

Reduction of fear arousal in young adults with speech anxiety  
through elicitation of positive emotions

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**Abstract**

A research study was conducted to examine Fredrickson's Broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions in a speech anxious sample of undergraduate students. Experimental elicitation of positive emotions has previously been shown to speed cardiovascular recovery, increase attention, and broaden thought-action repertoires compared to elicitation of negative or neutral emotions (Fredrickson et al., 2000). 88 undergraduate students were selected from a screening process based on their reported speech anxiety on the Personal Report of Confidence as a Speaker (PRCS). Students who reported low or high speech anxiety completed an anxiety provoking task and were subsequently exposed to either a neutral emotion condition ("Pipes" film) or one of two positive emotion conditions ("Puppy" film or thinking of a happy memory task). Fredrickson's theory was not supported since results showed no differences in cardiovascular recovery, thought-action repertoires, or global thinking for either groups or conditions. However, differences were found for broadened scope of attention on a modified Stroop task where the low anxiety group responded faster to threat words in the neutral and happy memory conditions than after viewing a positive film. Results of the study are discussed in light of attribution theory of emotion and previous studies on the effects of positive emotions.