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The Stress Interview

Melissa Morrow had an unusual job interview a few weeks ago. The interviewer asked her several strange questions. He asked her why she couldn't work under pressure and immediately another question which was whether or not she'd cleaned out her car recently. Those questions came to Melissa as a shock and she asked him if he was going to get down to business. Finally, she ended the interview politely.

Such kinds of interviews are stress interviews. In a stress interview, the interviewer tries to ask tough questions and sometimes tricky ones to see how the interviewee reacts to pressure. The stress interview can be appropriate for certain jobs like television news anchor and the plant's public relations officer in a nuclear power plant as they have to handle pressure in some way in their positions, but such interviewing is not needed when hiring people as accountants or computer programmers. Unfortunately, the stress interview can also work against the company even when it is appropriate for the position. A lot of even good candidates refuse to work for the company after they experience the hostile atmosphere of the interview.

Candidates have to bear in mind that not all tough questions indicate a stress interview. Asking about one's age or marital status is considered illegal in the States unless it's directly related to the job. If you think such questions are not related to the job you can refuse to answer. Finally, all interviews make candidates feel stressed and you should expect it and learn how to respond to it calmly.

1. What did the interviewer ask Melissa first?

He asked her why she couldn't work under pressure.

2. What did the interviewer want to know about Melissa's application?

He wanted to know who had written her application letter for her.

3. How did Melissa feel in the interview?

She felt shocked, but she handled herself well.

4. What is the stress interview?

It's a type of job interview that features tough, tricky questions, long silences, and negative evaluation of the candidate.

5. What do candidates think about the stress interview?

Stress interviews seem like unnecessary nastiness on the part of the interviewer.

6. When is a stress interview helpful?

It's helpful when hiring people who are going to work under pressure.

7. How does the hostile atmosphere of a stress interview help the employer?

It gives the employer a chance to watch a candidate react to pressure.

8. Is stress interviewing appropriate for all jobs?

No, it is not appropriate for all jobs.

9. Can you name some job candidates that do not need to go through the stress interview?

Yes, for example accountants and computer programmers are not supposed to work under pressure so there is no need to put them under pressure in the interview.

10. How can a stress interview work against a company even if it's appropriate for the position?

A lot of interviewees refuse to work for the company after they experience the hostile atmosphere of a stress interview.

11. Under what condition are questions like "How old are you?" and "Are you married?" illegal?

Such questions are illegal if they are not directly related to the job.

12. How can we stay poised in interviews?

If we expect pressure in interviews and learn how to control our responses, we will stay calm even in a stress interview.