

# Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Bar

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Performance anxiety



Wellbeing  
at the Bar

# Performance Anxiety

*"I'm petrified about my next interview/hearing and I have no idea how I am going to cope."*

It is normal to feel anxious before a major event such as a pupillage interview or your first court hearing, some very senior barristers tell us they still feel ill before a big hearing! Panic is your body's way of expressing its reaction to stress albeit exaggerated.

Try not to fight the feeling, but acknowledge it, then take steps to accept it. This way, the feeling will slowly diminish and you will come to realise that you will survive this moment of panic.

## Dealing with Anxiety

### If you feel anxious, gently ask yourself why?

#### Interviews

- **Timing** – Try to give yourself time before the interview to relax and prepare your mind.
- **Prepare** – Read up to the best of your ability beforehand, and in as comfortable a setting as you can. Focus on what you do know, and not what you do not.
- **Connect** – Enlist the help of your friends and family to prep for the interview.
- **Rest** - Get as much sleep the night before as you can. Do not obsess over the interview, and remember you will perform better if you go into it calmly.

#### Court hearings

- **Speak up** - If you feel out of your depth, try to confide in your Pupil Supervisor, clerk or colleague.
- **Practice makes perfect** – As a pupil you will naturally feel nervous about attending court. Rest assured that with practice over time you will overcome this feeling of panic.
- **Manage expectations** - Accept that you are the most junior member of chambers and therefore may have a steep learning curve. Try to build a good support network within chambers.
- **Time management** – If you are panicking because the time frame for preparing for a case is too short, speak to your clerk or Pupil Supervisor about possible alternatives.

## Where can I find out more?

See our resource on [Panic Attacks](#)

Also:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/coping-with-panic-attacks.aspx>
- <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/panic-attacks/>

- <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/panic-attacks/#.Weh1Af6WzIU>
- <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-relief-in-the-moment.htm>
- <https://hbr.org/2014/11/how-to-handle-stress-in-the-moment>