A JOB INTERVIEW is one of the most intimidating and nerve-racking hurdles to securing a new position—whether it’s your first interview or you’re an interview pro. To help you land that coveted position, here are some ideas for how to handle yourself during the interview and some smart ways to answer those tough questions that can trip you up.

But first, keep these points in mind as you head into the interview.

**Look your best.** You have about 30 seconds to make a first impression, so make it a good one. Dress professionally: Suits always are appropriate; avoid loud prints or revealing clothes.

**Be enthusiastic.** Show interest. Smile. Speak clearly.

**Be yourself.** Breathe normally and let your personality shine through. Just be yourself, which will help you relax and decrease your stress.

**Be prepared.** Make up a list of possible questions an interviewer might ask you, based on your résumé. Then jot down your answers. For example, suppose you were part of a start-up program in your last position; think about what skills you had that helped it succeed so you can explain your role in the program if asked.

**Get to know the organization.** Ask others in the community or current employees about the facility. Search the Internet, where you’re likely to find the facility’s Web site with lots of information.

**Be honest.** Present yourself in as positive a light as possible while still being truthful. Stress your skills that will help the employer, but also say that you’re willing to learn.

**Answering the toughies**

Here are some examples of typical questions employers ask and how you can respond to them.

- **Can you tell me a little about yourself?** Talk about your experience, qualifications, and accomplishments. Don’t mention your childhood, family, or hobbies. Personal information isn’t what your potential employer is looking for when asking this question.

- **Why do you want to work for us?**
Keep your answer positive. If this is a facility that you’ve wanted to work in for a while because you hear such great things about it, say so. But link that enthusiasm to reasons why you’d fit in well and what you can contribute.

• **How did you learn about us?** Tell the interviewer if a newspaper, friend, or another means led you there. Make clear that it wasn’t a random choice.

• **Can you tell me about your current/last job?** Talk about your duties, responsibilities, and any accomplishments. Stay positive. Now isn’t the time to sound off about your grumpy boss or poor working conditions.

• **Why are you leaving your current job?** Try to be truthful without getting personal. Good, solid reasons include wanting to move to another region or clinical area, seeking to learn new skills, being let go because of downsizing, and looking for growth.

• **What did you like most about that job?** Again, respond in terms of your responsibilities, accomplishments, and things you learned. Explain something that was meaningful to you, something that expanded your skills.

• **What would you change about that job?** Don’t bad-mouth your former employer. Simply say that you wanted to learn something different, grow, or expand your knowledge and opportunities. Stress something the new hospital offers that you’re seeking, such as more educational opportunities, rather than criticizing the other hospital’s lack of them.

• **Did you ever have a disagreement with a manager? If so, how did you handle it?** You can keep it general and say, “Sure, we disagreed at times, but we worked well together.” But if you’re pressed for an example, make it a work-related one, such as a disagreement over a project due date, rather than a personal one.

• **Can you tell me about your education and training?** Explain the education and training you referred to in your résumé. Be sure to say how it helped prepare you for the

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**If you’re asked a question you don’t know how to answer, say that you’d like to think about it. Jot it down, and move on.**
prospective job.

• Can you give an example of a major problem you faced and how you solved it? Think of something related to work, school, community, or leisure. Define the problem, identify options, and explain the solutions you used. The employer wants to see how you solve problems.

• What’s your greatest strength? Focus on work here and stay positive. For example, you might say, “I can see the big picture in a given situation” or “I’m good at organization.”

• What’s your greatest weakness? Focus on work with this one, not personality, and target one that you can turn into a positive.

• Which do you prefer: working alone or in a group? Stress that you’re comfortable with both roles but state your preference: “I prefer working as part of a team, but I also enjoy working individually to complete assignments.”

• What salary are you looking for? Here’s where research comes in handy. If you don’t already know the going rate or what this facility is offering, stay general with, “It’s negotiable.” If the interviewer persists, give a ballpark figure; for example, “I’m looking to earn in the upper 40s.”

• Do you have any questions for me? If you prepare for an interview by researching the facility, you’re more likely to have questions to ask. In doing research, start by asking around, tapping into people you know who work there. Look for published information about the facility, such as profiles in directories like this, and visit the facility’s Web site. When you arrive for the interview, scan the lobby or office for pamphlets that might offer more details.

If the interviewer asks a question that you can’t answer on the spot, take a deep breath, tell her that you’d like to think about that a minute, write it down, and move on. If you come up with an answer during the interview, say to the interviewer, “Getting back to your question about…” and then answer. Your goal should be to answer questions completely yet concisely. Don’t offer extra information that the interviewer didn’t ask.

Consider the interviewing process as just that—a process. Don’t get down on yourself. And whether you get this job or not, you can look on the interview as a learning experience that will serve you well as you interview for other positions. Good luck!

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