

Fear Factor: The Personal Interview

Yes, I know... your stomach is in knots and your palms are sweaty. You are not sure if you want to hide out in the ladies room or just close your eyes through the whole thing and get it over with. It's the most nerve-wracking part of the pageant for many contestants: the interview. Everyone, yes even the most experienced pageant contestant, gets nervous right before the personal interview. So how do you manage to pull yourself together, flash your best pageant smile, and wow the judges with your quick wit and insightful answers? Here are a few simple tips for overcoming those pesky little interview butterflies:

1. **Preparation** – I know you hate to hear this but practicing really is the best way to minimize your interview nerves. You will feel significantly less queasy if you have practiced some interview questions and answers at home. Just five minutes a day for the month prior to your pageant will make you feel amazingly confident when the judges toss a question your way.
2. **Visualize yourself in the interview room** – When you are at home practice by pretending that you are in an actual interview room complete with several judges staring at you intently and scoring your every word. Visualize yourself feeling relaxed in the interview environment and you will feel more relaxed when you are actually standing in the room sporting your best interview suit and three-inch heels.
3. **Get dressed for your interview early** – It just stands to reason that a rushed beauty queen is an uptight beauty queen. You will not be at your charming conversational best if you're loading one last coat of mascara and glossing your lips just minutes before your interview. Plan to be completely dressed at least 30 minutes before your report to the interview location.
4. **Arrive at your interview location early** – Now that you are dressed make sure you have allowed plenty of time to walk to your interview location. Don't get stuck in the lobby waiting for the elevator with only 30 seconds to your interview. Many a beauty queen has gotten off to a bumpy interview start because she felt flustered after rushing to get to the interview on time.
5. **Take a few slow, deep breaths** – Right before you enter the interview room take a few slow, deep breaths. Just taking a few deep breaths will slow down your heartbeat just a little and make sure your brain is getting the oxygen you need to sound like an incredibly intelligent, informed, and charming contestant.
6. **Smile when entering the interview room** – Not only does this make you appear relaxed and confident to the judges, it will actually help you feel more relaxed. Smiling makes you feel positive, relaxed, and good about any situation. Try it right now as you are reading this article... stop... flash your best smile and notice how you feel more positive and confident. As

soon as the door to the interview room opens, break into your best beauty queen smile and you will feel more relaxed.

Remember that the key to any successful interview is to just be yourself. Yes, I realize that is an overused pageant cliché but it is, in fact, true. In order to be yourself you have got to be relaxed. Take a deep breath, smile, and “think positive”! By remaining relaxed you’ll be able to put your best interview foot forward and start racking up those personal interview points!