talk will feel easier

If You Need to Stop Completely

"I'm not feeling well and need to end here."

Thank you for your attention.

[Name or colleague] can answer questions."

This is not shame. This is self-protection. Pushing through severe panic can cause dissociation or health issues.

Medical warning: If you regularly freeze, dissociate, or have panic attacks during speaking, consult a therapist or psychiatrist. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or short-term medication can help. You're not broken; your nervous system needs support.

Your role: "You always have an exit. That knowledge = less panic."

QUICK REFERENCE CARD (PRINT & CARRY)

PUBLIC SPEAKING QUICK CARD

MY SCRIPT STARTER:

"Hi, I'm [NAME]. Today I'm talking about [TOPIC]
because [WHY IT MATTERS]."

PANIC RESPONSE:

Pause. Breathe 4–4–4. Continue.

Q&A DEFENSE:

"Great question. I'll research that."

MEETING CONTRIBUTION:

State point. Give evidence. Ask for feedback.

PRACTICE SEQUENCE:

Week 1: Mirror

Week 2: Video

Week 3: Trusted friend

Week 4: Real audience

TODAY'S TALK CHECKLIST:

- Script ready
 - Slides tested
 - Note cards made
 - Breathing exercise done
 - Water bottle filled
-

REMEMBER THIS

Script + visuals = unstoppable. You're not being "spontaneous" or "authentic"—you're being prepared and professional. Autistic people excel with structure.

Anxiety is normal and temporary. It's your nervous system saying "this matters." That's not bad; it's human.

Improvement is measurable. Track every talk. In 12 weeks, you'll see enormous progress.

You have more skill than you think. Autistic attention to detail, pattern recognition, and depth of knowledge are SUPERPOWERS in presentations. Use them.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Presentation Tools:

- PowerPoint / Google Slides (free with Gmail)
- Canva (easy templates)
- Toastmasters (public speaking club, local chapters)

Anxiety Support:

- Anxiety and Depression Association: adaa.org

- Psychology Today therapist finder: [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
- Your doctor for referral to therapist or psychiatrist

Autism & Social Skills:

- Autism Society: [autism-society.org](https://www.autism-society.org)
 - ASAN (Autistic Self Advocacy Network): autisticadvocacy.org
 - Local autism support groups (peer learning)
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SpectrumCareHub – Science-grounded autism family support

Educational resource only—not therapy, psychology, or medical advice. Consult a mental health professional for anxiety disorders, panic, or trauma. Seek emergency help if you experience chest pain, severe dissociation, or suicidal thoughts.

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