



# Tips and How To's

## The CTA Oral Exam.

Each year as CTA exams approach I remember my own oral exam. In this edition of my Tips and How To's, in a fairly light hearted way, I would like to share some of my experience and my top ten tips for supporting yourself in having a great exam process.

- Have a buddy, this is essential in my view. This is the person who will get you there on time, follow you around generously picking up your bits, bobs and bag, make reassuring noises and celebrate with you when you pass.
- Have back up copies of everything. You probably won't need them but it will reduce your anxiety that something might go wrong with your equipment.
- Travel with someone who is not a candidate. I travelled with another candidate and we missed the train and got on the bus going in the wrong direction. Which brings me to my next tip –
- Leave in plenty of time. Fortunately I did, so missing the train wasn't a problem.
- When you get to the exam venue, check out the layout of your room if you can; decide how you are going to arrange the furniture, where you want the table, flip chart, chairs etc. I found it helpful to orientate myself to the space so I knew in advance how it felt.
- I found it really useful to focus on the idea that board wanted me to pass. That they weren't there to catch me out, but to create an environment and give me an opportunity to demonstrate my competence as a psychotherapist.
- Decide on the practicalities in advance – what you are going to wear, clothing, shoes etc. Being comfortable was a key element in this for me, whilst being professional and smart as well.
- Get plenty of mock exam practice. There are lots of opportunities to do exam workshops and to go through the mock exam process in supervision and training. I found it really useful to have practiced at least once or twice before the actual event. I felt more confident in knowing what to expect and calibrating the kinds of questions I was likely to be asked.

And the final two –

- You probably will not know the answers to every question you are asked – I didn't, and it really is OK to say "I don't know."
- Stay grounded and enjoy the process – you have worked hard to get to this point, your exam can be an affirming, validating challenging and enjoyable experience. Mine was, I invite you to make yours one too.

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