The Road Map toward Employment: A Checklist to Navigate Each Step of the Way
by Leslie O’Brien, LICSW
Internship Program Manager, Aspire

When looking for a job, there can be many daunting aspects of the employment process. The job search, the first day of work, and all of the steps in between have the potential to make you anxious. How do you progress to the next phase? The following are stages that lead you towards employment. Many people can get stuck not knowing what to do next. Here are some helpful tips of how to get “unstuck” and move forward!

STEP ONE. The Search: Where Do I Even Start?

☐ It’s a great time to brush up on your stress management skills to make the first move. Before taking the next step, try a few strategies to help center your thoughts and help you to get ready. Consider deep breathing, meditation, exercise or talking with a person you trust about your concerns.

☐ Searching for Jobs: Start by looking for jobs online. There are many options, how do you narrow down your interests? First consider your interests, skills, volunteer or work experience. These examples will help you to focus your search to find a job that meets your interests and qualifications.

☐ Your resume: Do you have an updated resume? Or need to start one? It’s important to gather your education, work and volunteer experience -as well as any awards - to create a resume to send with your job application. Whether you are writing a resume for the first time or updating one, it’s best to run the resume by a few people that can give you constructive feedback. Consider having a relative, friend, job coach and/or teacher review your resume.

STEP TWO. Applying to the job

☐ So you’ve found some jobs that meet your criteria based on your work/volunteer history and education. What’s next? Depending on the site, complete an application online or download one. These can be time-consuming so make sure to allot at least an hour for your first attempt.

☐ Usually an online application asks you to include your work history, so it’s helpful to have your resume ready to upload or attach to the application.
☐ Submit the application. If possible, have someone with you to go over your application and make sure that you’ve given all of the required information.

STEP THREE. Hearing Back (or not) from the Employer

There are a few possible outcomes after submitting your application. (Choose the one that best fits your situation).

☐ You hear back and are asked to come in for an interview.
   Please proceed to Step 4- The Interview.

☐ You hear back and are told that the position has been filled or they are not going to move forward with your application.
   Due to the large pool of applicants, it is very common to hear that a position has been filled or receive a rejection from a company. It’s important to continue applying to jobs and keep your eyes open for new opportunities.

☐ You do not hear back.
   If it’s been a week or two since you submitted your application, it’s okay to reach out to the Human Resources department to ask about the status of your application. If they confirm that they’ve received your application, you don’t need to contact them again and can wait for one of the first two possibilities (above) to occur.

   If you still don’t hear back after following up, it’s time to look into other job opportunities.

STEP FOUR. The Interview

So you’ve scheduled an interview - how do you make a good impression? The idea of going through an interview can be nerve-wracking for many people. There are a few things to do that might calm your nerves and make you feel more prepared for the interview.

☐ Dress attire – Have you heard of the phrase “dress for success”? It’s important to take into consideration the organization you are interviewing for and choose an outfit that looks professional. For men this can mean nice slacks, dress shoes, dress shirt and tie. For women, a blouse or dress shirt with skirt or dress pants and dress shoes would likely be appropriate.

☐ Copies of your resume- Bring a few copies of your resume. Some employers already have your resume at the interview but it will make you look more prepared. Also, having a few copies is great in case you meet with more than one person.
☐ Do your research- Look up the organization online to learn more about it and your role if possible. The more you know and can refer to in your interview, the better prepared you look.

☐ Practice/Role play the interview- Ask someone you trust to practice the interview with you to help you get used to the questions and interview process.

☐ Arrive early- Anticipate that there may be some traffic no matter what time of day you are leaving and plan to get to the interview site 15-30 minutes before the interview. If you arrive 30 minutes earlier, take 15 minutes to do some stress management skills like deep breathing or progressive muscle relaxation. Then around 15 minutes early for the interview, let the front desk know you are there for an interview.

☐ After the interview- remember to write a quick “Thank you” email to the person that interviewed you. This email should be short and say thank you to the person that interviewed you, your interest in the position and that you look forward to hearing back from them.

STEP FIVE. So You Got the Job – How to Prepare for the First Day

Well, first, Congratulations! This is a great accomplishment and you should be proud of yourself. You worked really hard to get here! Each step towards employment is so important and feels great when you are rewarded with a job!

Prepare for the first day-

☐ Lay out a first day of work outfit
☐ Practice your commute to work the day or two before the interview (anticipate traffic)
☐ Do some stress relieving activities
☐ Get a good night’s sleep
☐ Eat a healthy and hearty breakfast to start the day!

CONCLUSION

It is very common to repeat a few steps (even several times) before making it to Step 4 or even Step 5. A little motivation and support can help your hard work to pay off. Try to keep a positive mindset, take a deep breath and keep trying!

MGH Aspire serves individuals with high cognitive autism spectrum disorder or a related profile. For information on Aspire’s Adult Internship Program visit our Adult Internship Program’s website. For information on other Aspire programs designed for adults, go to our website at MghAspire.org. MGH Aspire is a program of the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Massachusetts General Hospital for Children.