How to Ace Your Next Interview

Session Transcript

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- [Mininia] Welcome to the first day of the 2019 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium. My name is Mininia Hawkins, and I am a program analyst in Military Community Support Programs, the host for this week's symposium. Our next speaker is Kristina Santos, SECO career coach. Tell me about yourself. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Why should we hire you? If these questions make you a little queasy, don't worry. Ms. Santos will walk you through what to do before, during, and after the interview to set you apart. Welcome, Kristina.

- [Kristina] Thank you Mininia, and welcome everyone again to the fourth session of the 2019 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium. As Mininia mentioned, my name is Kristina, and I am a career coach with the Spouse Education and Career Opportunities Program. I am also a military spouse, so I want to say first and foremost, thank you for showing up today and sharing your time, your energy, and your courage. It is an honor to be here, and it is an honor to be part of this military family every single day. I have been a SECO career coach for over five years, and I love assisting military spouses in discovering their career goals and then gaining knowledge and resources to help them accomplish these goals in the midst of a very demanding military life. And with this webinar, I hope to provide you with tools, insight, and inspirations that you can ace your next interview. So as we begin, we're gonna bring up those two poll questions that many of you answered while you were entering into the webinar today. So thank you so much for participating. If you did not get a chance to respond, you can go ahead and do that now. And this poll question stated what is your biggest challenge when it comes to the interviewing process. And I see some responses are coming in. It looks like the top two challenges that you are sharing with me today are obtaining a call for an interview and preparing answers to interviewing questions. So thank you again so much for responding to this question. No matter which area you find most challenging, we are going to discuss concrete actions you can take to ensure you achieve success before, during, and after an interview. Today's agenda includes how to ace your next
interview by concentrating on connection, planning for success, focusing on the fundamentals, rehearsing your responses, preparing questions to ask, and finishing strong by following up. We will be ready to answer any questions you might have at the end. And while we will share resources, tools, and tips that you can use to improve your interviewing skills, I want to start by discussing the most important part of the interview equation. And that is you, your unique personality, skills, experiences, and achievements. Concentrate on connection is our first topic because the interview is your opportunity to sell yourself. It’s your moment to go from searching for a job to connecting and communicating directly about a possible job offer. We want to help you seize your moment and shift your perspective from fear of failure to open to opportunities. And we’re gonna get started with just a quick activity. If you could please take a moment to visualize your favorite commercial. For some of you it could be something you saw this week. Or I know for some of us, our favorites might have come in the Super Bowl or some big event where we have a lot of powerful commercials that come out. And once you have that in your mind, if you could think about how does it make you feel, and what did you like about it. The truth is, most impactful commercials have one or two things in common. Number one, you feel professional or personal connection. And number two, the experience leaves you wanting more. So you envision a better future if you get your hands on the product. And the interview process has these same goals. An interview is not like a math test where you have specific correct answers to each of the problems. An interview is more fluid. It is about human connection and communication. And that is why we want to concentrate on connection first. It is your chance to tell your story in a compelling way. Always be you and remember nothing and no one can replace you and what you have to offer. So you want to focus on being genuine, likable, memorable. And you want to help the interviewer envision you as part of the culture and mission. You wanna paint the picture of success with you on the team. And you already know what it’s like to be part of something bigger than yourself, and part of a mission, because you are a military spouse. You also know the best predictor of team success is mission planning. So the second strategy to help ace your next interview is to research and plan for success. So I want to cover two main areas you’ll want to focus on while you are conducting your research. Number one is yourself, and number two is the company. And probably the best and easiest place to start is with you. Now I know you might be thinking, you have lived with yourself your whole life. You already know everything about your experiences. But you want to take the time to dive deep into the professional you and identify your skills, strengths, and accomplishments. If you schedule an interview, congratulations! Most likely you are qualified for this position, and now is the chance for the employer to clarify any questions they still have about your experience. Many of the military spouses I worked with over the years are extremely humble. So if you need help discovering, identifying, and articulating your skills and strengths, the MySECO Portal holds many personality and career assessments that can help you highlight these as they related to the world of work. Career coaches like myself are also available to meet with you one-on-one. And asking others to help you brainstorm ideas for when your strengths, skills, and personality traits made you shine is another way to research yourself. Along with
