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| **Turn Nerves and Anxiety into Triumph**Have you ever felt nervous before a [big event](http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=9c52918bb8bc4bb1e205e736b&id=784fb2d521)?  Perhaps your heart is racing prior to an [athletic competition](http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=9c52918bb8bc4bb1e205e736b&id=784fb2d521), or before a big presentation, high-stakes meeting, or sales pitch.  Your instinct is probably to tell yourself something along the lines of “relax” or “keep calm.”  But in a paradoxical twist, great performers who are at the top of their respective fields don’t fight this natural arousal. Rather, they channel it toward the task at hand.  [Research](https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/releases/xge-a0035325.pdf) shows that instead of trying to force calm, reappraising anxiety improves performance. You can reappraise anxiety by telling yourself something like, “I am excited,” or, “These heightened sensations are my body and mind getting ready to execute.”  This works because when you tell yourself, “I need to relax,” you are sending a signal that something is wrong and that you are stressed; in a sense, you are reinforcing the negative emotion.  But by telling yourself the sensations you are feeling is the body engaging all the systems it needs for the task at hand, you transform [negative energy](http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=9c52918bb8bc4bb1e205e736b&id=784fb2d521) into positive energy and [improved performance](http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=9c52918bb8bc4bb1e205e736b&id=784fb2d521) follows.  In other words, the [physiological](http://us13.campaign-archive2.com/?u=9c52918bb8bc4bb1e205e736b&id=784fb2d521) sensations we associate with anxiety are actually neutral.  They can be positive or negative, and that all depends on how we view them. |

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| **Try This*** Next time you feel nerves starting to kick in, don’t try to calm down or fight it.
* Rather, tell yourself something along the lines of: “My body and mind are preparing to give it their all,” or even simpler, “I am excited.”
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