

# Kahit Kabado

A CONFIDENCE GUIDE FOR  
EVERY FILIPINO WHO'S EVER  
FELT AFRAID TO SPEAK

written by  
Gia Abao



# ***Kahit Kabado:***

A Confidence Guide for Every Filipino  
Who's Ever Felt Afraid to Speak

by **Gia Abao**

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## ***Disclaimer***

This ebook is intended for informational and educational purposes only. It is based on the personal experiences, insights, and research of the author, and does not constitute medical, psychological, legal, or professional advice.

*Kahit Kabado* is a self-led, self-produced passion project created without external funding, a publishing team, or third-party support. All visuals in this ebook were generated using AI-assisted tools to support accessibility, creativity, and cost-conscious self-publishing. No known artist styles, copyrighted characters, or brand assets were used or referenced. All outputs were carefully reviewed to ensure originality, respect, and compliance with fair creative use.

The current edition is part of a testing phase. The decision to use AI visuals was made after thoughtful consideration of both the topic's sensitivity and the realities of independent production. Given the limited project timeline and the fact that everything, from writing to layout to visuals, was completed by a one-person team, the author chose to prioritize completion and accessibility. A clear long-term goal remains: to hire and collaborate with local artists in future editions to elevate the visual and educational experience.

Every word and resource was created independently by the author with care, reflection, and personal commitment. While every effort was made to ensure factual accuracy and clarity, this book was created without a full editorial or academic review team, and may contain unintentional errors.

Readers are encouraged to take what resonates, reflect with discernment, and consult licensed professionals for personal guidance, especially in matters related to mental health, trauma, or clinical anxiety.

If you spot any factual inaccuracies or have suggestions for improvement, feel free to reach out to the author at [hello@kahitkabado.com](mailto:hello@kahitkabado.com).

## *Acknowledgments*

This book was written for my community.

To every person who watched my impromptu speech clips, sent a kind DM, or shared a post with a friend, thank you. You were part of this even before the first page was written.

I wrote *Kahit Kabado* for the quiet ones, the anxious ones, the ones who've stayed silent too long. But I also wrote it for all of you, who believed in me while I was still figuring things out, documenting every nervous step of the way.

Your messages reminded me that my voice mattered, even when it shook. I hope this book reminds you that yours does, too.

Special thanks to my family and friends who previewed early drafts and helped me double-check the research, especially ate Nadine Galimba, and to my friends Alexandria and Angelina for checking the content of this ebook and sharing their insights. Though this is a self-published work, it was shaped and strengthened by your care and attention to detail.

May this book be your quiet permission slip to begin: messy, brave, and still afraid.

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## *How to Use This Book*

This isn't a workbook you have to finish in one go. It's a companion, something you can return to when you need a reminder, a pep talk, or a plan. Whether you're a student, a freelancer, or an employee trying to find your voice in meetings, I hope this guide finds you where you are. Your fear doesn't make you unqualified. It makes you human.

Here's how you can make the most out of it:

- 1. Read at your own pace.**

You don't need to rush. Whether you read it all in one weekend or take it chapter by chapter over a month, what matters is that it resonates with you.

- 2. Pause and reflect.**

Each chapter ends with prompts and practical tools. These aren't just there for show. Use them to check in with yourself, to unpack your fears, or to brainstorm your next brave move.

- 3. Come back to it.**

Confidence isn't built overnight. When self-doubt creeps back in (and it will), flip to the part that reminds you who you are and what you're capable of.

- 4. Make it personal.**

Highlight what hits. Scribble on the sides. Take notes. Apply the frameworks to your school org, your work pitch, your next content post. This book becomes more powerful the more you use it.

- 5. Try the 30-Day #Kahitkabado Speaking Challenge.**

At the end of this book, you'll find a speaking challenge designed to help you build courage little by little. No pressure. Just progress.

- 6. Start where it feels right.**

If you're looking for tools, templates, and quick wins, feel free to jump ahead to Chapter 4 (Openings That Make People Listen) or Chapter 5 (How to Practice Even Without a Stage). This book is designed to meet you where you are, whether you need mindset shifts or just a presentation plan.

This is your space to grow. Messy, meaningful, and honest. Use it in the way that fits your story.

