

## TIPS FROM HEARINGS

(From the Life Support Alliance newsletter, October 2017)

Don't let the little things trip you up. Every parole hearing is a stressful event and you're bound to be nervous. But there are some basic strategies you can use to help calm those nerves and assist you in making your best presentation possible to the parole panel.

None of these items will assure you of a grant, but they will help you put your best foot forward and remove some small but important details that could trip you up. After going to more hearings than any inmate will ever have to endure, LSA staffers have put their collective heads together and come up with a short list of helpful hints.

1. Read the transcript of your last hearing; note what the commissioners told you to work on and be sure you can show progress in those areas.
2. Be sure to speak when answering questions; the transcriber can't hear a nod of the head.
3. Don't interrupt the panel members; they'll let you know when they've finished their questions and want your response.
4. Don't use 'bad decisions' as the reason for your crime; bad decisions lead to wearing brown socks with a black suit, not committing a crime
5. If AA is a part of your recovery, know the 12 steps. If you can't memorize all of them, know which one is the most important to you and why.
6. Ask your attorney what questions he's likely to ask you—you don't want any surprises there.
7. Don't say you'll deal with anger and stress by never getting mad or letting yourself get stressed. Reality check—it will happen, but it's how you deal with it that matters.
8. If you have victims at your hearing, keep your eye focused on the panel during their statements. The commissioners understand this and the better ones will tell you to do so.
9. Wait for the commissioner to paraphrase or repeat clarifying questions from the DA and then answer the commissioner. The DAs are not to question you directly and the commissioners sometimes decide some questions are irrelevant and don't require you to answer.
10. If you start to feel stressed and overcome, don't be afraid to ask for a short break. Chances are the panel members could use one, too.
11. Don't try to impress anyone with your vocabulary. Even if you know what that 11-letter word means and when to use it, this is the place to keep it humble and simple
12. If you are denied, don't become angry. Look at it as a temporary setback and read your transcript for what areas you need to work on and improve. Showing your anger at a disappointment is proof to the panel that you might be dangerous.
13. Be honest. Don't take the blame for something you did not do and don't try to make yourself look good. Honesty works, and it's much easier to deal with in the long run.