



Why Mental Preparation is THE Most Important Part of Pageant Prep with Empower Mental Training

If we're being honest, we've all had bad days. You know, the ones where you're really down on yourself and critical of everything you do. The days where you think every other person on your timeline is more fit, prettier, smarter or more successful than you. If you've had one of these bad days around your pageant, you know how detrimental it can be to your performance.

We talked to **Chris Nieves**, the director of **Empower Mental Training**, about the importance of the mental side of pageantry. Nieves primarily works with contestants in Miss USA and Teen USA, Miss America 2.0 and Miss America's Outstanding Teen on feeling more confident, focused, motivated and overall ready to compete at their pageant.

As you can tell Chris knows a thing or two about why mindset is so important going into a pageant.

"Having a confident and focused mindset is essential to performing your best and to overcome nerves," says Nieves. "You could have the perfect dress or physical appearance, but if you cannot manage your emotions or handle the pressures of competing, you will not reach your full potential."

So, what should you be focused on during the pageant to perform at your full potential? We're glad you asked.

"Contestants should be focused on themselves and should be thinking about doing their best in every aspect of the pageant," says Nieves. "Too often, many pageant contestants become distracted and start thinking too much about the other contestants or about what the judges think. Instead, just focus on yourself and doing your best."

What happens if you get distracted by other contestants and what they have to offer?

"A contestant can combat the comparison game by thinking about his/her strengths, accomplishments, and uniqueness," said Nieves. "The more you are aware of what you can offer as a pageant titleholder, the more you will be focused on yourself and not on anyone else."

Totally makes sense, right? Great, now let's practice! We've included some tips and exercises for you to work on your mental pageant prep. Need some help? [You can book time with Empower Mental Training here.](#)

Pageant Prep Tips

1. *Gratitude Journal* - Write down three to five things you're grateful for each morning. This will put you in a positive mindset to start each day and will create a habit of positivity in your life.
2. *Affirmations* - Each day, take some time to remind yourself of how awesome you really are. No, seriously. We know it might sound a little silly but this simple practice can help you build confidence. Either set aside a few minutes to tell yourself how great you are in the mirror or set silent alarms throughout the day with affirmations. Consider things like, "I am smart," "I am beautiful," "I am accomplished," "I am Miss (insert your pageant title here)," or whatever else makes you feel good.
3. *Give yourself proof* - Have you ever thought about all the things you've *already* accomplished? If you're a pageant girl, we bet the list is a mile long already. Have you graduated from school? Spoke in public? Started a community service project? Gotten an A on that test you studied so hard for? Take an hour and write your accomplishments down. Give yourself proof that you have been successful in the past and you'll start to believe you can be successful again. Having a hard time coming up with a list? Ask your mom, dad, best friend, husband (whoever knows you best) to write down the same list. You'll be amazed at what they came up with that you didn't even think of.
4. *Change the habit cycle* - So many of us have negative self talk on a regular basis without even realizing it. We tell ourselves all about the things we don't like about ourselves all day long. Start paying attention to your self talk. Every time you think something negative about yourself, immediately replace it with something positive. For instance, if you think, "I'm stupid," immediately replace that thought with, "I'm intelligent and I've worked through problems before." Do this everyday and watch how your self talk changes.

Pageant Weekend Tips

1. *Positive Vibes Only* - "One tip is to think positively," Nieves said. "When you are thinking positively, you are giving yourself a chance which is really all you can do at a pageant. Thinking negatively will only cause stress which will hurt your performance."
2. *Breathe* - "Another tip is to take a deep breath before going on stage or into the interview room," says Nieves. "Breathing is a great way to reduce nerves and help you be more focused. So don't forget to breathe!"