## ***Kahit Kabado, Tuloy Pa Rin***

I used to think I wasn't the kind of person who could speak up. I've always found comfort in writing. It was my quiet space, my way of making sense of the world. But when I joined a global competition back in college, everything changed.

In 2017, I applied for the National Model United Nations in New York, one of the most prestigious international simulations of the United Nations, attended by thousands of students from over 130 countries. It was intimidating, to say the least. We trained for seven months in writing, research, lobbying, and public speaking. While I felt confident on paper, the moment I had to speak out loud, I'd freeze. My hands would tremble, my breath would shorten, and my mind would go blank. I'd overthink every sentence before it left my mouth. I even asked to be paired with someone stronger in speaking, hoping I could hide behind her voice.

But life had other plans. During the conference, my partner lost her voice, and suddenly, I had no one else to rely on but myself.

That moment taught me something I'll never forget: you can't delegate your voice. You have to own it.

***This book is for every Filipino who's ever held back.***

For the student afraid of recitation.

For the jobseeker dreading interviews.

For the overlooked worker, the passionate dreamer who just wants to be heard.

This isn't about sounding flawless. It's about sounding real. It's a guide to help you speak with heart, even when you feel like you're not enough, especially when you feel like you're not enough.

Your voice matters. Your story deserves to be told.

You don't have to be fearless. You just have to begin.

Start here. *Kahit kabado.*

## ***Why This Book Is In Taglish***

You'll notice this book is written the way many of us speak: in Filipino-English. That choice was intentional.

Not because I can't write in full English, but because I believe confidence should sound like you. And for many Filipinos, that means a mix of languages, emotions, and lived realities.

As a content creator, I've learned that I connect most deeply with my audience when I speak the way we do in real life: unfiltered, heartfelt, and local. That's when people say, "Ate, *parang ako 'yan*." That's when they stay, listen, and start believing in their own voice.

This book was written for Filipinos, by a Filipino. And that's not just a tagline, it's the core of everything:

The *tone*.

The *stories*.

The *examples*.

Even the studies I cite reflect the unique challenges we face as Filipinos: how *hiya*, fear of judgment, and language bias can silence us before we even try.

Because public speaking shouldn't feel foreign. It should feel familiar. Safe. Ours.

So if you're used to more formal, polished books, thank you for staying.

I hope this reminds you that speaking well doesn't mean erasing your tone, your texture, or your story.

## ***Chapter 1: “I Go Blank When I Speak”: What To Do When Your Brain Betrays You***

### **Lahat ng magaling magsalita, dati ring natakot.**

I took up Consular and Diplomatic Affairs (CDA) at De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde, and public speaking was a huge part of our training. But I wasn’t one of those students who already knew how to command the room.

I didn’t join debate teams or pageants.

I didn’t grow up being told that my voice was powerful.

In fact, I was a late bloomer in almost everything.

I only started building confidence because I *had* to.

At that age, I was still trying to figure out who I was. I’ve always been the type who falls in love with too many things. I’d go through seasons of wanting to be a writer, then a diplomat, then a dancer, then an artist. I used to envy people who seemed to know exactly who they wanted to be. I, on the other hand, felt like I was always just starting over, always catching up.

That’s why when I saw the application for the National Model United Nations in New York in 2017, I told myself: “*Sige na, subukan mo na. Wala namang mawawala.*” It felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to finally sharpen the skills I always wished I had.

It wasn’t just about speaking on the international stage.

It was about me trying to become someone I could be proud of.

At that time, I didn’t fully understand what I was walking into. The NMUN-NY wasn’t just any conference. It was one of the most prestigious academic simulations of the United Nations in the world, with thousands of students from over a hundred countries. There was a training program provided by our college, which promised to strengthen our research, writing, negotiation, and, you guessed it, public speaking.

I was excited. But I was also quietly terrified.

Nothing prepared me for how much I’d have to face myself.

This wasn’t new.

I'd felt this before. In high school, I was so soft-spoken my classmates joked about turning off the aircon just to hear me. If you've ever been in organizations like JPIA, UP Debate Society, or PUP Speak, you've probably felt this too. One minute, you're just attending a meeting or helping out, and the next, someone says, "*Ikaw na mag-host.*" Or maybe, you were asked to present updates during a Zoom call without warning, "Can you walk us through this deck?"

