

Help Move Students from PANIC TO POWER:

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

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BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- ▶ 1. Life is full of opportunities to turn panic into power
- ▶ 2. Everyone has experience with worry, stress or nervousness
- ▶ 3. Some situations/events are unfamiliar or tough to handle
- ▶ 4. Due to personality, influences of others, life contexts, and/or challenging or traumatic experiences – people have variable sensitivities to nervousness.
- ▶ 5. In order to implement skills, knowledge and performance it is sometimes necessary to manage nervousness first
- ▶ 6. Unmanaged nervousness can be a barrier to success in job search and career development

KNOWLEDGE + EXPERIENCE + PRACTICE = CONFIDENCE

WHAT MAKES YOU NERVOUS?

- ▶ Personal: health, finances, romance, appearance
- ▶ Task related: public speaking, exams, performing, competing, interviewing, evaluations, driving
- ▶ Contextual: environmental change, global conflict, pollution, economic instability

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS*

- ▶ Physical: sweating, rapid heart, muscle tension, stomach upset, sleep disruption, headaches
- ▶ Emotional: worried, afraid, dread, uncertain, overwhelmed, anxious, feeling lost
- ▶ Cognitive: unreliable memory, word-finding, problems with learning; negative and fear-based thinking, “what-if...?”, catastrophizing, repetitive review of negative experiences or expectations



ORIGINS AND PURPOSES

- ▶ 1. A normal “hunter-gatherer”
- ▶ 2. 2015 software on 50,000 year old hardware
- ▶ 3. Fight, flight or freeze response
- ▶ 4. Stay safe! Survive!



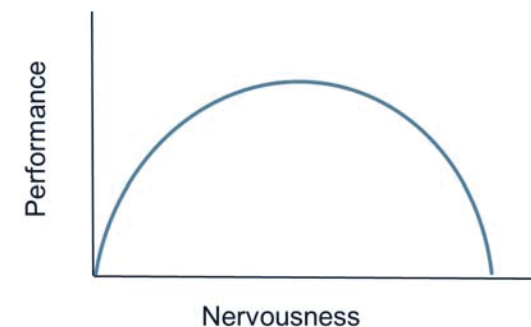
SOLUTIONS

- ▶ 1. Turn nervous energy into positive action and manage our coping for contemporary “threats”
- ▶ 2. Pay attention to perceptions and thoughts to avoid triggering fear-based reactions
- ▶ 3. Develop and practice healthy and positive strategies for thinking, feeling and doing



Impact of Nervousness on Performance

“Making Oral Presentations” by Beth Fisher & Michael Zigmond



“RETHINKING POSITIVE THINKING: INSIDE THE NEW SCIENCE OF MOTIVATION”

BY GABRIELE OETTINGEN

- ▶ * Too much focus on negative thinking (challenges, obstacles and fears) can result in procrastination, avoidance and poor performance (and feeling miserable).
- ▶ * Too much focus on positive thinking can result in a relaxation that reduces the energy necessary to prepare for and implement successful action (the “problem” with positive thinking).
- ▶ * Attaining goals requires a hybrid approach that combines positive thinking with realistic plans and approaches to overcome challenges.



“MENTAL CONTRASTING”

- ▶ 1. Imagine the positive image of your goal coming true.
- ▶ 2. Imagine the obstacles/actions/tasks required to achieve your goal.
- ▶ 3. Apply this understanding to planning, practicing and implementing realistic actions to achieve your goals.



#1: BE AWARE AND MINDFUL

- ▶ 1. Accept the energy of nervousness and notice what triggered it
- ▶ 2. The theme of your nervousness will tell you what you need.
- ▶ 3. Develop a plan of action that will turn off the “alert signal” and use the energy constructively to meet your identified needs and goals
- ▶ 4. “Thank you for this alert to possible harm”
- ▶ 5. Metaphor: Smoke Alarm



#2: Plan – Prepare – Practice

- ▶ 1. For a task, make a plan of action to accomplish your goals
- ▶ 2. Learn or prepare what is needed and practice
- ▶ 3. Seek out guidance, information or support
- ▶ 4. Confidence is a by-product of knowledge, experience and practice
- ▶ 5. Even mistakes and “failures” will hold useful information for how to take better action later



#3: Stress Management*

- ▶ 1. You know this! Remember to do it!
- ▶ 2. Basics: healthy food, water, good sleep, fresh air, exercise, recreation, connection with others
- ▶ 3. Avoid excess
- ▶ 4. Caffeine and sugar are stimulants
- ▶ 5. Make a “go to” list of your favorite ways to manage and diffuse stress



3 Ways to Change Your Body*

- ▶ 1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- ▶ 2. Deep Breathing
- ▶ 3. Visualize a Peaceful Scene



#4: Learn How to Relax*

- ▶ 1. Build in “down time” and recreation
- ▶ 2. Take a few moments to breathe and reflect
- ▶ 3. Learn and practice a method that changes action chemistry for rest/healing chemistry:
 - ▶ Meditation
 - ▶ Yoga
 - ▶ Autogenics
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation***




