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Ace the Interview. Win the Job!

Secret Coaching Tips and Tools to Make Behavioral Interviews a Breeze

If it's been a while since you interviewed for a job, you might be in for a surprise. Gone are the days when a job interview consisted of predictable questions about your strengths, weaknesses, skills, experience and education. Today's most common interviews – called behavioral interviews – dig below the surface of your answers in an effort to predict the future. If you're not prepared, it can be an unnerving experience.

I have a confession. I love behavioral interviews. They are like old friends.

I first began using behavioral interviews as a manager in the early 1980's and found them to be an excellent tool to quickly separate the 'talkers' from the 'doers'. In the 1990's, as a corporate executive, I used behavioral interviews to identify the top talent required to build award winning, high performance teams. For the past ten years, as an executive coach and leadership consultant, my behavioral interviews have been the secret weapon in the executive selection process for many of my corporate clients. Once the client company narrows the field of candidates down to the finalists, they call me in to conduct an in-depth behavioral interview with each finalist. And, of course, I've helped many coaching clients prepare for behavioral interviews.

Until now, I've never given away my secret coaching tips and tools for behavioral interviewing success.

Why would I give away my secrets now? Simple.

The economic crisis has left many highly talented, successful professionals searching for work. Some of these folks haven't had to look for a job or interview for a job in 20 years. Their track record brought jobs to their doors. Recruiters were calling them. Competitors were calling them. Job opportunities were plentiful.... Until now.

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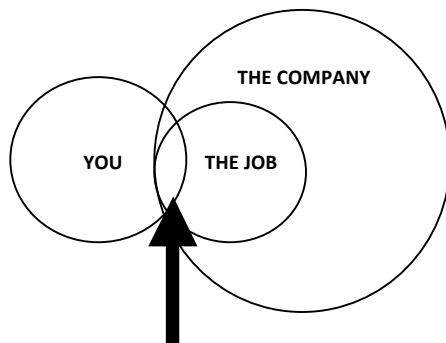
High achieving, talented professionals are my tribe. I want to do my part to help during these tough times.

What is a behavioral interview?

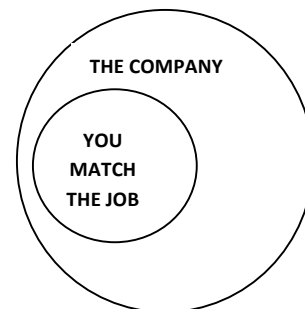
A behavioral interview is an interviewing technique developed by industrial psychologists. It is based upon the premise your past behaviors and results are the best predictors of your future behaviors and results. Before conducting a behavioral interview, the organization identifies the behavioral competencies and skill sets considered to be keys to success in the job. Mastery of these competencies and skills is what the interviewer wants to see during your interview.

In a behavioral interview, you will be asked to talk about what you did in past situations that presented a specific type of challenge. As you answer, the interviewer listens for evidence of the predetermined skill sets and behavioral competencies. Learning how you handled these situations and what outcomes you achieved gives the interviewer a window into who you are and how well you are suited to the job.

Think about it like this. On paper, your skills, education and experience must match the job requirements in order for you to be given an interview. But that's not good enough. Landing the job depends upon how well the interviewer believes your past actions fit the behavioral competencies needed to be successful in the job. Your goal in the interview process is to clearly and compellingly convince the interviewer that you can deliver what the job demands – *in terms of these behavioral competencies*.



You get an interview when your resume shows skills, education and experience that overlap with the requirements of the job and company.



You get the job when you demonstrate behavioral mastery of key competencies and skills and the ability to achieve results valued by the company.

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How do I know what skill sets and behavioral competencies the interviewer wants to see?

The truth is there may not be any way for you to know for certain. However, while you don't have a crystal ball, you can do a few things to make an educated guess about what is important in the job for which you are interviewing.

1. **Check out the scope and magnitude of the job.** As responsibility, accountability and authority increase, the importance of effective decision-making, leadership, collaboration, communication and conflict resolution also increase.

Coaching Tip: Make a list of situations – at work and in your personal life – where your decision-making skills and leadership played a key role in achieving a big goal.