Suddenly your mouth goes dry. No prep. No script. Just you and the mic, or the screen share. *Kahit gusto mo, parang ayaw ng katawan mo.* Your hands shake. Your heart races. You knew what to say. But the moment you speak, it all scatters. *Parang nawala lahat ng na-practice mo.*

As a content creator, I've heard this from so many Filipinos: the pressure to speak "proper English," the shame around our accents. Even SB19, one of the biggest Filipino pop acts today, once opened up about feeling insecure during global interviews because of how they spoke English. But what stood out wasn't their accent. It was their authenticity, effort, and heart. And that's what people remembered. This insecurity is not uncommon. A study by Hjalmar P. Hernandez, on Filipino graduate students, found that many still perceive American-accented English as the ideal, even when teaching in the Philippines, revealing how deep our colonial hang-ups about language still run.<sup>1</sup>

So there I was at 19, during NMUN training, outline in hand. All eyes on me.

Halfway through my speech, my thoughts slipped away. My voice trembled. I stared blankly at the wall behind the trainer, wishing the floor would swallow me whole.

That night, I was convinced I'd be cut from the team.

This was a global competition, and I couldn't even finish a one-minute speech.

I think a lot of us feel this, especially growing up in classrooms where one mistake can get you laughed at. *Minsan, mas pipiliin na lang natin tumahimik.*

It's not just fear. It's *hiya*. The kind that lingers long after the class ends.

For the longest time, I thought nervousness meant I was failing. But I've learned that feeling nervous doesn't mean you're unprepared. It means you care. Your body is reacting to how much the moment matters to you.

In many Filipino households, there's quiet pressure to speak English fluently and avoid mistakes, especially in public. That pressure can make speaking feel heavier than it should be. A study from UP Diliman found that the value of *hiya*, a concern about embarrassing oneself or

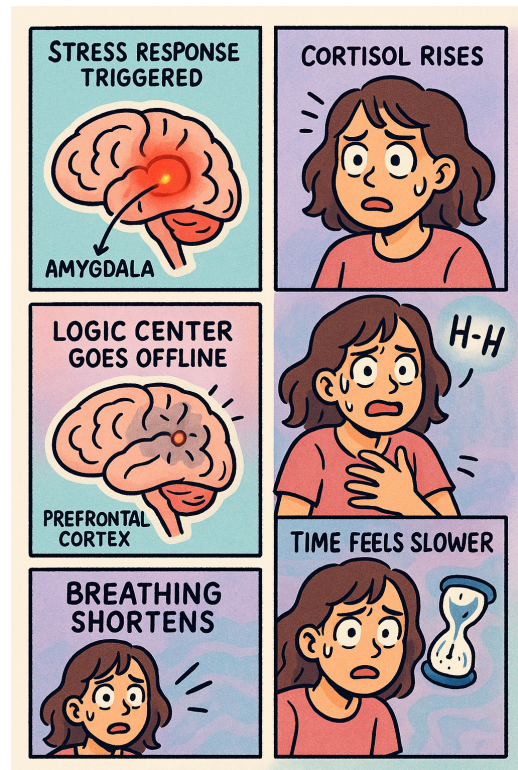
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<sup>1</sup> H. P. Hernandez, Filipino Graduate Students' Attitudes Toward Teaching Educated Philippine English, *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.59588/2350-8329.1280>

others, can prevent students from even asking basic questions in libraries or class, not due to lack of knowledge, but fear of being judged.<sup>2</sup>

But here's what I wish someone told me earlier: Nerves don't mean you're not ready. I froze because I cared. That's why it mattered so much. I wasn't weak. I was just overwhelmed by how much I wanted to get it right.

That moment became one of the biggest mindset shifts I've ever had.



### *How Your Body Reacts*

When you blank during a speech, your body's stress response is triggered. Research found that public speaking significantly raises levels of cortisol (a hormone released during stress). This further shows just how real and intense that biological reaction is

At the same time, your amygdala (the brain's alarm system) takes over. It signals your body to freeze, as if it's assessing whether to fight, run, or stay still (LeDoux, 2000)<sup>3</sup>. This temporarily shifts mental resources away from thinking and toward reacting, making it harder to access your words in the moment (Arnsten, 2009).<sup>4</sup>

### *Why Time Feels Slower*

That pause, that blank, no matter how brief, feels like an eternity. And there's science behind it: in these moments, your prefrontal cortex (responsible for reasoning and memory) goes offline, overwhelmed by

stress. Suddenly, seconds feel like minutes, and words vanish.

