

Harvard Business Review

4 Ways to Make a Connection with Your Job Interviewers

by [Marlo Lyons](#) September 10, 2024



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Summary

When interviewing for jobs, it's critical to let your authenticity shine through. Showing your interviewer your true self will help you connect with them — and stand out from your competition. Authenticity is about being genuine, not flawless; your personality and unique communication style are assets. According to the author, you should focus more on being yourself than being perfect, remembering every talking point, or presenting someone you're not. That way, if you get the job, you can feel confident you're in the right place, and if you don't get the job, you'll at least feel good about not compromising yourself or your values in the interview for a job that wasn't the right fit.

Interviewing for jobs is a notoriously uncomfortable experience. Candidates have mere minutes to impress recruiters, hiring managers, and interview panels — and the pressure can lead them to adopt an unnatural, overly formal demeanor or otherwise obscure their true selves. That makes it hard for interviewers to establish a genuine connection and envision a candidate as a potential team member.

What's the key to connecting with your interviewer while standing out as a candidate? It's not about saying all the right things perfectly, but letting your authentic self shine through. Here are four tips to help you stay true to yourself, even in this inherently uncomfortable situation:

Understand and translate your authentic style

Start with self-awareness. Identify key aspects of your personality — such as whether you lean toward extroversion or introversion, analytical thinking or creativity — to get a foundational understanding of your communication style. Then you can tailor your answers accordingly.

For example, consider the question, “How do you deal with misaligned priorities?” If you’re an extrovert, you might describe how you successfully engaged stakeholders with competing perspectives and goals. If you’re more introverted, you could highlight how your deep listening skills and intuition came into play. If you tend to think analytically, you might discuss how you used data to craft a persuasive story, whereas if you’re more creative, you might showcase how you proposed an innovative approach that stakeholders hadn’t considered before.

Equally important is recognizing how others perceive you. If there are aspects of your personality that might be misunderstood or undervalued in an interview, think about how to address these perceptions without compromising your authenticity, because doing so can increase your stress. For instance, if you’re known for being talkative, consider how you can keep your answers conversational and engaging while staying focused, avoiding tangents and giving too many details, and being concise. Conversely, if you have a calmer, lower-energy demeanor, think about how to frame your composure as an asset in high-pressure situations, demonstrating your ability to tackle urgent matters effectively.

When you fully grasp your authentic style and personality nuances, you can make strategic adjustments that allow your true self to shine through in your answers, creating a more compelling and genuine connection with your interviewers. This approach not only ensures that you present yourself as the ideal fit for the role but also removes the stress and worry of trying to fit into a mould that doesn’t reflect who you truly are.

Recognize your natural body language

Your body language is a powerful reflection of who you are, and the key to authenticity is staying true to your natural tendencies rather than forcing a perfect posture or gaze. If you naturally use your hands while speaking, for example, embrace that during your interview. If sitting up straight feels comfortable, go for it, but if you’re more inclined to slouch, don’t stress about maintaining a rigid posture. Instead, focus on a relaxed, confident position, with your shoulders down and perhaps your arms resting on the table in front of you.

Making eye contact is crucial whether you’re interviewing in person or online, though it can be uncomfortable. If direct eye contact feels too intense, try focusing on the interviewer’s eyebrows, or allow yourself to look away briefly while pausing to think about your answer. Practicing eye contact with a partner or friend or even in the mirror can help it feel more natural. If neurodivergence makes maintaining eye contact difficult or impossible, explain that early on and assure your interviewer that you’re still fully engaged.

It’s also important to practice your facial expressions and body language. For example, imagine your interviewer presents you with a troubling hypothetical scenario. If your eyes widen, you may be perceived as overwhelmed instead of intrigued. Looking away may suggest disengagement or discomfort with the circumstances, while [maintaining a neutral “poker face”](#) might suggest a lack of understanding or empathy. Develop a go-to strategy for navigating those tricky moments — for example, maintain a calm, thoughtful expression and express empathy about the circumstance before responding. Practicing responses in front of a mirror or with someone you trust can

help you keep your communication professional and authentic even when you're confronted with challenging information.

Plan to build rapport and connection

You want to build a meaningful connection with your interviewer — without coming across as intrusive. Ensuring your interactions remain both authentic and professional requires some planning in advance.

Begin by researching your interviewer to uncover any commonalities, such as shared educational backgrounds, locations, or interests. You can integrate these connections naturally into the conversation where appropriate. For example, “I see we both graduated from Y university; did you find any particular course influential in your career?”

Additionally, practice active listening and reflecting back what you've heard before answering questions or discussing hypotheticals. For example, if the interviewer mentions challenges within the organization, you might say, “What I'm hearing is that the team is experiencing some disjointedness, and you're interested in knowing if I've faced similar situations before.” This demonstrates that you're engaged and invites a deeper conversation.

Further, consider asking thoughtful questions of your own to gain further insights — for example, “What have you already tried with the team, and what was the outcome?” Seek common ground by posing open-ended questions or sharing relevant experiences that align with the interviewer's points or the company's values. For instance, you might say, “I noticed the company places a strong emphasis on corporate social responsibility — how do employees typically get involved in these initiatives?”

Find a comfortable location for remote interviews

Finally, if you're interviewing remotely, consider the importance of location in ensuring your authenticity and ability to connect. Choose a familiar setting where you feel comfortable. If your usual workspace is a bedroom office, that's perfectly fine — just blur the background for professionalism. If staying focused is a challenge, keep a small fidget toy, Silly Putty, or a pen within reach, just outside the camera's view.

Minimizing distractions is key, so do your best to prevent interruptions from pets, children, or other potential disruptors. However, you should also prepare for the unexpected. Think about how you would naturally react to a distraction if you weren't in an interview. For example, if the dog starts barking or your child walks in, what's your instinctual reaction? Have a plan, whether it's giving the dog a quick treat, picking up your child, or simply excusing yourself briefly. And remember, interviews don't have to be perfect; life is messy, so plan for how you'll handle those inevitable moments. Additionally, be ready for a distracted interviewer. If they're dealing with their own interruptions, engage with them authentically as you would with a friend, and follow their lead. This adaptability shows your genuine self, making the interview more of a conversation than a performance.

Authenticity is about being genuine — not flawless. Your personality and unique communication style are assets! Focus more on being yourself than being perfect, remembering every talking point, or presenting someone you're not. That way, if you get the job, you can feel confident you're in the right place, and if you don't get the job, you'll at least feel good about not compromising yourself or your values in the interview for a job that wasn't the right fit.



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