

Cave Men (and Women) Never Had to Interview

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Why is it so hard to “take in the good” Dr. Rick Hanson, author of the newly published book, “Hardwiring Happiness” asks? It's because we have brains that lean towards the negative. The good rushes by. Brains are wired towards a “negative bias.”

A ‘negative bias’ means that we have a brain that is set up for being always on guard, like the cave men who had to be on guard for the potentially dangerous tigers lurking just outside their caves to devour them.

That wiring helped the caveman say on “alert” for when he stepped out of his cozy cave because he would never know if he would be mauled, maimed or munched alive by a hungry tiger. So, that kind of brain helped him survive. Hey, that's a good strategy for cave men (and women) and here's the hard news; that part of our brain is still with us, folks and it has not become a vestigial organ, like so many others which we as modern people no longer need. The primitive brain guards us against danger but alas, it's so hard wired that we often unconsciously approach situations as if they are fraught with danger when clearly they are not. Our other parts of our brain; our reason and cognitive thinking, our executive functioning in the cortex are not engaged BUT we need them for interviewing! Otherwise, we will interview like cavemen or cavewomen; on alert and ready to run or fight. Not a good strategy, for sure.

How are you interviewing? Ready to run or fight? Wouldn't it be better to counterbalance that primitive part of us (we all have it) with some positive thoughts, feelings and actions?

Dr. Hanson says, that if we spend just a wee bit more time with pleasant experiences, memories, and the neurons in our brains will begin to connect with each other and begin to change the shape of our thinking to balance out the bias towards the negative. It seems that neuroscience research shows that the more frequently our neurons are firing together, they will create new pathways (positive) and lo and behold, your brain now has a chance to balance out and begin to more easily and readily seek the positive. (The “negative bias” is always there but it's not the only piece in the orchestra.) You just have to be ready and willing to take it in the “good” with the negative bias.

So, how can you do that and what in the heck has this to do with interviewing? Well, let's see: positive view of interview or negative? What shall it be? Do you take a positive view of being an older worker or a negative one? Do you want to interview from a “What if I fail?” or “I can do my best” way of thinking?

Here's the approach. Take in the positive, the good, the nourishing feelings about yourself. Grab that good feeling and spend some time with it and fully experience it. Seek it. Say it. Sense it. Stay with it. Stick with it. Savor it. Sustain it. Dr. Hanson suggests you take at least 12 seconds to sit with the feeling. I suggest, since I have

successfully used this technique, with clients and myself, if you take more than 12 and less than 25 seconds, it works.

For example you might recall that you are a “competent” person and you may remember a specific time when you really felt competent. It is already part of your history so it’s true. It can come from any part of your life. I know, I know. You are probably saying to yourself, “But I’m not working now.” See? There you go...already leaning towards the negative! It doesn’t matter whether or not you are currently employed. What you want to do is instead “take in the good” feelings of a proven time that truly existed and allow your whole being to feel that good feeling again...and again. That’s it.

If you want to try it, follow these steps to help you access any feeling you want. This example is about the feeling of "competence."

1. **Seek it.** Take some time by yourself, ease into a chair or some comfy place and treat yourself to a couple of nice exhales. Then let a time when you felt really great,, on top of your game, and let that sense of feeling “competent” show up.
2. **See it.** Now, deeply look at the experience in your mind’s eye. See all that you saw, colors, people surroundings.
3. **Say it.** Hear again, what people were saying and also say the feeling to yourself, like “I feel competent,” or “Competence.”
4. **Sense it.** Allow your whole being to fully experience the feelings that come with the experience. You may feel warmth, relaxation or elation and it doesn’t matter, just allow the body to feel the pleasant feeling, as the neurons fire away. You want to experience, **not** think about the experience. Stay out of your head and move into your feeling self. The feeling is what you sense in your body, the actual full blown memory of the positive experience, the warmth, the physical sensations, the breathing, the sense of fullness as it fills up your heart.
5. **Stay and stick with it.** Count up to 12 or down from 12 as you breathe in the good. Stick with it and stay with the feeling so the brain has time to register what you are experiencing. Stay with the feeling, not the thought of the feeling.
6. **Savor it.** As you are counting, notice and enjoy the feelings that you are having.
7. **Sustain it.** Repeat this as you would with anything that feels good for frequency produces brain chemistry changes and results.

I have written much on interviewing over the years, I think . Dr. Hanson’s book, “Hardwiring Happiness” while not directed specifically at job seekers, has much to offer insofar as feeling happier about yourself while interviewing...and in life. After all, how

bad would it be to imagine feeling more positive by saying it, sticking with it and savoring your own positive experiences!

Move out of being a caveman or woman and be here now while breathing in the good. It will make a big difference in your interviewing.

Try it, it takes only 12 seconds to feel better and better. You be the judge and enjoy, 12...11...10...9...8..7...6..5..4..3..2...1!