This phenomenon isn't a failure of will. It's a survival mechanism. Your brain is trying to protect you, not embarrass you.

<sup>2</sup> F. D. Alvarez, *Bipolar Filipino Value of Hiya: Impact on Freshmen Students' Use of the Main Library* (Undergraduate thesis, UP Diliman, 2014). Retrieved from <https://tuklas.up.edu.ph/Record/UP-99796217611273588>

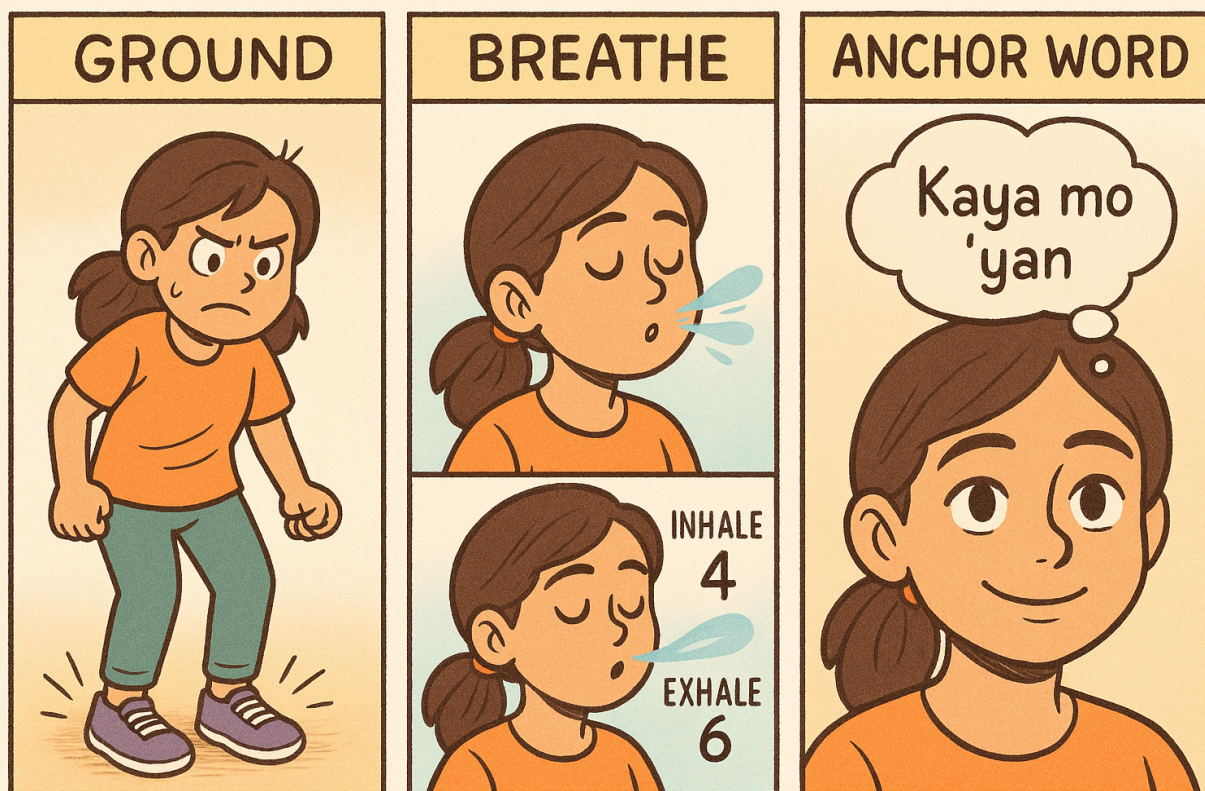
<sup>3</sup> J. E. LeDoux, *Emotion Circuits in the Brain*, *Annual Review of Neuroscience*, vol. 23, 2000, pp. 155–184. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/10845062/>

<sup>4</sup> A. F. T. Arnsten, *Stress Signalling Pathways That Impair Prefrontal Cortex Structure and Function*, *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, vol. 10, no. 6, 2009, pp. 410–422. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19455173/>

When we know that freezing is a normal, biological reaction, not a lack of ability, we take away its power.

