

Get Nervous? Learn to take Control.

Most actors get nervous, it's not just you, so relax. It's really all about your degree of nervousness. Whether you get slight anxiety or are the deer in headlights what's my middle name I'm paralyzed actor, nerves of any sort can stifle your relaxation which is essential for creativity and spontaneity. So, how do you avoid it? Here's the truth. The more you try to avoid it, the more you concentrate on it and play into it. Know this. It's not going away. You're human and your mind and body will absorb stimulus in it's own way, regardless. You're a human machine that absorbs and reacts to situations. Sound familiar? Isn't that what good actors are supposed to do anyway? You can't avoid your nerves, but you can recognize, understand and control them, instead of allowing them to control you and your work.

If you're nervous, then the stakes are probably high. When the stakes are high, so the downside is probably equally as low. This business is unforgiving and some say you only have 1 shot. You've worked many years and spent a lot of time and money to get this point and you don't want to screw it up. People are watching, very self-appointed important people who are going to report back to other very self-appointed important people. Good news travels slowly, but if someone takes a chance on hiring or sending you out and you screw up, it will travel quickly, as all bad news does. So, what to do, what to do?

Here are some things to remember which will help.

Know the Material Cold. Prepare. Like in grade school, if you know the material cold, you'll look forward to nailing the test. Your nervousness will be more excitement to show them your stuff. Make sure you got the lines down cold and have done all your intellectual homework with text analysis and objectives.

It Ain't YOU. Sorry my friends, it's not personal. Really. It's not a personal thing about YOU or your life. Nobody cares. You are merely the vessel or messenger of the message. It's about "*the message*." You're the one to relay the message. Yes, that's right, Ghandi, Martin Luther King and YOU. You're a vessel. *Focus on the feelings and the message, that's your job*, don't make it about you personally.

Shift Focus Outside of YOU. Usually, you're speaking to someone when you speak, unless you're at Bellevue. Are you concentrating on *you* or your partner's reaction? Chances are, you're concentrating on your partner or whatever you're doing at the time you're speaking. That's called "business." Your job is to concentrate on *your partner* or the business you're doing, *not YOU*. Actively listen and focus on the stimuli outside of you. It's really your job as an

actor and what you've been trained to do, so do it. If you're doing "business," or a task, focus on the object or the task and really do the task, don't pretend to do it. Do the task or business honestly, as you do in real life, and actively concentrate on it. So get over yourself, stop focusing on you.

Breathe. It's the most spontaneous and natural thing you do in life. You're shortening or holding your breathe without consciously being aware of it. Become aware of your breathing. It's okay to pause, reflect and think when you act. Take a beat to do it if you need to gain composure or relax. There are relaxation techniques and courses you can take specifically to help you focus and relax. You can do practice these techniques no matter where you are.

Get Excited! Chances are, you're prepared and excited to have the opportunity to be where you are. Channel the nervous energy to the character or feeling and think of what you're feeling as excitement.

It's not a do or die. Sure, some auditions and bookings are a lot more important than others and some bookings can impact your career in a much bigger way. I get it and have been there. Here's the simple truth. There will be more auditions and even if you're not right for the part and don't get the job, you've been seen. That's the silver lining. If you've studied and have talent, you'll have the opportunity to show it again and again and will probably be requested again and again. Don't make it a do or die it's this one or I'm sunk audition, they'll be more, many, many more. Relax and just be you, it's gotten you here and you need to not change.

Understand the Voice: Again, you're a human machine that responds. That's what we do as human beings, react and respond. You'll never be able to eliminate that silent voice that is always speaking in the back of your head, somewhere in a blind spot. Just know it's there. It's speaking to you as you read this article now. The unknown is scary, as is your interpretation of what others think of you and your performance. That voice is speaking and causing the nervousness. Listen, that's only *your interpretation* of what can happen and what others are thinking about you, it's not the reality. The truth is they are totally and completely rooting for you and are on your side.

Unfortunately, acting is the lifestyle we chose. With it, comes the necessity to put ourselves up there for public critique continuously, anytime and anywhere we either book a job or audition to get a job. Learn to control how you interpret and understand these situations and incorporate the bullet points above. You're nerves and fears won't go away and you don't want them to completely because the only time they go away completely will be when you're dead. Flatlined. That will make it hard to audition. Just remember, you're not alone, it's a crowded boat we share and we're all nervous, just at varying degrees. Now, relax.