[How to Perform Under Pressure - Think On Your Feet (oprah.com)](https://www.oprah.com/spirit/how-to-perform-under-pressure-think-on-your-feet_2/3)

You know when you're about to say something and suddenly your mind goes completely blank? (Hours later, in a bittersweet stroke of genius, you'll think of the perfect words.) We've all been there: Brain freeze is a natural result of the body's fight-or-flight response to anxiety-inducing situations. The sympathetic nervous system triggers a hormonal cascade in the brain that temporarily suspends your ability to organize your thoughts, leaving you flustered. For advice on performing under pressure, whether you're in a private conversation or a roomful of people, we went to the pros—five folks who make a living thinking on their feet (including a law professor, an improv coach, and a TV show host). Here, their smooth-talking secrets

**Assume the Posture**

"Body language can translate directly to the mind's willingness to engage in conversation. People who are nervous tend to step back, fold their arms, avert their eyes. They are actually putting up physical barriers. You can't be fully present or think spontaneously if you're trying not to be seen. So stand tall with your legs apart, on the balls of your feet, make eye contact—and smile."

**Find an "Anchor"**

"If you start to get anxious, a simple gesture, or 'anchor,' can bring you back into focus. Think of a tennis player intently bouncing the ball before she serves. The bouncing has nothing to do with the serve; it has to do with mental preparation. To find an anchor, think about what you do when you are collected and confident. Perhaps you roll your shoulders back or straighten your spine. Do that one thing whenever you're agitated or distracted, and it'll help turn on the lights in your brain."

**Buy Some Time**

"Paraphrasing the key points someone else just made gives you a moment to gather your thoughts before responding. Like: 'I heard you saying\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . Is that right?' or 'It sounds like the questions you're raising are\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . Did I miss anything?' This not only ensures that you processed the information correctly but also lets the other person know you are listening, interested, and committed to the topic at hand. Don't use this tool more than once or twice in a conversation, though, or you'll risk sounding like a parrot."

**Lighten Up**

"If your mind goes blank, laugh at yourself—it'll dissipate the tension in the room. When people are expecting me to be funny but I'm bombing, I'll pray to the comedy gods—out loud—to give me just one joke. Your audience can relate to the pressure you feel; they root for you. Plus, talking about being nervous takes your mind off being nervous, and then you can get on about your business."