

How to stop the jitters

“Facing your fears robs them of their power” - Mark Burnett

Before the interview

- 1. Recognize your anxiety for what it is: a primal response.** The amygdala is the primitive part of our brain that generates and processes our fear. It prevents us from jumping off cliffs. Yay for the amygdala! However, it also jumps into action when we do not need it (like during job interviews). **Remember this next time yours kicks in**, then tell yourself “Ah-hah! This is my primitive brain responding. I am an adult, with a fully-mature frontal lobe. My fear does not own me.”
- 2. Face it: Name your greatest interview fear.** What is it – really – that worries you most about a job interview? Some of the most common interview fears include: getting asked “scary” questions, saying something stupid, blushing, sweating, exposing skeletons in your closet (“I got fired!”) ... and of course, the ultimate fear: they won’t want me. Naming your fears often robs them of their power.
- 3. Remember 3 times when you have succeeded before.** You can do this! You’ve done it before. Think of 3 times in your life when the stakes were high, but you succeeded anyway. **Then write them down.** Whip them out next time you think “I can’t do this.”
- 4. Make a plan.** So what? If you talk too much, so what? What’s the worst that can happen? They might cut you off, or you might realize it yourself. Either way, you can stop, smile, and maybe even laugh about it. I LOVED the candidates who said “Geez, I must be nervous. Wow.” all of a sudden, everything changed.
- 5. Take care of your body.** Eat well. Sleep well. Dance!
- 6. Prepare for the interview.** The more prepared you are, the more relaxed you will be ... and the better you will handle whatever comes your way.
- 7. Practice with a friend.** A mock interview is the very best way to reduce your anxiety and worry.

On the day of your interview

1. **Dress for success.** If you look good, you'll feel good! Period. You can laugh with them about being overdressed. You can never make up for being under-dressed.
2. **Remember: you've succeeded before!** Re-read them in your car before your next interview to boost your confidence.
3. **Get happy right before the interview.** Play your favorite music. Listen to a motivational tape. Or, call a champion (friend) to pump you up and remind you how talented you are.
4. **Arrive early. Arrive early. Arrive early!**
5. **Stop worrying.** Stop the negative thoughts! When you start to worry, interrupt your thoughts immediately and say, "There goes that primitive brain again." **If you think you will fail, you are much more likely to fail** ("the Golem Effect.")
6. **Envision success.** In stark contrast to the "Golem Effect," **if you think you will succeed, you are MUCH more likely to succeed!** This is called the "The Pygmalion Effect." **Close your eyes and envision yourself being successful (getting the job).** World-class athletes do this, and it works!
7. **Do a victory pose!** Reduce your cortisol ("stress hormone") and increase your testosterone with Amy Cuddy's "Victory pose." Watch her TEDTalk called "Your body language shapes who you are." Then shake your limbs. Stand up and breathe deeply ... 5 times. It really works!

As you walk into the interview (Video, phone or in person)

1. **Smile & say "Hello" to everyone you meet (in person).** You never know who they are (they may be part of the hiring process) and making positive connections will boost your confidence.
2. **Stop thinking "interview." Start thinking "Conversation."** Remember: you aren't sure you want to work with them yet, either. You're just getting to know each other. It's a two-way street.

In the heat of the moment (In the middle of the interview)

1. **Be yourself. Be honest. Be real.** It NEVER works when someone tries to play a character.
2. **Stop. Breathe. Smile. Repeat.**
3. **Own it! If you get really nervous, say something.** Feel free to say "Wow! I'm nervous." Or "Gee, I'm talking a lot. Did I answer your question?"
4. **Buy yourself some time to think.** Look at the person, and say, "That's an interesting question," or "That's a good question" and/or "Hmm. Let me think about that." Breathe. Smile. Share.
5. **Make sure you understand the question.** If you don't, simply ask "Will you repeat that please?" or ask a clarifying question like "I'm not sure I understood that question. Would you mind reframing it for me?"
6. **If you feel yourself talking too much, just stop.** Then ask "Have I answered your question? Do you want more detail, or is that enough?"
7. **Let it go!** If you feel like the interview is going south, it may have very little to do with you! Relax, and remember: this is your worst-case scenario, and you're ready for it! You can handle this. If it doesn't work out, it wasn't meant to be. There will be other jobs for you! **You can even laugh!** Reader's Digest really got this one right: Laughter really is (almost always) the best medicine. It really is okay to laugh during an interview ... especially at yourself!