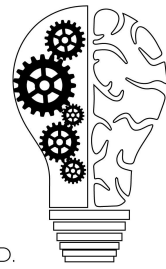


Episode 063: Interviewing Well For Psychiatry

Residency & Beyond

David Puder, M.D.

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**PSYCHIATRY &
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There are no conflicts of interest for this episode.

On this week's episode of The Psychiatry and Psychotherapy podcast, we will be covering a special topic—interviewing well—for psychiatry residency, and even in other interviews post residency. I am interviewing Neal Christopher, a 4th year, chief resident and the host of a podcast for the APA, The American Journal of Psychiatry Residents' Journal Podcast.

Know yourself

We wanted to talk about how you evaluate the program—how you interview the program—from start to finish.

To understand your values, you can use the Acceptance and Commitment Therapy principles. Think in terms of what thoughts or ideas you want to move towards, longterm, in your life. What kind of person do you want to be? Also, consider what you want other people to think of you. What do you want to be said about you? When you are particularly angry or anxious, it is usually because a value you have has been violated. It's an unconscious process normally, but if you pay attention, you can tell what your value and what is important to you.

Notice your mentors, bosses, famous people in your career, and write down the attributes you like about them. When you find yourself drawn to a person professionally, notice what you like about them. Now consider how these things you like about other mentors are things you yourself could work towards and embody.

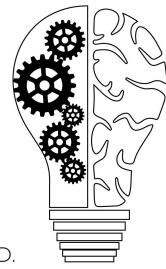
What kind of jobs would you do for free?

Write down all of these attributes. These are things you value, and they will be things you'd value in a future psychiatry program.

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Know the program

Now that you have written down your values and research the programs.

Write down questions you have for the program. Get very specific about your interests and how the program will train you to be the best psychopharmacologist, psychotherapist or researcher you can be.

Check on the culture of the program. Is it healthy? When you go out to the dinner, watch the residents and how they act. Are they excited, sober-minded? How do the faculty treat each other? If the residents are both realistic and also passionate, it's a great sign. Of course they will be tired as first and second years, because it is a time-consuming program. But overall, look at the residents to get a good gage on the program.

Each program will have strengths and weaknesses, and it's important to be honest about what they offer so you can make a choice that will be good for you for the next few years.

Another important thing that not everyone does, but is helpful in you determining your desire to be there (and will help in the interviews) is to research the faculty and supervisors before you go. Have they written articles? Do they have a podcast? Twitter? A published work? Youtube videos? What are their passions? Go beyond the bios on the website, if you can, and see if their values are similar to yours.

The Actual Interview

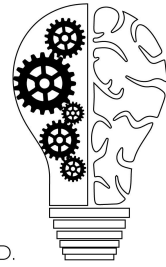
In a medical school interview, you are just hoping that they don't say no and let you into the program. When you get to your residency programs, everyone is pretty much equally qualified. When you look at the data of what stands out in psychiatry, it basically comes down to personal likes and dislikes—how you come across in the interview.

People always ask “what part is the interview?” The truth is that everything is the interview—the dinner, the “actual” interview, the social event before and after, and

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everything in between. Even the way that you treat the program assistant is important; we have disqualified people from joining our program based on the way they treated our program assistant. If we are giving a tour of the facility and the person is on their phone or not engaged in the conversation, that tells us they aren't as interested in our program.

One piece of advice I always give people is very practical: exercise the day before your interview, set two alarms, and wake up early.

One of the unique things about interviewing for a psychiatry program is that you're interviewing with people whose entire job is...understanding people. That means that the more you can let them in to see your passions, your passion about your future career, about your goals, what you liked about their program and why you feel you'd be a good match, the better the interview will go.

The goal is no longer to give rehearsed answers for what you think the programs want to hear. The goal is to be yourself so that you can find a good match, and so can the program. They can remember you, know you, and get a sense of what it is like to work with the real you. Demonstrate a highly-developed interest that will make you stand out from the crowd. Rather than try to answer questions, try to connect with the person as a person. Demonstrating empathy (understanding their perspective or thoughts) will go a long way.

When you have already covered your values for yourself, and the values you have identified and appreciate in the program you are interviewing for, it is much easier to stand out from the crowd because you're already demonstrating interest and knowledge of the program, and of yourself.

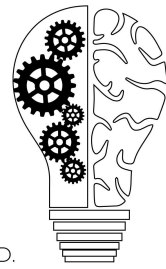
They will ask you questions, and you should have well-rounded, empathic and intelligent answers that are real and true. Most often, they will ask you about: the greatest thing you have overcome, what your weakness is, and how you have demonstrated resilience.

One thing Dr. Christopher did to prepare was recount stories about patients he'd learned from. Also, it's important to be able to describe how you handle conflict, and any issues you've had in the past.

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As an interviewer, here are some things that impress me:

- Thoughtfulness
- Some insight into what it will be like to be a psychiatrist
- Have done some independent reading, podcast listening, etc.
- Have some link to the area or some reason for being in the location
- Congruent emotional expression

Take notes on your trip home, after each interview. Once you've gone on ten or twelve interviews, they all start to blur together, so it's important to note details so you won't forget. Those details on who you met and what you liked will come in handy when you write your thank you cards. Write somewhere private, as raw as possible, any thoughts, feelings, body sensations, and even fleeting thoughts about the program. Try to do this in private before talking to others who also were at the program before, so you can get your own ideas on paper.

When looking at post-residency job offers (and in my application to a residency) I paid attention to the quality of the people I would have supervisors. I wanted the most competent, smartest and most respected psychiatrists and psychotherapists to continue to mentor me. Choose your supervisor carefully. It's incredibly important who your supervisor is and if you want to spend your next few years learning from them. In my opinion, brand and money are less important than the quality of the supervisors you will have. Are the supervisors people you would like to become?

In conclusion

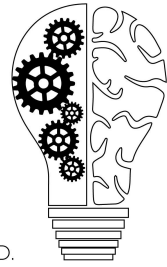
After clearly identifying your values, you are looking for alignment in residents and faculty. When you go on interviews, you are also interviewing them. You are looking for a good match, but also even if you don't think it is a good match you are looking to build relationships and contacts for the future. Everyone you interview can become a resource and someone to learn from and grow from. So take notes, get contact information, read about them and what they are into, and consider them as becoming

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some small part of your network in your journey forward. Uniquely in psychiatry, we value relationships, and consider the interview trail as a place to create relationships.

Link to Dr. Neal Christopher's Powerpoint



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