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Amy Morin: Welcome to The Verywell Mind Podcast. I'm Amy Morin, the editor-in-chief of Verywell Mind. I'm also a psychotherapist and a bestselling author of four books on mental strength.

Amy Morin: You're listening to the "Friday Fix." Every Friday, I share a quick mental strength strategy that will help fix the thoughts, feelings, and actions that can drain you of the mental strength you need to be your best. And the fun part is we record the show from a sailboat in the Florida Keys. Let's dive into today's [00:00:30] episode!

Amy Morin: Today I'm talking about how to get yourself in the best emotional state for whatever task you're about to do. I'll explain why it's important and the steps you can take to make it happen.

Amy Morin: Our emotions have a direct impact on our behavior. For example, studies show you should never negotiate when you feel sad. If you do, you aren't likely to walk away with the best deal possible. Here's why. Let's say you're selling a car. Someone makes

[00:01:00] an offer on your car, but it's much lower than your asking price. If you feel sad, you're likely to accept their offer. Researchers say this is because you'll be afraid that if you counter-offer, your offer's going to be rejected. And when you feel sad, you'll likely question your ability to handle one more blow to your ego.

Amy Morin: If you're in a good mood, however, you'll be much more likely to make a counter offer. And you'll trust that you can handle it if your offer isn't accepted. But getting [00:01:30] in the best emotional state isn't just for negotiating. It's a skill that can help you perform better at just about everything that you're doing.

Amy Morin: Let me share an example of how this works in the speaking industry. In 2015, I gave a TEDx Talk. If you aren't familiar with TEDx Talks, they're short talks that are about 15 minutes in length. And they're given at an event where maybe 10 speakers will share their talk in front of a live audience throughout the course of a day. The talks are recorded [00:02:00] and eventually share it online. When I gave my talk, we were given times that we had to get miked up backstage. When my time rolled around, I went backstage, and there were three other speakers who were getting ready for their big moment on stage.

Amy Morin: One speaker was feverishly reading through her notes one last time. Notes aren't allowed on stage, so talks have to be given off the top of your head. So there's a lot of pressure to memorize them. You can use slides but no notes.

Amy Morin: Another [00:02:30] speaker was meditating in a dark corner with his eyes closed as he

got ready for his big moment.

Amy Morin: And the third speaker was listening to rock music through his headphones so loud that I could hear them across the room. He was jumping up down and trying to psych himself up before he stepped on stage.

Amy Morin: Which of those three people do you think had the best strategy to get in the best emotional frame of mind? The one who's trying to memorize their notes one last time? The one who's trying to calm themselves down? Or the one [00:03:00] who's trying to pump themselves up? The answer is, "It depends."

Amy Morin: It's important for each person to know themselves well enough to understand which emotional state will help them perform at their peak. It's something that elite athletes usually learn through a process of trial and error. Some might do better when they energize themselves. Others might do better when they put themselves in a state of relaxation. Of course, it depends heavily on the task that they're about to perform as well. [00:03:30] A golfer might want to be in a state of relaxation so that they can calmly hit the ball in the right direction. A football player, on the other hand, might want to rev themselves up so they can tackle someone who's trying to run past them.

Amy Morin: The key is to understand which emotional state is going to help you do your best. Through my own process of trial and error as a speaker, I learned that I'm much better off getting myself pumped up rather than calmed down before I step on stage. Here's [00:04:00] why. I was a really shy kid, and I hated public speaking most of my life. So when I first started speaking, my body reacted as if I were stepping into a life or death

situation. My heart raced, my palms got sweaty, and I felt like I was having an out-of-body experience. So all the work I would do to calm myself down backstage would go out the window the second I stepped in front of a live audience. And if I wasn't careful, that would send me into a tailspin because I'd start thinking, "Oh, [00:04:30] I'm supposed to be calm right now, and it's not working."

Amy Morin: If, however, I put myself in a slightly amped up place before I stepped on stage with a little music, then my heart beats a little faster, but I tell myself I'm excited. Fortunately for me, this is what works. But it's not just for when I'm stepping on stage. I work a lot to figure out which emotional state I do best in, apart from speaking too, because whether you're about to enter a sales meeting to discuss a really big deal that [00:05:00] you hope to land or you're about to call someone to invite at them on a date, getting in the right emotional state first could be the key to your success.

Amy Morin: And it doesn't just have to be reserved for achievement-type activities. You might want to get yourself in the best emotional state before you visit with family, spend time with friends, read your kids a goodnight story, send an email, or go to an appointment. Getting yourself in the best emotional state could help you feel and do your best. [00:05:30] And then you can get your needs met, enjoy the moment more, and foster the best relationships.

Amy Morin: Here are a couple of examples of how changing your emotional state could be helpful. I

once worked with a man in my therapy office who called his mom on his drive home every night from work. The call often didn't go well. They ended up in some sort of heated political debate. So by the time he arrived home, he was in a bad mood. And he was impatient with his kids. He thought that he was making [00:06:00] good use of his time by calling his mom from the car. He was multitasking. But ultimately it made him walk in the house in a bad mood after work, and he took it out on his family. So as an experiment, he tried listening to happy music on the drive home and waiting until after the kids went to bed before he called his mom. It helped him get home in a happier mood. He enjoyed his family more, and there's no doubt that they enjoyed him.

Amy Morin: Here's another example. [00:06:30] I worked with a woman who had a lot of anxiety about making phone calls. Whenever she could, she would avoid talking on the phone by sending text messages or emails, but sometimes it couldn't be avoided. It was usually when she was making an appointment or canceling an existing one. She had to talk to a human. Before making the call though, she would pace around the room for at least 20 minutes thinking about how uncomfortable she felt about talking on the phone. All that pacing and thinking increased her anxiety. So by the time [00:07:00] she actually dialed a number, she felt so anxious she could hardly think straight.

Amy Morin: She agreed to try an experiment. She started going for a really brisk walk about 20 minutes before she made the call. And then the second she stepped back inside her apartment she immediately dialed the number. There was no time for pacing or overthinking the call. With practice, she found that it made calls much easier. Instead of wasting an hour dreading a two-minute call, she got it over with, and she felt a lot less anxious when she made [00:07:30] the call, which usually made the call go better.

Amy Morin: So think about some times in your own life when it might make sense to get in the right

emotional state (before going to work, coming home from work, visiting your family, exercising, meditating, or eating.) And then experiment with different strategies that can get you in a different emotional state to find out what works best for you. You might find shifting your emotional state helps you feel better and helps you do better.

Amy Morin: [00:08:00] If you know someone who could benefit from hearing this message, share it with them. Simply sharing a link to this episode could help someone feel better and grow stronger. And if you like the show, make sure to subscribe to us on your favorite platform.

Amy Morin: Do you want free access to my online mental strength course? It's called "10 Mental Strength Exercises That Can Help You Reach Your Greatest Potential." To get your free pass, just leave us a review on Apple Podcasts. Take a screenshot of your review, and email it to us. Our [00:08:30] email address is podcast@verywell.com. We'll reply with your all-access pass to the course.

Amy Morin: Thank you for hanging out with me today and for listening to The Verywell Mind Podcast. And as always, a big "thank you" to my show's producer, who likes to keep the podcast studio organized so he can be in the right emotional state for recording the show, Nick Valentine.