

Interview Nerves

These days, interviews are a fraught process, brutally competitive and require nerves of steel. It is important in the run up to the big day, that nerves are kept under control and are channeled in such a way that keeps you alert, energetic and focused.

If you find that anxiety is getting the better of you, the following six points should help put you back in the driving seat.

Perspective

An employer's objective is to select the best qualified person for the job. They *want* you to do well in the interview and are trained to put you at ease. Experienced interviewers will help you present yourself in the best possible light. Ensuring that you perform well is in everyone's best interest.

Keep your Focus what you can Control

Instead of wasting your energy worrying about your competition, focus on what you *can* control and influence – your own performance.

Interviews are like a weak muscle and it takes training to get into shape. To get interview fit, look at the most common interview questions asked and prepare hard hitting answers. You need to understand and address the needs of an employer when putting together your responses. Employers want to know what skills you are bringing to the table, proof that you are a good team player who will fit well into the corporate culture. They will also look for evidence that you work well under pressure, have initiative and will go the extra mile to ensure the company's success.

Forensically examine the job spec, making sure to match your background and experience to the employer's specific needs and requirements. (Have a look at our website www.interviewtechniques for guidance on how to answer specific questions.)

Self-talk

Sports psychologists have long recognised the importance of mental attitude. At world class level, there is very little physical difference between the top athletes – what distinguishes a winner is self belief and mental strength. The same holds true in the interview arena – all the shortlisted candidates can *do* the job but to secure the job offer, you need to show that you have that extra spark.

Athletes are taught to be aware of the stream of thoughts that go through their heads as these have been shown to have a dramatic effect on physical performance and self confidence. Self-talk includes all of the thoughts that we allow to run through our brains - both positive and negative. Research shows that *negative* thoughts lead to problems such as fear, extreme nervousness, lack of belief and worrying about things that lie out of our control.

Athletes are trained to become aware of their self-talk - to replace negative with positive thoughts during their competition as rethinking past errors tends to cause repetition of these same mistakes. By simply focusing you mind on positive thoughts and past successes, your breathing pattern slows down and your ability to concentrate deepens.

Relaxation Techniques

When we are in a stressful situation our breathing becomes quick and shallow. By simply doing the opposite and breathing slowly and deeply, we can effectively counteract nerves. Meditation, yoga and pilates are also very effective ways of relieving anxiety, and the more these techniques are practiced leading up to the interview, the more beneficial they become. During the interview remember to breathe slowly and take a few extra deep breaths between questions.

Smile during the interview. Smiling helps reduce anxiety and according to Jane Plant, a former scientific advisor to the British government 'Smiling is a way of tricking your brain into thinking that everything's OK, even if it's not,' It is worth remembering that once an interviewer has determined that you have the skills to do the job, the next most important criteria is whether they would enjoy working with you. By presenting yourself as a positive happy person, you could well give yourself that crucial extra edge.

Stay in the moment

In the interview, concentrate on what the interviewer is asking, listen attentively and when you are answering a question – fully engage. If you answer one question badly, don't dwell on it but instead keep positive and mentally move on to the next question. You will have plenty of time to overcome any slip-ups and to make a strong impact.

Dress Rehearsal

Practice makes perfect. Ask a friend to help you in your preparations, rehearse your answers out loud in front of a mirror or better still invest in the services of an professional interview coach. By doing this you will have the opportunity to make mistakes in a safe environment, get constructive feedback and learn how to inject dynamism and energy into your performance.

Conclusion

Remember, be kind to yourself stay focused, smile and breathe deeply!

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of [Interview Techniques](http://www.interviewtechniques.ie), a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with *Recruit Ireland* and the *Sunday Business Post*.

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