It stops being something to dread. It becomes something to recognize, then pause through.

When nerves arise, know they're not sabotaging you. They are signaling that this matters. They are the body's way of encouraging you to slow down, take a breath, and reestablish your footing.



### ***My 3-Point Calm-Down Plan***

I use a simple reset whenever anxiety strikes:

- Ground: Feel your feet firmly on the floor.
- Breathe: Inhale deeply for 4, exhale slowly for 6.
- Anchor Words: Tell yourself something reassuring. “*Kaya mo ‘yan.*” Choose something that feels like a friend whispering to you, not judging you.

This anchors my mind to the present and slows the panic.

## ***Why Keywords & Outlines Truly Work***

I swapped full scripts for keyword outlines, and that changed everything. Research shows that using a delivery outline composed of keywords and cues, instead of full scripts, helps speakers stay present, maintain natural flow, and sound more authentic by enhancing eye contact, vocal variety, gestures, and audience engagement. When you speak from keywords, you trust your ideas more than your words and your audience feels that trust.

After returning home to the Philippines, I made a daily promise: if there's an opportunity to speak, I'll take it. Presentations, class discussions, even small group meetings. I started raising my hand more than ever. Confidence, it turns out, is built through consistent exposure. Repeated public speaking experiences have been shown to reduce anxiety and desensitize fear responses over time, a process aligned with exposure therapy techniques<sup>5</sup>.

That's exposure therapy in action, not just psychological jargon, but a retraining of both body and brain through imperfect, consistent practice. Each talk I gave, whether smooth or messy, helped me trust myself, my voice, and the process. And every time I stumbled but continued, I realized: I could handle it.

### **Here's your reminder kahit kabado:**

*"Hindi mo kailangang maging magaling agad, basta handang magsimula."*

### **Key takeaways:**

- Nervousness doesn't mean you're unprepared; it means you care.
- Freezing is a biological stress response, not a personal failure.
- Use the Ground–Breathe–Anchor reset to manage anxiety.
- Shift from full scripts to keyword outlines to speak naturally.
- Confidence grows through consistent exposure, not waiting to feel ready.

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<sup>5</sup> Speak Out, Call In: Organizing and Outlining – Chapter 6. University of Kansas Open Textbook. Retrieved July 12, 2025, from <https://opentext.ku.edu/speakupcallin/chapter/chapter-6-organizing-and-outlining/>

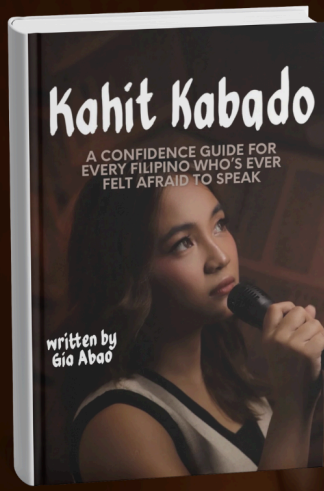
## ***Kailan Mo 'To Susubukan?***

List experiences in the past where you started blanking out. Moving forward, how do you plan to address it:

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## ***Kahit Kabado, Gawin Mo 'To:***

Craft a 1-minute speech. In this short talk, reflect on a moment when you froze, why that moment mattered to you, and what you would tell your younger self now that you've grown. Use the "Ground-Breathe-Anchor" reset before you begin: feel your feet on the floor, take two deep breaths, and repeat a calming phrase like "*Kaya mo 'yan.*" If you can, deliver your speech in front of someone you trust or record it for yourself. The goal is to practice staying grounded, even while nervous. Reclaim your voice, not by erasing your fear, but by showing up anyway.



## Ready to Grab the Full Copy?

The preview you just read is only the beginning. The full Kahit Kabado™ ebook includes:

- 60+ pages of Filipino-based tools and real-world examples
- A 30-day public speaking challenge to practice your confidence
- Speech frameworks you can apply instantly
- Stories that remind you you're not alone

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