2. **Determine the number of stakeholders with which the position regularly interacts.** As the number of stakeholders increases, the political complexity and visibility of the position increases. In addition to the skills mentioned in number 1 above, you need to be able to effectively and creatively problem solve, negotiate and influence.

Coaching Tip: Identify three politically complex situations that you successfully resolved. What did you do in all three situations that led to you being successful? What were the common threads in your actions?

3. **Discover what the company's culture is.** If the company prides itself on innovation, you need to demonstrate creativity and ingenuity. If the company prides itself on following the book, you need to highlight your ability to make a plan and work the plan.

Coaching Tip: Know what type of culture you work best in. Do you thrive with lots of change or do you prefer consistency of direction? How well does your preference match the company's culture?

4. **Figure out the biggest challenges facing the profession or industry in which the company is situated.** More than likely, these are also important issues for the company that is interviewing you. If growing market share is a key focus within the industry, then you may want to demonstrate your abilities in that area. If profitability is an issue, you

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may want to highlight your ability to gross revenues and control costs. Many times professional or industry associations are excellent sources of this information.

Coaching Tip: What challenge have you encountered that is similar to ones faced by the company? In what way is your challenge related to the company's challenges? How did you handle it?

5. **Talk to someone who has a job like the one for which you are interviewing.** Use your extensive social network to connect with someone who is doing the job. Ask them what they see as the most crucial components of success. Ask them what their biggest challenge is. Pick their brain... in a friendly, respectful manner, of course. And, don't forget to express your appreciation for their help.

Coaching Tip: Don't fall into the trap of being the Lone Ranger. Doing everything by your self is inefficient, slow and short-sighted.

Coaching Tool: Look back over your answers to the questions above. Make a list of what you believe are the most important aspects of the job and the most significant challenges the company is facing. These become critical reference points to tie back into your answers during the interview.

How do I give the interviewer the answer they want without coming across as fake?

First, let me be clear. You must be truthful in your behavioral interview. Trying to 'game' the system by giving the 'right' answer when it may be inaccurate or less than honest will ultimately backfire on you. In addition to competencies and skills, an interviewer also listens for the consistency, confidence and ease in which you respond. If you try to project a persona that is not authentic or true, the interviewer will smell it and you will lose credibility.

The secret to successfully and authentically navigating through a behavioral interview is to invest some time beforehand to identify which aspects of yourself you most want to highlight in the interview. All of us are multi-faceted mosaics. Who do you want the interviewer to see? Ideally, you want to choose those aspects of yourself that most closely align with the skill sets, behavioral competencies and organizational culture you suspect are important in the position you are interviewing for. It's a bit like selecting an outfit from your closet that best suits the occasion. If you're headed to a cocktail party, the

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little black dress and stiletto heels may be perfect. On the other hand, if you're off to play tennis, shorts and tennis shoes are more appropriate. Here's the important point. Regardless of what you are wearing, it's still the real you.

Here are some coaching questions designed to help you find the aspects of your authentic self you most want to showcase during the interview. Jot down your first answer to each question and then put some additional thought into each question. Dig a little deeper and see what other insights surface.

Coaching Tip: This exercise will also help you a little later when you determine how to best stand out in the mind of the interviewer, or, in other words, when you create your personal brand or Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Remember, if you want the job, it's not enough to be competent in your interview answers. You must be positively memorable in the mind of the interviewer to rise above the crowd.

Coaching Tools:

1. Who (meaning which aspects of yourself) do you want the interviewer to see?
2. What character traits and abilities have always helped you to be your most successful?
3. What values do you hold dear? How do these values show up in your work?
4. What professional accomplishments are you most proud of? Why?
5. What character attributes contributed to these accomplishments?



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Coaching Tip: Looking back over your answers to the questions above, you should begin to see a picture emerging. As you connect the dots, you will discover your authentic self that best aligns with the job. This is who you want the interviewer to meet through your answers. Write one sentence that accurately captures your authentic self that best aligns with the job.

