

How to take the fear out of job interviews

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Now the world is opening up a bit more, I have noticed that my clients are starting to get [interviews](#). And then the fear starts to kick in. I have lived that terror myself and quite frankly one of my favourite things about working for myself is that I don't have to go to interviews. In my pre-ADHD-diagnosis days, I had some fairly devastating feedback about how I'm not very good at interviews. Nod to my friend "Impulsivity" and engaging gob before brain!

So how do I get my clients from 'holy shit' I've got an interview to be a bit excited about chatting with some possible future colleagues about what value you could bring to the team if you choose to join them?

We identify where the fear is coming from, where we hold it in our bodies and look to unpack that, identify where the fear is coming from, reframe and shift the energy. We talk about the fear, if it's based on our limiting beliefs or those unhelpful voices in our head saying we're not good enough, smart enough, experienced enough. We sprinkle a little bit of curiosity into the situation and realise that change can be both scary and exhilarating.

I often get questions around the below...

1) Understanding the context

The number one thing to remember about interviews is that they wouldn't have invited you to interview if they didn't think you could do the job. Your only job is to convince them that they are correct.

Secondly, remember the interviewers do not have all the power in this situation. I know this doesn't always feel true. Sometimes you actually desperately need the job, or maybe this is your absolute dream job. But try not to give up all your power in the interview. Chances are that this is not the only opportunity you'll ever have. You have to choose them as much as they can choose you.

To be fair, interviews are tricky things, and using these as the only way to hire people into organisations leaves so much margin for getting it wrong. What do interviews measure? It's really how good someone is at being interviewed. So if you are not naturally good at answering questions quickly (and confidently) under pressure, then you're at a bit of a disadvantage. Personally, I feel that I'm better able to organise my thoughts in writing, really love preparing and delivering presentations and I'm much happier having informal conversations than the rigidity of a formal interview, but here we are.

It's important to understand what is going to be happening during the interview - location, duration, interviewers, format etc. If you have any questions, please ask them!!

And finally can't stress this next bit enough... If you require any reasonable adjustments for your interview - please do make sure you ask for them. You are the expert in you, and your needs, so make sure you ask for them - Scope has some good resources - <https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/ask-for-adjustments-at-interview/>

2) Rethinking interview preparation

I find that women generally prepare **really** well for interviews. We do our research on the company, on the interviewers and on the role, we try to figure out what the questions are, and then we plan and prepare our answers. Sometimes we do so much planning and preparation that we end up overthinking it all and give ourselves so much stress. We try to prepare the perfect answers, to tie ourselves in knots to be exactly the person they're looking for.

Why do we do this? Does this make any sense?

This is all due to our 'Good Girl' conditioning. You know, when we were at school/college/university and we learned how to adapt ourselves and our work to how the teacher/lecturer/the authority figure wanted us to be? We were super respectful and formal with one teacher and could have a bit of a laugh with another. We tied ourselves in knots understanding what was expected of us and portraying that. Sound familiar?

So. Instead of asking yourself what they're looking for and how you can prepare to meet their needs.

What if you could prepare by being able to effectively communicate your value? To be you. Authentically you. To be able to show your strengths and your unique take on solving problems? Wouldn't that be easier?

Because let's face it, the real you is exactly what they're getting if you both decide to work together. If you are trying to be the "perfect" interviewee, you may feel you have to try to be the "perfect" employee. And that shit is just exhausting!

So how can you prepare for the interview by being more you? What are you proud of? What are your greatest achievements? What tricky problems have you solved? How can you solve their problems?

3) Calming the nerves

Having nerves is really common. It shows that you care. And you won't be the only person who is feeling nervous - you'll probably find the people interviewing you are nervous too - because they care about getting the right person for the job.

I always find trying to hide your nerves and pretending to be confident makes you look more nervous than actually naming it - you'll be surprised how effective naming your nerves are. A quick "Oh I'm feeling quite nervous about this interview" is really effective.

