Interviewing

Finished interview impressions

* Empathy overload, emotionally drained, after speaking XXX as so much of what she is experiencing was the same as me 2 years ago. A timely reminder that while I might be getting over it others are still experiencing the challenges of transition and that there continues to be a need for this research to be conducted.
* Shaken after reliving the death of a colleague in Iraq after finding out that the person I was interviewing not only knew the individual personally but was also on duty when the death occurred. Speaking of this particular incident always brings back memories of the individual involved (they way they used to answer the phone – abrupt bearing on the rude and the bunk we shared on an overseas staff ride) and thoughts of their family. It is not just one memory that resurfaces but a multitude and leaves me feeling unsettled, upset and a fraud. (that is not to say I was ever potentially in harms way but rather that I never specifically felt my life was in imminent danger, despite air raid sirens, security patrols, live armed guards and tactical landings in transport aircraft (perhaps normalising such things as routine which they definitely are not!?)) Whilst my own service career was in many ways (as far as I know) free of any life-threatening incidents my job meant I dealt with the aftermath of such events including the repatriation of soldiers who had died in combat and having to tell service personnel their loved ones had died while they were away on operations. While I have vivid memories of my limited operational experience I can claim only a partial understanding of personnel who faced danger on a daily basis nevertheless this understanding brought about by my service (both home and overseas) provides me with some appreciation of others who have faced more kinetic environments. Perhaps this is one of the reasons service personnel are reluctant to openly talk of their experiences. People like myself whose service careers rarely put them in harms way are acutely aware of how lucky they are compared to colleagues who have experienced combat. Meanwhile those who have experienced more life-threatening events have no real desire to relive those experiences and are wary of appearing to sensationalise or glorify operational military life where friends or colleagues have been injured or lost their lives. This presents a somewhat paradoxical situation for it is often these very incidents that we remember most vividly but feel uncomfortable talking about.