Coaching Tip: All of us are naturally skeptical – including the person who is conducting your interview. When explaining what you have done in the past and what you can do in the future, go the extra step and answer the interviewer’s unasked questions of “So What? Why should I care?” Clearly tie your actions to the benefit the employer will receive. Don’t assume the interviewer will naturally see the value in what you do. If you are an expert at building high performance teams don’t stop there when describing your skills. Tell the interviewer you build high performance teams which help the company cut costs and improve customer loyalty by achieving goals more effectively and efficiently. Then give a real example from your past work experience to illustrate the point. If possible, highlight the value-added benefits that match what the company most needs.

Coaching Tool: Thinking about your answers to the questions above, write a one sentence description of what you can do for an employer and why the employer should care. Answer the ‘so what’ question before it derails your interview. You’ve probably heard of the 10 second elevator speech that people use to quickly describe their business. *The sentence you just wrote now becomes your 10 second ‘interview show and tell’.* It is a verbal business card that you can hand out several times during the interview.

What kinds of questions can I expect during a behavioral interview?

For most of us, interviews and questions naturally go together like peanut butter and jelly. Be warned. In a behavioral interview, questions often play second fiddle to a directive request. For example, in a behavioral interview, you might hear something like this:

Describe a team experience you found disappointing.

Then, after you’ve responded to the request and just when you think you’ve made safely to the other side, the interviewer might surprise you with this question.

What could you have done to prevent it?

There are lots of good examples of plain vanilla behavioral interview “questions” on the internet. I strongly encourage you to take a look at some of these resources and become very familiar with what you may be asked. Remember these are generic. Your actual interviewer will be asking “questions” specially designed to address key competencies required in the job for which you are interviewing. [Quintessential Careers offers examples of behavioral interview questions on their website.](#) Take a look.

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Coaching Tip: Read over these sample questions and begin to craft your first draft of answers. Don't worry about getting your answers 'perfect' at this time. That will come later. What you are doing now is laying a strong foundation upon which you can add pizzazz and style so as to stand out in a crowded field. We'll get to that later.

What is the best way to answer behavioral questions?

In general, the basic skeleton of your answers should include the following components *in this order*.

1. Explain the **SITUATION, ISSUE** or **CHALLENGE** you were facing in one or two sentences.
2. Describe the **ACTION** you took in response to the situation, issue or challenge.
3. Share the **OUTCOME** or **RESULT** that you achieved.
4. Spotlight the **BENEFIT** gained from your outcome or result. If there are more than one benefit, emphasize the one that you believe would be most meaningful to your potential employer. Answer the "so what?" question lingering in the interviewer's mind.

These four components are the meat of your answer.

Coaching Tip: When answering, it's important that you be focused, clear, concise, targeted and compelling. Don't bore the interviewer. Provide enough detail so the interviewer can grasp the scope and complexity of the situation and your actions, but don't get caught in the trap of talking too much. Resist the temptation to launch into a long and involved description and analysis of every aspect of the situation. Get to the point and make it relevant to what you know to be important in the job for which you are interviewing. Be engaging. Remember, in addition to listening for your behavioral competencies, a masterful interviewer is evaluating your emotional and social intelligence, your communication skills, your self-awareness and how effectively you create relationships with other people.

Coaching Tool: Watch the interviewer as you talk. Is the interviewer really engaged in listening to you or has she checked out? You must keep the interviewer's interest and attention! Lose the interviewer's interest and you lose the job.

If the interviewer is really engaged, pay attention to what you said that piqued her interest. That's an important clue to what may be important to her. You will want to build on that in your other answers.

If the interviewer seems to be just going through the motions, check in with yourself. What are you doing that has caused the interviewer to lose interest? More often than not, you are talking too much and not saying anything of real value. Choose your words wisely. Make them count.

Coaching Tool: When the interviewer appears to be fading away, getting bored or becoming impatient, you need to take decisive action to shift the dynamic and re-energize the interview space. This is a great time to wrap up your answer with a question. Ask the interviewer a pertinent, powerful and open ended question and then shut up and give her space to answer. (An open ended question is one that can't be answered with a simple yes or no.) Your question



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snaps her back to attention and requires her to more fully engage in the conversation. Think of it like ringing the interviewer's door bell as she's dozing off on the couch in front of TV. Your question first startles her, then jolts her wide awake and, finally, makes her open the door to see who's there.

