Help Move Students from PANIC TO POWER:
STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

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

Performance

Nervousness
“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.

#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
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

#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

#7a: Think Positive*

1. Change your negative, fear–based mind
2. What you “tell yourself” can trigger or calm a nervous reaction
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”
**#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

**3 Ways to Change Your Mind**

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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

#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)

#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!”
4. Ted Talks
   b. “Fake It Until You Become It” by Amy Cuddy
   c. “How To Make Stress Your Friend” by Kelly McGonigal

Keep Learning and Practicing

1. Ted Talks
   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!
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

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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