

Interview and Presentation nerves: Tackling Negative Thoughts

If you're nervous about an interview or presentation, it's helpful to be more aware of what negative thoughts you might be telling yourself (what is called 'self-talk') and how to create more positive thoughts around your success. The technique described below will help you to do this.

Start with a sheet of paper divided into two halves, as shown below.

Step 1: Ask yourself – For what reasons might I be nervous about this?

- When you imagine doing it, what thoughts are you having?
- What might cause you to be nervous?
- What would stop you from doing well?
- What are you telling yourself?

Write your thoughts down in the 'thoughts that hold you back' column verbatim – very important to do this! Then read what you wrote down. What's your reaction to seeing it on paper?

Step 2: Ask yourself:

- How likely is that to happen? If it did, what could I do?
- What evidence do I have that this is true?
- What is a more helpful way of phrasing that?
- Assuming I wanted to do well, what could I tell myself?
- Imagine people saw you at your most confident – what would they see and hear? What will you tell yourself to make that happen?
- Write your thoughts down in the second column.

This is a completed example of some thoughts a person might have about interview or presentation nerves. Start yours from a blank page as your own thoughts might be different to these.

Performing interfering thoughts (PITs)	Performance enhancing thoughts (PETs)
I can't do interviews	There's no physical reason I can't do interviews. I can do this interview.
I'm going to freeze and forget my words	I will practice talking about my experience and skills in advance so I know what I'm going to say. If I do forget anything, I will take a moment to think and I will remember.
I won't get the job	The interviewers think I have a good chance of getting the job otherwise they wouldn't have invited me to interview. I can get this job.
I always get nervous	I will feel confident because I have thoroughly prepared
I can't do presentations	There's no physical reason I <i>can't</i> do a presentation
People will think what I say isn't interesting	The audience will be interested because otherwise they wouldn't be watching
I'm going to freeze and forget my words	I will practice talking about my experience and skills in advance so I know what I'm going to say. If I do forget anything, I will take a moment to think and I will remember.
I always get nervous	I will feel confident because I have thoroughly prepared
They know more about the subject than me	I know what I'm going to share with them. They are attending because they want to know more about the subject and hear what I have to say.