For example, let's say you were answering the request I listed above: *Describe a team experience you found disappointing.* As you are answering, you notice the interviewer's gaze appears to be more detached and a bit distracted. She's fiddling with her ink pen and trying to steal glances at the clock on the wall. These are clues you have lost her attention. Wind down your answer as quickly as possible and then – without pausing – immediately ask the interviewer an open ended question.

Make the question personal to the interviewer and directly related to your potential employer and job. The more specific you can make the question, the better. If you were interviewing for the position of Vice President of Operations, the question might be something like this: *"In your experience, what seems to be the toughest challenges faced by the operations team in this tough economic climate?"* Bingo! You've got her attention now.

Let me break the question down to show you how I made it personal and pertinent.

"In your experience [personal to the interviewer], what seems to be the toughest challenges faced by the operations team [pertinent to the VP of Ops position] in this tough economic climate [pertinent to the company's marketplace]?"

How can I stand out from the crowd of other applicants?

Take a moment and think back to the most memorable moments in your life. Maybe it was the birth of your child... or the day you got married... or the day you were handed that #@%\$* pink slip. Pleasant or unpleasant, what do all of these memorable events have in common? You guessed it. They each triggered an emotional reaction within you.

Research shows that we are much more likely to remember events and people who trigger an emotional response. But you didn't need a bunch of scientists to tell you that emotion is the secret sauce to memories. Consider... The forgettable book you never bothered to finish reading compared to the horror movie that had you sitting on the edge of your seat chewing your fingernails as your heart pounded and your eyes were glued to the screen.

What separates the forgettable from the unforgettable? Emotion.

Once you've become familiar with the 'meat' of a behavioral interview, it's time to spice up your answers with some secret sauce of emotion. And, just like all spices, it's important not to overdo it. You want just the right amount of the right emotions in the right places. Too little secret sauce and you'll be boring and bland. Too much secret sauce and you'll be overwhelming. It's like motivating and inspiring your direct reports. You've got to use the right amount of emotion at the right time.

I see you scratching your head in puzzlement..."How do I bring emotion into an *interview*? After all, this is *business*." The answer is simple.

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An interview is simply an opportunity for you to tell your best stories.

Share your high impact stories. By their very nature, high impact stories elicit authentic emotional responses from you as you re-live the experience when telling the story. The presence of emotion in your voice makes the story come alive for the interviewer and sparks the interviewer's own emotions as she imagines herself in your shoes.

In *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers*, Chris Vogler, an executive story consultant for major motion picture hits like *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*, observes:

In any good story the hero grows and changes, making a journey from one way of being to the next: from despair to hope, weakness to strength, folly to wisdom, love to hate, and back again. It's these emotional journeys that hook an audience and make a story worth watching.

When you tell your high impact stories, you are the hero of your story. Take the interviewer on the journey with you. As you tell your stories, don't be afraid to admit you might have had some misgivings or frustrations when confronted with the challenge. This is perfectly normal. The key is to show how well you recognized your emotions and worked through them successfully. This gives the interviewer some sense of your EQ.

Expand the structure that we've already identified as the 'meat' of a behavioral interview to include a little secret sauce of emotion. While it may vary depending upon the story you are telling, the basic structure will now look something like this:

1. Explain the **SITUATION, ISSUE** or **CHALLENGE** you were facing in one or two sentences.
Secret Sauce: How did you feel about the situation, issue or challenge? Exhilarated? Apprehensive? Determined? Frustrated? Inspired? Guilty?
2. Describe the **ACTION** you took in response to the situation, issue or challenge.
Secret Sauce: How did you feel about the action you took? Scared? Confident? Hesitant?
3. Share the **OUTCOME** or **RESULT** that you achieved.
Secret Sauce: How did you feel about the outcome? Satisfied? Proud? Disappointed? Thrilled? Surprised?
4. Spotlight the **BENEFIT** gained from your outcome or result. If there is more than one benefit, emphasize the one that you believe would be most meaningful to your potential employer. Answer the "so what?" question lingering in the interviewer's mind.
Secret Sauce: How did you, the team and the company feel about the benefit? Relieved? Motivated? Excited?

