

Don't let nerves ruin your chances

By: Natalie Fraser

It is quite normal to be nervous in an interview. No matter how many interviews you've attended or if you're a first-time job seeker or experienced executive, the butterflies that rampage in your stomach as you approach an interview are to be expected. A little nervousness helps to keep us on our toes but the overwhelming panic that sometimes sets in from nerves can definitely ruin your chances of success.

Be Prepared

"Winging it" during an interview is never a good idea and automatically increases the tension and results in nervousness. Prepare yourself properly before an interview, research the company and the position so that you have an idea of what to expect. Think about some of the questions that may be asked during the interview and prepare yourself in how to answer them. Practice highlighting your strengths and build your confidence in your abilities. A good recruiter will assist you in preparing for the interview and while it is never a good idea to "learn" the answers it is best to have a general idea of how to sell yourself in your answers.

Prepare yourself by having all the details about the interview including time, place and the person who is handling the interview. Decide what you're wearing and remember that the more professional and confident you look, the more confident you'll feel.

Act Confident

Even if you don't feel 100% confident, act that way. Your mindset has a direct impact on the way you speak and the signals you give off in terms of body language. If you allow negative thoughts to dominate then you will increase your stress levels and allow nerves to get the better of you. Let your body speak of your confidence. Avoid fidgeting, avoiding eye contact and mumbling – the interviewer will begin to wonder if you're lying and start to doubt your abilities. Rather sit up straight, shake hands firmly and maintain good eye contact. Speak slowly and clearly and don't be afraid to take your time to formulate your answers. Believe in yourself and the interviewer will be more likely to follow suit.

Ask for Help

If you aren't sure how to handle yourself in an interview ask for assistance. Your recruiter is best placed to assist you because she will be able to give you information about the company, the interviewer and what to expect. She is also experienced in dealing with interviews on a daily basis and you can learn a lot from her past experiences. Alternatively you could ask friends or family to role play with you and pose some of the most common questions so that you have an opportunity to practice your responses. There are many books and self-help guides that can also give you pointers to help limit the impact of nerves.

Relaxation

We are all different and different things trigger our stress response. Find out what triggers your stress and plan ahead to combat this. For some people the fear of being late is very stressful and often these people will spend the night before waking every few hours leading to them being tired and a bundle of nerves during the interview. Rather plan ahead, decide what you're going to wear, drive past the interview venue so that you are confident of the directions and travel times. Spend your evening before relaxing, take a hot bubble bath, read your book and try not to dwell on the issue you need a good night's rest so you can be at your best.

Smile!

Smiling releases endorphins, the body's natural antidote to stress, and these help to fight the nerves brought on by stress. Stand up straight, think positive thoughts and smile – you will feel and look much more confident!