#5: Mindful Breathing*


- ▶ 1. Notice when you are breathing in a rapid or shallow style or holding breath
- ▶ 2. Do a cleanse breath and follow it with some slow, calm breathing using the diaphragm
- ▶ 3. Slow the rhythm of the breath and let the exhale be slightly longer than the inhale:
 - ▶ Inhale - 1 - 2
 - ▶ Exhale - 1 - 2 - 3
- ▶ 4. If desired, follow this with a few moments reflecting on a peaceful scene*




3 Ways to Change Your Body*

- ▶ 1. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
 - ▶ 2. Deep Breathing
 - ▶ 3. Visualize a Peaceful Scene
- 


3 Ways to Change Your Mind*

- ▶ 1. Reframe a negative attitude to useful, positive focus: fear to excitement; anxiety to desire; uncertainty to curiosity; exaggerated fearful expectations to realistic understandings
 - ▶ 2. Negative thoughts to positive thoughts/action: “There are no jobs for inexperienced people!” to “I researched labor market trends and learned that 80% of new grads got jobs!”
 - ▶ 3. Gradual exposure + Desensitization: start small and easy and work up to your goals
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#6: Stop the Fear of Fear Cycle*

- ▶ 1. Fear of Fear of Fear...
 - ▶ 2. Reframe “nervous” energy as readiness or excitement
 - ▶ 3. Consider nervousness as evidence of desire and **act** on the desire
 - ▶ 4. Notice and name the fear (failing an exam), the opposite desire (to do well on the exam) and put plans and action into achieving the desire
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#7a: Think Positive*

- ▶ 1. Change your negative, fear-based mind
 - ▶ 2. What you “tell yourself” can trigger or calm a nervous reaction
 - ▶ 3. Challenge and revise negative, self-defeating, fear-based, “what -if...!?” exaggerated thoughts
 - ▶ 4. Re-author negative, fearful thoughts into realistic, positive, self-supporting understandings:
 - ▶ “No one will ever hire me!”
 - ▶ To
 - ▶ “I can be patient and persistent in this normal process”
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#7b: Negative to Positive Thoughts*

- ▶ 1. Identify your negative self-statement and be curious about the underlying meaning
- ▶ 2. Respond with information to refute the exaggeration
- ▶ 3. Re-author negative to positive:
 - ▶ “Everyone is more experienced than I am”
 - ▶ To
 - ▶ “I have the credentials and skills to go for this job”



#8: Face Your Fears!

- ▶ 1. Apply mental contrasting, search relevant information, practice needed skills, make realistic and positive plans
- ▶ 2. Apply this preparation to **gradual exposure** to the tasks and/or circumstances
- ▶ 3. Start with the easiest components and examples, practice until it is comfortable, then move on to the next challenging part to **desensitize** fear and build confidence



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#9: Build in Recovery Time


- ▶ 1. Respond to an accumulation of demand, challenge and fatigue with time to:
 - ▶ REST
 - ▶ RECOVER
 - ▶ RELAX
 - ▶ RECREATE




#10: Share and Connect

- ▶ 1. No need to suffer alone. You are not the only one! Others can relate.
 - ▶ 2. Seek out sharing and support – a “walk & talk”, the “go for coffee”
 - ▶ 3. Learn from the examples and stories of others
 - ▶ 4. Seek professional support for persistent, debilitating anxiety or depression
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#11: Laugh

- ▶ 1. Find the positives. Look for and enjoy the humor in life and human situations
 - ▶ 2. Keep an eye on the big picture for perspective
 - ▶ 3. Your worst, most embarrassing mistake might also be your best life learning
 - ▶ 4. Notice relevant humour (for example: www.phdcomics.com)
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#12: Enjoy Your Accomplishments

- ▶ 1. Becoming well prepared for your opportunities and challenges and developing strategies for positive self management results in mastery and accomplishment
 - ▶ 2. Enjoy the reward that comes from feeling capable, confident and successful
 - ▶ 3. “I can do this!”
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Keep Learning and Practicing

1. Ted Talks
 - a. “The Happiness Advantage: Research Linking Happiness and Success” by Shawn Achor
 - b. “Fake It Until You Become It” by Amy Cuddy
 - c. “How To Make Stress Your Friend” by Kelly McGonigal
 2. Self-help books on career development and stress management
 3. Go to events, association meetings, job fairs, informational interviews – join Toast Masters!
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Additional Searches

- ▶ 1. “How to do Progressive Muscle Relaxation”
www.anxietybc.com
- ▶ 2. Relaxation Techniques
- ▶ 3. Autogenics Training
- ▶ 4. Guided Visualization or Guided Meditation
- ▶ 5. Breathing Exercises

Anchor Yourself

- ▶ Create your own grounding and empowering personal metaphor:
 - ▶ Nickname + blood type + optimism = **B+**
 - ▶ Heart to heart, hand to hand we stand
 - ▶ Timothy Findley: **TIFF**,
- Q: “What makes you tick?” A: “I don’t tick. **I talk.**”

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