Top Tips for Tackling Networking Nightmares

1. **Accept and identify your networking fears**
   You wouldn’t give yourself a hard time for being happy, so give the same courtesy to your fears. Once you know exactly what gives you butterflies in your stomach, then you can learn how to overcome it.

2. **Choose to let your networking fears go**
   As long as people believe you are fine, then you don't have to face how bad you feel about your situation. Once your fears are out in the open, they can't hurt you anymore.

3. **Create your networking plan**
   Some people fear networking because they don’t have a plan. If they go to a networking meeting, they don’t know who they want to meet or what they want to say. Or, they haven’t created a list of networking meetings to go to. Others go onto social networking sites, and don’t know why they are there. Some make plans with friends and former colleagues and don’t create an agenda, thus the meetings don’t go anywhere. Every networking situation or opportunity needs thought, attention, and a focus before you go. If you write down your plan with the steps for achievement, networking will be much easier for you.

   **a) Give and collect business cards**
   Make sure you have enough business cards on you. Yes, some people say that business cards are out of date these days. All you need is an email address or website. But a business card is still a sure way to know that the information is clear and will be easy to find again. Even more important – collect business cards. It’s not only a way to collect contact information – it’s also a message to your new contact. If you ask for a business card – or contact details – they will know you are serious. And it’s a big compliment – when somebody asks for your personal information it gives you a huge feel-good moment.

   **a) Who’s who?**
   And the subtle side of it – surreptitiously make a personal note on the back of the card – so you will remember who it is. Nobody who meets twenty or thirty new faces in an evening can be expected to remember each one afterwards. Just a couple of words on the back of the card will bring it all back – I’ve used phrases like “wearing Calvin Klein glasses”, “her son is a lawyer” or even “spilt her orange juice”.

   **b) Top three**
   As well as the other participants, there are three people that you always want to be sure to network with at an event: the speaker; the event host/organizer; and the person doing registration and sign-in. The person at the front door sees everybody, and knows their name, and also is usually aware where the host is and can point you in their direction.

   **c) Listening skills**
   Don’t be so eager to speak about yourself that you don’t listen to the other person. Apply the 80/20 role – listen for 80% of the time. Prepare what you need to say about yourself so that you can communicate your value to them concisely. That way you save time for more listening! Ask lots of questions – that’s what women are good at! And don’t write people off too quickly. They may not be a value proposition for you at the moment, but you might find a need for their services several months – or years – later.

4. **Create value**: This is the essence of networking. Look for opportunities to be of service, and you’ll benefit in the long run, as well. Remember that you are not there only to take – be prepared to give as well.

5. **Follow up**: Self-discipline is all part of the process!!

6. **Have fun networking**
   Meeting new people can be fun. Catching up with former colleagues can be satisfying. Before you needed help, you may have been a person who kept to yourself. Your career and life was busy, but maybe something was missing. The missing piece was connections with others. No matter how far you go in the world, you’ll enjoy it more with great people you can count on and talk to.