

Interview blues—anxious, slow talkers often do not get the job

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Researchers offer a few tips for those who are worried that their nerves might stand between them and acing their next job interview. Stop worrying about how much you might blush or your nervous tics, and focus more on being warm, friendly and assertive. The advice comes from Amanda Feiler and Deborah Powell of the University of Guelph in Canada, who carefully watched what anxious people do during an interview, and how others respond to them. Their findings are published in Springer's *Journal of Business and Psychology*.

People who are anxious going into an [interview](#) often do not get hired. In the process, organizations and companies might often reject potential candidates with interview jitters who are otherwise quite capable of doing the job.

Feiler and Powell set out to establish why anxious job candidates receive lower performance ratings during an interview. Their study is the first to use a validated interview anxiety measure with which to rate how interviewees behave, what signals they send out, and how they are perceived by those who are choosing the right person for the job. They therefore videotaped and transcribed the mock job interviews of 125 undergraduate students from a Canadian university. Ratings were obtained from 18 interviewers who gauged the interviewees' levels of anxiety and performance. Trained raters also assessed how the interviewees expressed their anxiety through specific mannerisms, cues and traits. This could be adjusting clothing, fidgeting or averting their gaze.

Feiler and Powell found that the speed at which someone talks is the only cue that both interviewers and interviewees rate as a sign of nervousness or not. The fewer words per minute people speak, the more nervous they are perceived to be. Also, anxious prospective job candidates are often rated as being less assertive and exuding less interpersonal warmth. This often leads to a rejection from interviewers.

"Overall, the results indicated that interviewees should focus less on their nervous tics and more on the broader impressions that they convey," says Feiler. "Anxious [interviewees](#) may want to focus on how assertive and interpersonally warm they appear to interviewers."

"It would be valuable for researchers to build on the present study to investigate auditory and physiological cues and different methods of measuring nonverbal behavior, because organizational researchers are only beginning to understand the effects and implications of interview anxiety," adds Powell.

More information: Feiler, A.R. & Powell, D.M. (2015). Behavioral Expression of Job Interview Anxiety, *Journal of Business and Psychology*. [DOI: 10.1007/s10869-015-9403-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-015-9403-z)

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