**How to be Socially Bulletproof**

A *lot* of success in life will come down to your ability to interact with others and to network. While many of us might like to think that we are islands and that we can go it alone, ultimately life is much more fulfilling and much more augmented with the help of others.

If you want to succeed in business, then having the right partners can create incredibly opportunities. If you want to have great experiences then you need a range of different friends. And if you want to develop your career, then you need to be able to speak with business partners, employers and clients in a way that helps you to come across as impressive and desirable to work with.

The only problem is that not all of us are naturally so inclined. Many of us are introverts and this makes it hard for us to speak in a large group without feeling self conscious or to otherwise be engaging and dynamic.

So, what’s the answer?

**CBT**

The aim is for us to silence the inner critic. And one tool you can use to accomplish this is something called CBT. CBT stands for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and this is a form of psychotherapeutic intervention that will enable you to change the way your mind works in particular situations.

This begins with a certain amount of self-awareness, called mindfulness. Here, your objective is to learn what kinds of thoughts you have that make it more frightening to speak in public or in groups.

For instance, you might find yourself thinking things like ‘everyone will laugh at me if I say something stupid’ or ‘what if I stutter and can’t get my words out’? As you might imagine, these thoughts don’t exactly inspire confidence and aren’t encouraging. Your job then is to try and remove them from your mind entirely which you can do by using cognitive restructuring.

One part of this process is something called ‘thought challenging which involves looking at these thoughts and then challenging them on grounds of accuracy and relevance. Will people really laugh at you? Chances are not – most people are more polite than that.

And if people do laugh at you? Well then who cares anyway!

**Hypothesis Testing**

The even more powerful tool within cognitive restructuring though is hypothesis testing. Here you look at the thought and you literally test to see if it’s true. People will laugh if you say something stupid? Well then try it and see for yourself. What you’ll likely find is that it is a little awkward but nothing bad happens. Likewise, try stuttering on purpose or generally being strange.

Not only does this help to disprove the things you were afraid of, but it can also help you to gradually become desensitized to the things you were afraid of. The very best way to do this? Take up stand up comedy classes. You’ll be required to go out on stage and make a fool of yourself regularly and soon you’ll realize that it really doesn’t matter what other people think.