

Reducing Interview Stress

Five little things can easily derail your big moment if you don't prepare.

Posted on: November 9, 2015

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After months of responding to job postings, you finally land an interview.

This could be a pivotal moment in your life and career so it's natural to feel nervous. But there's no reason to let stress rule the day, says Lisa Quast, author of the book "Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want Every Time" (www.careerwomaninc.com).

"Life routinely throws us curves, and that's just as likely to happen on your job-interview day as any other day," Quast says. "Traffic could be bad. You might spill something on the blouse you planned to wear. Any number of things could go wrong that aren't directly related to the interview, but can knock you off your game."

While it's not possible to anticipate every scenario, Quast says a little preparation can help you keep the anxiety level manageable.

She offers these tips for navigating your interview day as stress free as possible:

- Know where you need to go. Don't wait until right before an interview to make sure you have the correct address and phone number. Verify these online by checking the company website a few days ahead of time. You also should download driving directions or program the address into your smart phone or GPS to find potential routes and estimated drive times. "When in doubt, do a trial run," Quast says. "You can drive there the weekend before to get the lay of the land and see where to park." Don't rely on technology alone. Always have a hard copy with the address and driving directions, just in case GPS or the smartphone fails you.
- Obtain the correctly spelled name of the interviewer. And remember, bring a printout of the job posting. "It always surprises me how many people show up for a job interview and can't remember the name of the hiring manager or even the job title of the position they're interviewing for," Quast says. "Don't be one of those people."
- Schedule enough time for the interview. Block your calendar so you won't need to rush from one job interview to the next, or go straight to another appointment or back to work. "The interview could take much longer than you think going in," Quast says. For example, if things are going well, you might be asked to interview with others in the organization. Be sure to schedule ample time in case you need to stay longer. "You don't want to be stealing quick glances at your watch when you should be listening to what the hiring manager is saying," Quast says.
- Turn off your cell phone. "When I say off, I mean off," Quast says. "Don't put it on vibrate." The reason, she says, is that almost everyone can hear a cell phone vibrating in a purse, briefcase or pocket. You will be aware that a call is coming in for you. The people interviewing you will be aware. And you will be aware that they are aware.
- Take a bathroom break before the interview. Use the restroom before you leave your house and avoid too much coffee or other liquids shortly before your interview. If you need to use the bathroom when you arrive at the company, ask the receptionist to point you to them before he or she informs the hiring manager that you have arrived.

"One additional thing you can do is give yourself a pep talk before the interview," Quast says. "Mentally remind yourself of all the things you plan to do during the interview, the points you want to make about your experience and the questions you have about the company."

"You may not be able to eliminate all the butterflies, but your preparation should help reduce the stress and let you concentrate on making the most of the opportunity."

Lisa Quast is a career coach, a business consultant and author of the book "Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want Every Time" (www.careerwomaninc.com).

