

Your appointment day is here - ways to stay calm, cool and collected

The meeting day is approaching. It's normal to be nervous. For many people it's an emotional day, so it's a good idea to ready yourself with some strategies to make sure you're as prepared as possible to stay calm, cool and collected throughout. The more constructive your contributions to the discussion are, the greater likelihood you have of arriving at resolution.



Make self-care a high priority

If you're nervous leading up to the meeting, acknowledge your feelings and focus on practicing good self-care, especially in the 48 hours beforehand. Eat properly, try to get a good night's sleep, and make time for yourself the day before. For example, get some exercise in or do something you enjoy.

Be well-prepared several days before

Eliminate other factors that could elevate your stress unnecessarily on the day. Get ready any paperwork/info you need to bring, and get organised several days in advance so you're not running around last minute. Make sure you have childcare arranged beforehand and know the start and end times of the appointment, so you're not worried about your children during the session.

Get in the problem solving mindset

Remember that the meeting is a collaborative discussion, which means when your ex speaks, ideally you will respond with questions, not with an argument.

Unlike an adversarial court process where people are trying to convince the court who is right or wrong, most non-court options are ways in which you each attempt to understand one another's

perspectives. You do not have to agree with what the other person, but you do need to try to listen to them and hear what they are saying, not what you think they are saying.

Create comfort

Bring anything which gives you comfort (wear your lucky shoes, a picture of your dog ... whatever it is). Just having that thing present may help you. If you smoke, bring your cigarettes.

If you have special requests to assist with your comfort (perhaps you don't want to sit directly beside your ex) let the facilitator know ahead of time. It is their job to keep the process safe and productive, so if you feel uncomfortable at any point, let them know and tell them what you need.

Stay in tune with your physical and emotional state

Pay attention to physical signs (tightness in your stomach, shallow breathing, tense muscles, the urge to raise your voice, etc.) which indicate you're becoming upset. Notice how you are feeling and try to use a calming strategy to prevent your feelings from escalating further. If you're able to recognise at an early stage that you're getting wound up, it's easier to do something about it. Your goal is to avoid saying something which will worsen the conflict and that you can't take back.

Often we do the same things over and over, notice how you feel so that you can break the pattern, and create better habits.

Some calming strategies that you could use:

- Bring a notepad with you. If something annoys you, write it down rather than interrupting and reacting emotionally. Once it's on paper, think about how you can respond constructively. Consider whether it's worth responding to at all. It can be powerful to not respond to bad behavior of your ex.
- Ask for breaks when needed. Go outside, walk around, get some fresh air and take some deep breaths.

Come down gently

Plan something relaxing and low key for after your meeting.

Summary

No one's perfect, but if you do the things we've talked about, you'll give yourself the best possible advantage to stay calm, cool and collected. This will avoid damaging relationships further and will increase your productivity in finding a resolution. And for those moments when you lose your focus, remember, the facilitator is there to help you.