Coaching Tip: If you have trouble identifying your feelings (and lots of people do), the website [Guide to Psychology](http://www.Guide to Psychology) has a list of feelings categorized by basic emotion. Read over the list to help you remember the myriad of feelings we experience.

If two job applicants are equally matched on education, experience, expertise and behavioral competencies, the candidate that does the best job of emotionally engaging the interviewer in a positive

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manner will stand out in the mind of the interviewer and dramatically increase the odds of winning the job.

Vogler continues.

Human emotions, it seems, have certain elastic properties, rather like basketballs. When thrown down hard, they bounce back high. In any story you are trying to lift the audience, raise their awareness, heighten their emotions. The structure of a story acts like a pump to increase the involvement of the audience. Good structure works by alternately lowering and raising the hero's fortunes and, with them, the audience's emotions. Depressing an audience's emotions has the same effect as holding an inflated basketball under water: When the downward pressure is released, the ball flies up out of the water.... In an amusement park ride you are hurled around in darkness or on the edge of space until you think you're going to die, but somehow you come out elated that you have survived. A story without some hint of this experience is missing its heart.

Find the heart of your high impact stories.



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Coaching Tool: Make a list of three to five high impact stories from your personal and professional experiences. A high impact story is one that presented a compelling situation or challenge that had to be overcome on the way to achieving significant results. A high impact story could also be called a “Wow! That’s amazing!” story. If you tend to be overly modest and humble, ask your colleagues, friends and family to help you identify your high impact stories.

1. Write an attention getting headline for each story.
2. Identify the emotions elicited. Include both the lows and the highs.
3. How do your high impact stories illustrate your authentic self that best aligns with the job?
4. Based upon what you know about the job, the company and the industry, what aspects of your high impact stories will most likely resonate with the interviewer?
5. How do your high impact stories reinforce your “10 second interview show and tell” statement?

Coaching Tip: Using your high impact stories, tie your previous homework together into a consistent, coherent and compelling message that accurately reflects the authentic you, the competencies you bring to the job and how it aligns with the needs of the prospective job and company. This becomes your ‘brand’ or your Unique Selling Proposition (USP). Repeat this message periodically during your interview. Research shows that moderate repetition of a message increases the chances of the listener remembering and accepting the message. Each time you repeat your core message, you want to slightly tailor it to fit the context of what you are discussing. Be careful to not overdo it. Too much repetition can actually decrease the listener’s willingness to accept your message. Check out The American Management Association’s quick summary of researcher Carl Houland’s [Principles of Persuasion](#) for more helpful tips.

What if I’m not sure how to answer something?

Regardless of how well you prepare, in every interview there is usually at least one curveball. That one question or request that catches you off guard and leaves you stumbling for a coherent, intelligent answer. Use this to your advantage. Chances are the interviewer purposely designed the question to see how well you could think on your feet or handle the unexpected. When I conduct an interview, I always make sure to ask one almost impossible question just to see how the person reacts.

Coaching Tip: Instead of getting flustered, talking in circles or becoming tongue tied, just take a deep breath, smile at the interviewer and say, “That’s a great question. I need to think about it a minute.” Then collect yourself and in that minute see if you can find an intelligent link between the question being asked and what you know. If do find a good answer, great. If you don’t find a good answer, don’t make up something. Just come clean and tell the interviewer you don’t know. Better that you be honest and classy rather than desperate and bumbling.

Coaching Tool: If you have problems saying “I don’t know,” practice this before the interview. You may want to also take a closer look at how your reluctance to admit you don’t know something may be hampering your effectiveness as a leader.



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Note: If you find yourself saying “I don’t know” more than once or, at most, twice in an interview, it shows you didn’t prepare well enough for the interview. Learn from the experience and prepare better before your next interview.

What if I’ve been laid off or fired? How do I answer questions about that?

This is an opportunity to demonstrate your maturity, open-mindedness and honesty. Answering questions about being laid off or getting fired can be uncomfortable. It’s important that you don’t let anxiety, embarrassment or anger derail your interview. If you handle these kinds of questions masterfully, it adds points in your favor. Don’t be tempted to fudge on the facts. Potential employers can easily access this kind of information. They will find out if you are being less than fully truthful.

