

Controlling your NERVES

Have you ever been so nervous before a conference or competition that you thought they might have to peel your stomach off the floor when it was over? We thought so. News flash: That's not mental, that's biological. Here are some hints for thwarting the biology of nerves with the power of the mind:

1. BREATHE.

Sometimes we forget to breathe when we're nervous. And this is never a good thing. Trust us: The long-term implications of not breathing are quite serious. So if you start to feel clammy and tingly and mildly asphyxiated, take a few deep breaths.

2. DON'T RAMBLE.

You know when people get uptight and talk so fast that you can't understand them? Don't let that be you. Slow down, and don't be afraid of pausing even if no one appears to be responding. Give them a moment. And remember that silence is not a bad thing. The pause is there for a reason. The pause is your friend.

3. NO SWEAT.

Sweaty palms can lead to embarrassment, not to mention potential accidents on stairwells. Here's a trick: Spray your hands with antiperspirant. The powder will absorb the moisture. But don't use roll-on; that's both messy and stupid.

4. DON'T LOOK AWAY.

Maintain eye contact, even if it hurts. People tend to look away when they're nervous. This is, obviously, considered to be rude. Focus on the other person. Even if you don't want to listen, pretend that you're listening.

5. USE THE ALPHABET.

Old Eleanor Roosevelt trick: When she couldn't find something interesting to talk about at a social function, she'd run through the ABC's, starting with, say, the apple crop that year. If you're really fumbling this can help, though if you get all the way to Xanax you might be in trouble.

ABC

