



*...putting creativity to work*

### Feel the Fear and Draw it Anyway

It's well known that public speaking is top of the 'greatest fears' pops. Incredibly, most people would literally rather die than stand up and talk to an audience.

My experience of teaching drawing has revealed another little-recognised but widespread terror capable of reducing its victims to a blubbering jelly within seconds – the fear of drawing, especially in public.

But trainers speak in public for a living – surely, pens and flipcharts don't faze them? Wrong! Even the most confident trainers blanch and gulp loudly when invited to perform with a pen.

They'll do anything to avoid it. Hiding behind clip art and diagrams rather than standing naked – metaphorically, of course – before their clients with only a pen to shield their modesty. Yet they know drawing could take their training onto another level – enabling them to express ideas simply and memorably, using humour and wit to really grab their audience.

Drawings 'speak' across linguistic and cultural barriers. They bring ideas to life. Drawing is wonderfully low-tech – all you need is something that makes marks and something to make marks on.

Many trainers do prepare visuals in advance but most would love to be able to respond in the moment, producing drawings 'off the cuff'. Ironically, the greatest benefit of all is the one that terrifies most: drawing spontaneously makes us vulnerable, we risk letting our professional masks slip.

But drawing 'live' is an act of sharing, one of great intimacy. It's a gift to your audience. In doing it, you're sending a powerful message that it's ok to take risks and make mistakes. What a great way of preparing an audience for learning, not just by saying but by doing?

So why do so many people believe that they can't draw? Ask a child under the age of seven if they can draw and they'll give you a blank look. The idea of not being able to draw has quite simply never occurred to them. So what goes wrong?

A child's innate drawing ability blossoms if given support and encouragement. Sadly, many adults remember being told as children that their drawings were no good. This overwhelms their potential and replaces it with a critical inner voice.

If you think you can't draw you are labouring under a misapprehension of what drawing is. Could you write a great novel like Charles Dickens or Margaret Atwood? Probably not, but that doesn't stop you using writing as a tool for thinking and communication – one that's just as useful for making shopping lists as it is for writing novels.

But for some unfathomable reason people judge themselves by an entirely different standard when it comes to drawing, comparing themselves to Picasso and Da Vinci and finding themselves wanting.

Writing and drawing should be viewed in the same light. When freed of its 'artistic chains', drawing, like writing, is just an everyday tool for thinking and communication. It requires practice like any other skill but everyone can do it if they have the right outlook.

So take a deep breath, ignore the carping of your inner voice, pick up a pencil and get started!

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