Simply tell the facts of the situation without any hint of blaming or complaining. Don’t dwell on the event and don’t go into unnecessary detail.

Coaching Tip: Practice your answer with a friend or coach who is willing to tell you if there is even the slightest hint of bitterness or whining showing up in your tone of voice, body language or words.

If you were laid off, in a business-like manner, relay the company facts and the larger market context precipitating your job loss. To bring perspective, discuss your lay-off within the larger scope of your previous employer’s corrective actions. Acknowledge the impact of losing your job. Finally, focus on the future by firmly positioning yourself as being a motivated and strong contributor in your next position.

“With the current banking crisis, the company lost two critical contracts and had to quickly reduce operating expenses by 30% in order to stay afloat. After much investigation, it was determined the best course of action was to outsource all public relations to a private firm. That eliminated the Public Relations Department and, consequently, my job as Director of PR. While it has been a hardship for my family and I was sad to leave my previous employer, I totally understand why it was necessary for the company to take this action. Now I’m eager to bring my PR expertise to a new challenge and feel like your company is a perfect fit for my skills and experience.”

If you were fired, be responsible and accountable for your actions and role in creating the situation. Remember what your mother told you about learning from your mistakes? Now is a great time to demonstrate that ability. Don’t make being fired your employer’s fault.

Coaching Tip: If you can’t see where you had any responsibility for the chain of events, work with a coach to examine the situation from many different perspectives. More than likely, you have a blind spot that, if left unseen, may sabotage your future success.

Answer honestly without any hint of anger, resentment or bitterness towards your previous employer. Try to see the situation from your employer’s perspective. Avoid making excuses for or rationalizing your actions. Don’t justify or defend yourself. Express remorse over the incident. Give the basic facts and, if possible, put your firing into a larger context of your overall job performance. Watch your tone of voice, words and body language to make you come across as simply factual. Make a statement regarding what you have learned from the unfortunate situation and what you intend to do (or have

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done) differently moving forward. Express gratitude for the learning opportunity. End with a strong statement reflecting your determination to be a strong contributor.

"I was terminated from my last position when I lost my temper with a co-worker. In looking back at the situation, I clearly see where I made a mistake and I sincerely regret my actions.

My team had been working overtime for months on a big project for our most important client. All of us were under constant stress and pressure. Unfortunately, during the review phase, my colleague overlooked a design flaw in a mission critical component. Six months later the project suffered a fatal event due to the missed design flaw. The failure cost us the client.

When I realized my colleague had missed the flaw, I lost my temper and yelled at him in front of the entire team. I just snapped in the moment. I had never done anything like that in my professional career. In fact, just the month before, my boss had given me an outstanding performance appraisal. When I realized what I had done, I was embarrassed and deeply sorry.

I learned several valuable lessons from this experience for which I'm very grateful. One lesson was that I needed to better manage my stress. Another lesson was that I had to be more tolerant of others. I am determined I will not lose my temper again. Since being fired, I have taken an anger management class, learned meditation to decrease my stress level and worked with an executive coach to improve my emotional intelligence.

As tough as this experience has been, it's actually been a blessing. I've grown as a person. With my new awareness and tools, I intend to not only be a valuable contributor in my next position, but I also want to be a role model and mentor to help junior associates develop the emotional intelligence and tools to prevent burnout."

Coaching Tool: What have you learned from being fired? In what way has your firing been a blessing in disguise? What new wisdom or tools will you bring to your next job as a direct result of being terminated? What is the connection between your actions that led to you being terminated and your authentic best self?

How do I keep calm, cool and collected during a job interview?

A few butterflies before an interview are normal and can even be helpful. A little stress often helps us up our game and do a better job. However, an interview shouldn't be a full blown stress test. If the idea of interviewing throws you into a panic, you need to stop the destructive stress or – at the bare minimum – manage it better.

Here's the good news. You've got complete control over your stress. Stress comes from your perception of the events surrounding you. It comes from how you think about things. The bottom line? Stress is in your head. A good coach can help you recognize your stress triggers (which often are unconscious) and teach you how to permanently shift your thinking to dramatically decrease stress.



