



Webinar Series

United Spinal Association

Your Pathway to Employment: The Job Interview

Barbara L. Kornblau, JD, OTR/L
Bill Fertig



Barbara L. Kornblau



**Program Manager United Spinal Association
Pathways to Employment Program**

Bill Fertig



Director
United Spinal Association Resource Center

Polling Question 1

Have you ever had a job interview that made you feel uncomfortable?

A. Yes

B. No

Before the Interview

- Learn as much as possible about the company, employer, interviewer
- Prepare, prepare, prepare
 - decide on three or four messages you want to convey to the interviewer.
 - These should “show the connection between what you have achieved and what is really needed to succeed in the specific job and context,”
- Turn off your cell phone
- Prepare your opening

Gallo, A., (2012, September 26) Stand Out in Your Interview. Harvard Business Review.
Available from <https://hbr.org/2012/09/stand-out-in-your-interview>

Interview Advice

- First impressions are important.
- In business school they tell people:
 - “Walk with confidence.”
 - Body Language
 - Handshakes
 - Expectation is to look the interviewer in the eyes give handshake with 3-4 firm pumps.
 - What can you say or do to make up for not being able to “look ‘em in the eye and give 3-4 firm pumps?”

Interview Advice

- Have a strategy to make the interviewer comfortable.
- Turn perceived weaknesses into strengths
- Draw attention to the strengths you bring to the job and stress those strengths
- Explain how you do things

Interview Checklist

Before the Interview

If possible, find out the names of the interviewers in advance

Find out what you can about the interviewers (Google, Linked-in etc.)

Review possible interview questions

Know 3 strengths and 3 weaknesses

Wear business attire

Arrive a few minutes early

Bring extra copies of your resume for all interviewers

Be positive

Stress your strengths

Make the interviewer feel comfortable with you

Ask for business cards from all interviewers

Interview questions

- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, it is illegal to ask questions about your disability or questions that will reveal information about your disability.
- It is also illegal to ask questions of a person with a disability that are not asked of people without disabilities who are applying for the same job.
- Other laws forbid employers from asking questions about your age, arrest record, or marital status.

Illegal Interview Questions

- Why were you out of work for 9 months?
- How are you going to do your job from a wheelchair?
- How did you become disabled?
- Why do you use a wheelchair?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Have you ever filed a claim for workers' compensation?
- I see you have a gap in your employment. What did you do during that period of time?

More Illegal Interview Questions

- How much can you lift?
- How far can you walk?
- Do you have a driver's license? (If the job doesn't require driving or if a reasonable accommodation can't eliminate the driving)
- Does your wife or husband or roommate have a disability?
- Who takes care of your disabled husband (or wife)?
- Have you ever been injured in an accident?
- Do you have any physical conditions that would prevent you from doing your job?

More Illegal Questions

- Have you ever been hospitalized?
- Have you ever had a problem with the illegal use of drugs?
- Have you ever had a problem with alcohol?
- Have you ever had a disease or illness that caused you to miss work?
- Have you ever failed a drug test?
- How did you lose your arm, or leg, or eye or eye sight?
- How did you get burned?
- Have you been in a wheelchair your whole life?
- Have you ever seen a psychiatrist?

Acceptable interview questions

- The job you are applying for requires lifting 5 pounds from the floor to a table several times each hour. Are you able to do that?
- Have you held a job like this in the past and were you able to perform all of the duties?
- Can you explain (or show me) how you would move files from the file room to the front desk?
- This job requires that you drive to the blood bank twice a day. Could you do that and do you have a valid driver's license?
- We start our workday at 8 AM. Would you be able to get to work on time?
- Are you currently using illegal drugs?
- Are you able to climb a ladder? (if this is an essential job function)

Acceptable Interview Questions

- How would you reach the top drawer of the file cabinet from your wheelchair?
- Are you able to work around flashing lights?
- Can you work around dusty conditions?
- Show me how you would do.....(an essential job function)?
- Explain how you would do.....(an essential job function)?
- Would you be able to keep up with the production standards for this position?
- This is a high-pressure position with many deadlines, a loud work environment and lots of constant activity. Can you work under these conditions?
- Here is the job description. Can you do the essential functions of the job with or without a reasonable accommodation?

Dealing with Difficult or Illegal Questions

- If the interviewer asks you questions that are illegal or uncomfortable because of your disability, there are several strategies available to you. You can always respond by saying
 - "If you mean, 'Can I meet the demands of the job,' yes, I can." Or "I'd prefer to discuss my qualifications for this job, which are XXXXXX."

Four Options for Illegal Questions

1. You can briefly answer the question anyway even though you feel uncomfortable doing so.
2. You can respond to the intent of the question. (ie, “I can assure you that I am able to perform the job and meet all of the job demands.”)
3. You can ignore the question and change the subject. (ie. “Let me tell you about my last job.”)
4. Refuse to answer the question. Tell the interviewer that the question is not legal or relevant to the specific job requirements.

Your Dilemma

- Though they can't ask the illegal questions, you may want to answer the intent of the questions before they ask them
 - some of the information the questions seek may be advantageous to you to provide.
- Consider providing some of the information to the interviewer without the need for the interviewer to *ask* the illegal questions

Examples

- “I suppose you are wondering how I could run a server if I don’t have full use of my hands. Let me tell you some amazing strategies that I use.”
- “You must be wondering how I could work as an _____ from a wheelchair? Let me explain.”
- You are probably thinking that this job couldn’t possibly be done by someone who has my disability. There are some very simple reasonable accommodations that I use to enable me to do the job.

Questions to Ask at the Interview

- What is a typical workday like?
- What is the culture in the workplace?
- Is there anything I haven't told you that I can clarify for you?

Closing the Deal

- Summarize your qualifications for the position
- Thank the interviewer
- “Do you have any concerns about my ability to do well in this job?”

Interview Checklist

After the Interview

Prepare individual thank you notes/emails to all interviewers

Make notes about ideas for the next interview: the good, the bad and the ugly

Discuss the interview with your Mentor for advice for future interviews



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Feel free to contact Barbara Kornblau with any questions you may have or if you are interested in participating in our Pathways to Employment Program in New York, New Jersey, or Pennsylvania

Email: BarbaraKornblau@gmail.com

Email: bfertig@unitedspinal.org