

High-Intermediate 2
Unit 6: Reading
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The Stress Interview

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stress = nervous tension, anxiety, pressure

Why can't you work under pressure?
Have you cleaned your car recently?
Who wrote your application letter for you?
Do I really want this job?

A few weeks ago, Melissa Morrow had an unusual job interview. First, the interviewer asked why she couldn't work under pressure. Before she could answer, he asked if she had cleaned out her car recently. Then he wanted to know who had written her application letter for her. Melissa was shocked, but she handled herself well. She asked the interviewer whether he was going to ask her serious questions. Then she politely ended the interview.

Indirect Speech: The interviewer asked why she couldn't work under pressure.

Direct Speech: The interviewer asked, "Why can't you work under pressure?"

if = whether

Indirect Speech: He asked if she had cleaned out her car recently.

Direct Speech: He asked, "Have you cleaned out your car recently?"

application = request; asking for something

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

Direct Speech: He asked, "Who has written your application letter for you?"

handle = manage; control

Indirect Speech: She asked the interviewer whether he was going to ask her serious questions.

Direct Speech: She asked the interviewer, "Are you going to ask me serious questions?"

serious = important

Melissa had had a stress interview, a type of job interview that features tough, tricky questions, long silences, and negative evaluations of the candidate. To the candidate, this strategy may seem like unnecessary nastiness on the part of the interviewer. However, some positions require an ability to handle just this kind of pressure. If there is an accident in a nuclear power plant, for example, the plant's public relations officer must remain poised when unfriendly reporters ask how the accident could have occurred.

feature (v.) = present
tough = hard, difficult
tricky = problematic; difficult to deal with
evaluation = judgment
candidate = applicant
strategy = game plan, policy
nastiness = unpleasant behavior
require = need
nuclear = atomic
power plant = a factory where energy is produced
power = electricity
plant = factory
poised = calm, balanced, motionless, confident, assured
occur = happen

Indirect Speech: Unfriendly reporters ask how the accident could have occurred?
Direct Speech: Unfriendly reporters ask, "How could the accident have occurred?"

The hostile atmosphere of a stress interview gives the employer a chance to watch a candidate react to pressure. In one case, the interviewer ended each interview by telling the candidate, "We're really not sure that you're the right person for this job." One very promising candidate asked the interviewer angrily if he was sure he knew how to conduct an interview. She clearly could not handle the pressure she would encounter as a television news anchor—the job she was interviewing for.

hostile = unfriendly, unkind
react = respond
promising = with potential, talented, gifted
conduct = handle, carry out

Direct Speech: One very promising candidate asked the interviewer angrily, "Are you sure you know how to conduct an interview?"

encounter = experience, run into, face
news anchor = news reader

Stress questioning is not appropriate for all jobs. It may make sense while interviewing a news anchor, but it is unnecessary for less pressured jobs such as accountants, administrative assistants, and computer programmers. Even when it is appropriate, the stress interview can work against a company because some good candidates will refuse the job after a hostile interview. Melissa Morrow handled her interview beautifully, but later asked herself if she really wanted to work for that company. Her answer was no.

appropriate = proper, suitable
make sense = be logical

Direct Speech: Melisa Morrow asked herself, “Do I really want to work for this company?”

A word of warning to job candidates: Not all tough questioning constitutes a legitimate stress interview. In some countries like the United States, some questions are illegal unless the answers are directly related to the job. If your interviewer asks how old you are, whether you are married, or how much money you owe, you can refuse to answer. If you think a question is improper, you should ask the interviewer how the answer specifically relates to that job. If you don't get a satisfactory explanation, you don't have to answer the question.

warning = advice, caution

constitute (v.) = form

legitimate = legal # illegitimate

illegal = unlawful, forbidden, unauthorized

owe = be in debt (to)

improper = unsuitable

specifically = exactly

When an interviewer introduces pressure to create a reaction, it's easy to lose your cool. Remember that all interviews create stress. If you expect it and learn to control your responses, you can stay poised even in a stress interview.

satisfactory = acceptable, reasonable # unsatisfactory

lose your cool = lose your temper, get angry # keep your cool

DID YOU KNOW

In some countries, employers must hire only on the basis of skills and experience. In the United States, for example, an interviewer cannot ask an applicant certain questions unless the information is related to the job. The following are some of the questions an interviewer may not ask:

- How old are you?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- What is your religion?
- How many children do you have?
- Are you married?
- How tall are you?
- What does your husband (or wife) do?
- What country were you born in?

hire = employ # fire

on the basis of = based on, according to

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