

Getting Over Interview Jitters

by Carole Martin

Michael waits in the lobby for his interview. His hands are sticky and wet, his heart is beating faster than usual and his mouth feels like cotton. The interviewer approaches, and Michael has to wipe his hand on his pant leg before shaking hands.

This is a familiar scenario in company lobbies throughout the world. The job interview can be very stressful for most people. Since one of our top fears is rejection and one of our top needs is acceptance, it is not surprising that interviews make people sweat.

A Change in Thinking

The first and most important step in overcoming the fear is to put the interview in perspective. This is not an appointment with the dentist, who may inflict pain. It is a conversation with another person. The worst thing that can happen is you won't get the job, which may not have been the right job for you anyway.

Second, think of this conversation as a two-way process. You are interviewing potential employers as much as they are interviewing you. Is there a good fit here? What looks good on paper may not be what it appears for either party. Investigate whether this company is a good place for you and whether you want to invest a significant part of your life here.

Calming Techniques

One of the best techniques to handle stress is through breathing. Take deliberate shallow breaths. Take air in through the nostrils and exhale, quietly, through the mouth. This technique should be practiced to relax before the interview.

Relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation classes are effective in overcoming extreme cases of interview fright. The interview can cause panic attacks if the fear is strong enough. Preconditioning will do wonders for this type of anxiety.

Prepare Before the Interview

Michael has been to six interviews in the past two months. He has been runner-up for a couple of the jobs but has received no solid offers.

These are competitive times, and rejection can be expected. Competition for jobs is much keener than it was a year ago. It is important, however, to do everything possible to sell yourself by preparing for the interview. Start thinking of yourself as a product and presenting what you have to offer the company.

Can you imagine giving a performance without some practice and preparation? Winging the interview in today's market is a big mistake. Preparation will make you feel more confident and less anxious.

Fear of Rejection

Because of the number of interviews with no offer, Michael feels defeated, and it is beginning to affect his self-esteem.

Such rejection hurts, but try not to take it personally. There are so many factors that could be affecting the offer that it is impossible to say what is happening. There may be internal candidates, relatives promised jobs, a competitor who is a perfect match for the position, a lack of chemistry or a mismatch in salary needs.

Let It Go

When Michael has done everything to prepare for the interview and is satisfied that he has presented himself in the best light possible, the next step is to let it go. There is something to be learned from each interview.

Give yourself credit for getting an interview -- only a small percentage of people get this far in the process. Give yourself credit for going out there and putting yourself on the line, even though it is painful for you. Give yourself permission to not get job offers. Believe that an offer will come through when it is the right offer - the right fit for the company and for you.