

## How to Handle Interview Stress

To many job seekers, "stress" is synonymous with "job interview."

Job seekers stress over landing an interview. Then they stress over preparing for it. And then they stress over what to wear, what to say, if the interviewer will like them and more.

But the worst stress of all often occurs during the interview. This is the stress that can cause you to blow it. It can make you freeze, panic, chatter aimlessly, lose your train of thought or perspire profusely.

So how can job seekers keep cool when it counts? Relax. A few simple techniques can help calm frayed nerves and sooth interview jitters.

### Early Warning

Timing is everything: Don't cause yourself undue stress before a big interview.

Arrive about 10 minutes before the interview is scheduled to begin.

If you arrive too early, you'll sit and wait and worry. And if you arrive too late, you may find yourself racing in the door, your heart already pounding from a last-minute dash.

A ten-minute, pre-interview break will give you an opportunity to catch your breath and acclimate to your surroundings. It's enough time, but not too much time.

### Picture This

You can make your dream a reality. Use your imagination to stay calm during a job interview.

Visualization is a relaxation technique in which you create a mental image of a stressful or challenging situation.

Then you imagine yourself succeeding in the situation. By doing so, you're mentally preparing to handle the event in real life.

You can practice visualization in the days, hours or even minutes before an interview. Simply close your eyes and breathe deeply. Picture yourself greeting the interviewer confidently and answering tough questions with ease.

Practice succeeding in your imagination, and soon you'll be doing it in reality.

### Relax

A relaxed job candidate is a confident job candidate.

Show the interviewer that you're calm, composed and in command during an interview. He's likely to assume that you'll be rock-solid on the job too.

Use these tips to stay relaxed during an interview:

- Breathing deeply and slowly (and quietly, of course).
- Sit up straight and don't cross your legs or arms.
- Speak slowly and pause for breath often.
- Keeps your hands and jaw relaxed; no clenching.
- Smile -- it really is contagious!

### Pause, Don't Panic

In every interview, there comes a moment that doesn't go according to plan. There's an awkward silence. You stumble over your words. You flub a tough question.

Don't panic. Now's the time to put your relaxation skills into overdrive.

It's much easier to control fear and panic as it starts to build than to calm yourself down once they've begun to spiral out of control.

When you feel yourself starting to panic and lose focus, pause. Tell yourself silently that you can do this. Take a deep breath. Refocus. And then resume interviewing.

A quick ten-second pause can be all you need to regain your composure and get back in control. And the interviewer likely won't even notice.