Other quick tips:

- If you're having an in-person interview, make sure you plan your journey to arrive in plenty of time - because travel stress is the last thing you need.
- If you're doing an online interview, then test the tech and make sure you have the details so you're not scrambling around looking for them at the last minute.
- Bring water with you - because when I'm nervous, my mouth gets dry, so it's good to be able to take a sip if you need to. As sometimes you're not offered a drink, and if they do, you get a little cup.
- Limit your caffeine intake before your interview - this can serve to make you feel more on edge.
- I swear by Bach's Rescue Remedy and lavender essential oil - which calms me (or could be a placebo... but either way, it works for me).
- One of my clients has a little pebble, a touchstone she can hold in her hand, which helps ground

her.

- And this one sounds a little on the random side of the force... but take some deep belly breaths and smile - it calms you, and smiling can actually trick your brain into feeling a bit happier.

Have a think, what else can you do to soothe yourself before the interview? What would work for you?

4) In the interview

So, here you are. You're in the interview, you've taken some deep breaths and tricked your brain into thinking you're all happy. Now what?

They have a list of questions that they want you to answer and they will probably be making notes of your answers. If you're anything like me, when someone asks you a question in a normal everyday conversation, you're quite happy to start talking, then if you need clarification, you can ask some questions to clarify your understanding and get more information and then respond appropriately. In an interview situation, there's an expectation that they'll ask you a question (usually out of context) and you talk for a couple of minutes to answer it. If you're lucky you'll get asked some probing or clarifying questions and then you both move on to the next question with no indication of if the answer met their expectations or not.

I'm going to put this out there... this is bloody weird. It's totally awkward. But, this is the game you're going to have to play to get the job. So how can you navigate this? I could write a book on this (I probably won't though).

The things that help me:

- Take in a notepad to take your own notes, and let the interviewers know you're going to take notes.
- I'm much better at taking in information when I see it than when I hear it, so I got a couple of words of the question to keep me on track (and it stops me from blurting out the answers).
- You can take the time to think about an answer. A moment or two of silence is ok.
- If you don't understand the question, feel free to ask for clarification.
- Sometimes it's useful to use a way to structure your answers - I like to use "CAR" because it's simple. It stands for - Context - what was the situation? The problem you had to solve? Action -

what did you (and the team) do? Result - how this was successful? What did you learn?

You can (and should) ask questions too. So do bring some with you!

And a quick note about feedback... do make sure to ask for feedback - either way, as it is good to reflect on what you did well and how you could improve for next time. This is how we learn.

5) Preparing for the negotiation

You should know what the salary/benefits package looks like before the interview. Because you don't want to waste your time, or theirs going through the whole process and getting to the offer stage if you don't know if they can afford you!

This drives me nuts - because, frankly, how do you know if you should even apply for the job!? But this is a rant for another day.

Moving jobs is the number one best way to get a pay rise. So use this information to your advantage. So if you don't already know, you should really ask. And before you do this, figure out what you want and practice answering the question... "What salary are you looking for?". Because quite often when you ask for what the salary looks like, you'll probably get the above question.

So figure out your number. And practice saying it out loud. You need to sound confident and show you know your worth. "I am looking for XXX to move." No need to justify or explain your number. Just say that sentence. Practise. Record yourself saying it and if you sound apologetic, then keep practicing until you don't.

If this is not something they can afford, then that's a conversation to have before the interview and you can decide to stay in the process or decline.

So when it comes to the job offer, they know what you've asked for, then they should offer you it. If they offer you less, you don't have to accept it. You can explain that you had already said that you were looking for XXX to move and see what they say. You don't have to commit straight away. I've always employed the sentence "Thank you, please give me some time to think about it and I'll get back to you" to give myself time to weigh up any offer.

To sum up

I absolutely love it when I see my clients shift their energy from their feeling of fear and extreme nervousness around interviews to a more positive and exciting stance. I always ask the question... What are you going to take away from this conversation?

So over to you... what are you going to take from this article? What would you add?

The post "How to take the fear out of job interviews" was first published by Michelle Minnikin here <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-take-fear-out-job-interviews-michelle-minnikin/>

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<https://thehumancapitalhub.com/articles/how-to-take-the-fear-out-of-job-interviews>