



Don't Crack, THRIVE under Pressure!

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Teach Yourself to Rehearse for High-Pressure Situations

Do you remember that Arizona gubernatorial debate in September? You know, the one when incumbent Jan Brewer lost her train of thought during her opening statement? The video of Brewer struggling to recover not only went viral, it made most people cringe.

As painful as Brewer's incident was to watch, the fact is all of us have been there. ALL OF US, have felt so mortally uncomfortable at times, we've stuttered, stumbled, or have become frozen with fear. When this happens we know that high pressure situations have gotten the best of us.

Experts point out that there are two reasons why we crack during tense situations. First, according to [University of Chicago psychology professor Sian Beilock](#), **pressure saps working memory**, or the brainpower used to solve problems. In a 2005 study, Beilock found that undergraduates performed worst on a timed math exercise, but excelled on the practice test. Beilock concluded that "worrying about the situation and its consequences" literally shunted

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their mental resources. In a nutshell, **under stress, the brain may be unable to organize its resources to retrieve information from its memory.**

Beilock says the second reason why people freeze under pressure is because they **overthink the situation**. This can happen to even the most seasoned attorney who has presented dozens of cases. Instead of the brain moving into autopilot - which tends to guide automatic behavior - the lawyer may begin to think about the magnitude of the moment and inadvertently turn the autopilot off.

When it comes to handling high pressure situations - no matter your experience or mental toughness - **preparation is key!** Try **rehearsing for a high-pressure situation** by giving yourself a modest dose of whatever you expect to experience. For example, running through a presentation in front of a camera or a few colleagues can prepare you for presenting in front of a large audience.

Certain **relaxation techniques** can also calm jittery nerves. Meditation has shown to improve ability to stay focused on a particular task. For instance, when you find your mind racing under pressure, it may be helpful to pause to take stock of what's happening around you and breathe.

Whichever method you choose to handle your own stressful situations, always try to stop for a moment and reset your brain. Allow it to reorganize itself and get back to solving problems. Prepping ahead of time for stress will enhance your response - and help you **EXCEL UNDER PRESSURE!**

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