

# How can I apply for jobs when I feel so nervous about interviews?

Right let's talk about this. There are many reasons why you might feel nervous about interviews. The whole process of getting a job can be very stressful. Looking through job ad after job ad is demanding and the search for work now is especially hard. The whole process may cause debilitating anxiety and we may feel that we are paralysed by our own fears. When we do find a job we are interested in, nerves about what might happen in the interview may prevent us even applying for it. Common fears are that we might say something stupid, that the interviewer might ask questions we might not be able to answer, or that there will someone be better than us. So, we may end up in a vicious cycle we feel powerless to break.



Often so much rides on interviews we feel we need to impress the interviewer; we may be desperate for the job or any job or we need money and quickly. Whatever your motivation and with potentially so much at stake is it any wonder you are feeling stressed? But how can we stop sabotaging our chances and how can we overcome the fear of interviews?

Firstly, a bit of nervousness can be useful, think about an athlete preparing for a race. Stress hormones adrenaline and cortisone are pumping and preparing him for flight or fight. He knows what he needs to do, and he knows he has trained well and that he has what it takes to win the race. The most important thing here is that he has trained well...he might still have the butterfly feeling in his gut...but he is prepared. He has probably thought about so many different scenarios in his preparation for the race. What if I fall? What if someone is better than me on the day? These what ifs may or may not happen but he feels confident and he knows he has prepared for this race, the thoughts may come in and out of his head in training but ultimately he knows He...Has...Got...This.... The negativity and unproductive thoughts might come into his head before the race but when he is on the starting line, he is so completely focussed on the finish and he is in the zone and ready to go. He looks forward to the race and is eager to get going. Athletes are trained this way.

Preparation is the key to getting those nerves and negativity under control and if we can learn how to harness that anxiety and nervousness, we may use them to our advantage. I always say that being a bit nervous shows you care. You care enough to want to impress at interview, if you don't care about it then why are you applying for the job?

Like the athlete, the more you prepare and practice, the more positive you will become and the more confident you become the better at interviews you will be. If you can overcome some of the debilitating nerves and negative thoughts, then you will be able to sell yourself better. If you know where you may fail or what interview questions might trip you up, you can take action before the interview to address these potential causes of stress and mitigate their risk to you. Have you heard about knowledge is power? Or failing to prepare is preparing to fail. These clichés are so true.

We need to prepare and practice, to win the race. We will help you to prepare and practice for interviews so that they become less daunting. Alongside helping you to prepare for the types of questions you may be asked in interviews, I think it's important to have some coping strategies and techniques you can draw on to ease the nerves before, during and after the interview. We can help with competency-based interviews, panel-based interviews, virtual interviews, whatever the interview the key to succeeding is preparation. There is no other magic or super-power, just preparation.

We can go through some coping strategies which may help to cope with nerves:

- Power posing, (look at Amy Cuddy's Ted Talk on body language)

[https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_may\\_shape\\_who\\_you\\_are](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are)

It is quite interesting; Amy talks about faking it until you make it. We could all do with putting on our superhero capes and saving the world, even if it is only in our minds. The way we think really does influence the way we act. Thinking about it, we can put on our imaginary superhero cape before the interview and pep-talk ourselves into believing we have got this! Then maybe we will have!

- positive thinking and visualisation which helps you by getting you to imagine yourself acing the interview and what your life will be like when you get the job.
- easy breathing techniques which can help to calm nerves and anxiety

For example, box breathing or star breathing. Box-breathing can be done in 4 simple steps:

- Inhale for a slow count of 4 seconds
- At the end of the inhale, hold your breath for 4 seconds
- Exhale for 4 seconds
- Hold your breath at the end of the exhale for 4 seconds and repeat.

Or you could imagine a star as you are breathing. You breathe in and imagine tracing the shape of the star you then hold your breath when you get to the pointy bit of the star and then breathe out as you trace down the star to the next pointy bit and so on around the star....

Self-compassion is important, and we need to remember to be kind to ourselves. That is why I would never tell you not to worry or that you are worrying too much about interviews. The first step to being kinder to yourself should be acknowledging how you are feeling. You could say "it is no surprise that I am feeling anxious about job searching and interviews at the moment as it is a stressful time anyway...." Then, you could think about your first steps to changing how you feel, this could be "just turn up" this is the phrase I use for taking the first steps to changing how you feel and how you act. For example, if you wanted to lose weight but hadn't exercised for years.... your "just turn up" step might be getting your gym kit out from under the bed. This small action acknowledges that you have the intention to go to the gym.... but maybe tomorrow... Maybe tomorrow you could start on your new regime. You took the first and hardest step.

When looking for jobs and preparing for interviews your "just turn up step" could be saying I am good enough or you could try the power pose or you could try picking up the phone and speaking to an employment agency. All these little actions help on the journey to thinking and feeling that you have got this. And you will do.