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Coaching Tip: Stress is a by-product of feeling like your physical, emotional or spiritual well being is being threatened. Feeling threatened throws you into a subtle or, in some instances, not so subtle state of fear. Your body reacts by kicking off your stress reaction and mobilizing your defenses.

Coaching Tool: When you are stressed, ask yourself this key question: “What am I afraid of?” Each time you answer the question, look at that answer and ask again, “What am I afraid of?” Slowly you will peel back the onion to get at the heart of what you are most concerned about. Be warned. This is not a ‘logical’ exercise. Suspend your need to be logical and just listen to your innermost voice without judgment. Once you’ve arrived at the heart of the fear, ask yourself: “What would I do if that happened?” This exercise surfaces your deepest concerns and moves you into action coming up with a plan in the ‘worst case scenario’. Having identified alternative courses of action frees you up to relax in the moment, focus on the challenge at hand and perform at your best.

There are a lot of other good tools for managing stress. Investigate these tools:

- Belly breathing to trigger deep relaxation (you can do this before and during the interview)
- Meditation to calm the mind
- Exercise
- Visualize yourself being successful in the interview

Four final pieces of advice on staying calm, cool and collected during interviews.

1. Do your homework. Be well prepared for the interview. Practice your key messages.
2. Wear clothes (appropriate to the situation and the company) that make you feel confident.
3. Get enough sleep the night before.
4. Give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview without feeling rushed.

Bonus: 10 Common Interview Mistakes You Do Not Want to Make

Most folks know it’s important to make eye contact during an interview and to avoid appearing to be too focused on things like salary, benefits and vacation. Here are 10 other common interview mistakes you do not want to make.

1. **Giving the interviewer total control.** The best interviews are a dynamic exchange of information between people. It’s a conversation. Think of the interview as a snapshot of how you relate to other people. Respectfully and appropriately take the lead during some portion of the interview.
2. **Talking too much.** Nothing is more boring than someone who talks too much. This tells the interviewer that you don’t have enough self-awareness to know when you’ve made your point and you don’t have enough self-control to stop talking.
3. **Not talking enough.** Clam up and you’re going to come across as scared to death, arrogant, stingy, uptight or rigid. Who wants to work with someone like that?
4. **Answering a question when you’re not sure what is really being asked.** When in doubt, ask the interviewer to clarify what they are asking you. It’s better to be sure you are answering what they asked than go off in the wrong direction and look silly.

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5. **Being oblivious to the interviewer's subtle body language and facial expressions.** Watch the interviewer for subtle signs that tell you how interested he is in what you are saying. This gives you the feedback to stay the course or make corrections as you go.
6. **Interrupting the interviewer when he's talking.** This is the kiss of death in an interview. It signals that you are impatient, a poor listener and disrespectful.
7. **Getting stuck in details that don't matter.** Be mindful of what's important to share in an interview. You want to give just enough details to adequately convey the situation, but not so many that the key talking points of your story are lost. Giving too many details tells the interviewer that you don't know how to prioritize and distinguish important information from less important information. Being able to effectively identify important details is a critical component to good decision-making and problem-solving.
8. **Unconscious, nervous habits that annoy or distract the interviewer.** Do you have any annoying habits that appear when you are stressed or deep in concentration or thought? This is probably a blind spot for you so ask someone who will tell you the truth. Some examples are fidgeting with ink pens, diverting your eyes towards the ceiling before answering each question, frequent clearing of the throat or nervous smiling.
9. **Being too narrow in your focus.** A one note song gets monotonous. Look for ways to expand your answers to address many important dimensions. For instance, you could relate short-term goals to long-term goals or company needs to market trends. Think micro and macro.
10. **Not asking the interviewer thought-provoking questions.** Don't be timid. Ask the interviewer some well prepared questions that make her stop and think before she responds. This gives you valuable information about how the interviewer thinks, what's important to the company and what you need to know before you decide to take the job.

*****Here's One More Mistake To Avoid*****

11. **Being too staid.** Ingenuity, innovation and creativity are absolutely key to long-term success in today's business world. Loosen up and be spontaneous, warm and engaging.