

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A JOB INTERVIEW AND MAKE THE BEST IMPRESSION

Applying for and trying to land a job is one of the most exciting and stressful situations. While applying for a job and planning for an interview is usually stressful, it can be particularly stressful after a brain injury. Additional stress after a brain injury can include:

- Fear of going back into the job force
- Applying for a different type of job or asking for accommodations at work
- Being evaluated and answering unexpected questions in an interview
- Concerns with self-esteem, which can make it more intimidating to “sell yourself” in an interview

While a job interview can be challenging, none of these challenges are impossible to overcome.

FIRST, CHOOSE THE JOBS YOU WANT TO APPLY FOR

This might seem like a given, but after a brain injury it’s very important to apply for jobs that will be a good fit for you. Things to keep in mind when looking for jobs include:

- Think about your strengths and current challenges.
 - Talk to important people in your life such as your friends, family and therapists to help identify your strengths and challenges.
 - Sometimes others can help clarify what sorts of roles and responsibilities would be the best fit for you to set you up for success.
- If you aren’t currently working with therapists, sometimes requesting an updated evaluation (i.e. neuropsychological examination) can help you plan for a successful return to work, recommend strategies and identify accommodations to help you thrive.
- Know your resources. Vocational rehabilitation services are available through the state of Washington and the Brain Injury Alliance of Washington.

- Keep in mind, employers are not allowed to discriminate against you based on a disability as long as you are able to do the job with reasonable accommodations.
 - The size and type of company matters, learn more about the Americans with Disability Act at www.ada.gov.

NEXT, UPDATE AND BE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR RESUME

Does your resume paint a picture of you and your experience? Remember that gaps in your employment history, which is common after a brain injury, will be something an employer will be curious about. Be ready to talk about this, Vocational Rehabilitation can be helpful in preparing for these questions.

TIME FOR THE INTERVIEW

Before you go in for an interview, think about what the job involves, how your skills are a good fit for the job and how the job helps meet your long-term goals:

- Practice answering these questions before the interview, ask someone you trust to interview you for practice.

Be ready to talk about how your injury affects you if you will be requesting support, but also be ready to talk about your growth and development and how you are better and stronger now. Here are some tips for a successful interview:

- Smile
- Take pauses and slow breaths and plan what you want to say.
- Remember, the employer knows that you are nervous; it is okay to pause for a sip of water and gather your thoughts.

