

FAST Pathways® Skills for Mental Wellbeing – ‘Affirmation Havening’ in Action

Every now and again, I encounter a situation which has me on the back foot, and it often takes me a while to realise that my auto-pilot’s not kicking in to deal with it as smoothly as I’d like. When I finally realise, I think ‘If I was someone who’s come to me for support, what would I do with them?’ That’s how I came to have my big Affirmation Havening breakthrough.

It was about a year into my transition into professional speaking, and I was getting ready for the Professional Speaking Association’s annual competition for new members, known as Speaker Factor.

With no use of slides, an extremely strict 5 minute time allowance, and stringent assessment guidelines, the pressure was on. It was the very first time I’d spoken at the PSA.



As an experienced trainer I was well used to being on my feet in front of an audience, but somehow I seemed to be making the transition to speaking really hard for myself. And this was going to be the first time doing it in front of an audience of professionals.

I’d practiced the heck out of my talk, and knew that I’d soon settle into my stride once I was up there. But every time I thought about getting started, my heart absolutely raced and my mind started to skip all over the place. Reactions which don’t generally support engaging delivery – and bearing in mind that I earn my living by helping people to conquer their fears, I could hardly get up sounding nervous, even just briefly!

So, just as I’d advise someone else in that situation, I thought of 3 or 4 words to describe how I’d like to feel as I was giving my talk. Calm, Purposeful, Engaging.... And I spent a little while Affirmation Havening. Firstly just saying the words, then imagining delivering my talk while I continued Havening them.

The day arrived, and I got to the venue feeling fine. People started to arrive – still no nerves. I can’t say I was flat calm, but that slightly heightened state (I’m not sure I’d go as far as calling it excited!) was easily manageable. Even when it came to my turn and the MC was announcing me, still no nerves. I know I shouldn’t have been surprised, having supported those kind of outcomes for so many others, but it can still be pleasantly surprising when it’s you.

And the talk went fine. I didn’t win the competition, but I was happy with what I’d delivered, and it helped me start to build my Speaking reputation within my professional network.