your skills, you’ll want to know your resume and your LinkedIn profile. Both your resume and LinkedIn profile allow you to bring your professional story to life. So I recommend setting some time aside to sit down and reflect on your resume. Each bullet point, every significant project, achievement, experience, everything is fair game. And the truth is, some things may have taken place several years ago. So try to remember what was the experience like, who was on your team, what were the deadlines, the obstacles, and challenges. Picture your office and the software you were using and your to-do list. Were you doing something for the very first time? Reliving these details will help breathe life into your answers during the interview. One way to get a better idea of what they might ask about is to put your resume and job posting side by side. This brings us to researching the company and position. One of the most important reasons to research the company and position as a way to plan for success is not only to help you ace the interview, but to ensure the company and position are a good fit. As military spouses, we may have our own list of priorities for choosing a job and a company that are very different than our civilian counterparts. When researching, try to get a clear understanding of the company’s products, the services, customers, management, team, and partners. What is the culture like? What are the job’s requirements and responsibilities? What are the desired skills and traits? And is the company military-friendly? This research helps you speak in hiring managers’ language so they begin to see you as part of the team. And finding this information has never been easier. No matter where you and your family are stationed or located, if you can access the MySECO portal, you can find links to job postings and company websites using the Military Spouse Employment Partnership Job Search Feature. You can also research the labor market by accessing the Occupational Outlook Handbook, O*Net Online, and CareerOneStop. We are providing you with links to all of these resources during the session today. Now if you could please select the hands up icon if you have ever had an interview in the past. Okay, wow, I’m seeing a lot of hands going up. This is great. So if you have had an interview before, most likely you are familiar with some basic tips related to interview etiquette. But as with all strong foundations, it can be useful to have a refresher. So to focus on the fundamentals, we want to discuss how to look the part, plan your route, and pack your bag for the big day. Remember, first impressions begin as soon as you walk through the door. So you want to be sure to look the part. Researching and understanding the company culture is the best way to decide how to dress for the interview. We also have a link to an article titled Professional Dress from the MySECO portal to help you dress for success. But a good rule of thumb is to dress one level up from the position you are interviewing for. If you find it hard to decide after researching the company culture, some tips to dress for a successful first impression include dressing in comfortable, well-fitting clothing, wearing neat, clean shoes and minimal, conservative jewelry, carrying a nice briefcase or portfolio, and keeping makeup, perfume, or cologne minimal while paying attention to hair and nails. And perhaps the most important thing to wear is a smile. Even if you have a phone interview, wearing a smile is palpable on the other end of the line. And in order to plan your route, you’ll need to know what type of interview you are scheduled for, so you know where you are going, or you can pick a quiet place if your interview is being conducted virtually or by phone. You will also
want to plan how you will get there, what time will you arrive, will you need to pay for parking, and what will the traffic be like. For example, if your interview is on a military installation be sure to check the building number ahead of time, and maybe drive there to make sure you know how to get there and make sure the building hasn’t changed. All of this preparation can take some of the unknowns and stressors away on the day of the interview. Arriving early can also give you a chance to go to the bathroom or look over your notes or do some power stances or deep breathing exercises before going in for the interview. This will ensure you portray your best self, a calm and confident you. Also, will you be using any technology or equipment? If so, you will want to have it set up early and do some test runs to make sure everything runs smoothly. Pack your bag is the last fundamental we want to discuss. We usually recommend carrying some essential items with you during the day of the interview. First, bring extra copies of your resume. Some interviewers may ask you to walk them through your resume as one of their interview questions. So having your resume to provide them and having a copy for yourself may be very useful in this situation. Also, bring a copy of the job posting, a pen and paper to take notes, and a water bottle and extra breath mints. And you can carry all this in a professional looking portfolio or briefcase. And now that you understand how to look the part, plan your route, and pack your bag, what do you spend the most amount of time doing during the interview? The answer is answering and asking questions. So in the same way you would study before an exam, to ace your next interview, it would benefit you to practice for it. I was originally going to call this section Practice Makes Perfect. But the truth is, you cannot memorize a perfect answer. Your responses to interview questions will constantly change as you gain more experience, acquire more achievements, change industries, and become a leader. For this reason, you want to rehearse your responses not to memorize them, but to allow you to speak more naturally, effectively, and confidently. We are going to discuss interview tactics for different types of interviews. We will also demonstrate how to anticipate potential questions and how to use the STAR Method to develop prospective answers. We will share how scheduling a SECO mock interview with one of our SECO career coaches can take your interview capabilities to the next level. If you are scheduled for an interview, most likely it will be one of the following types. Phone interviews, or possibly a virtual interview, may be used to screen candidates before in-person interviews. Or they may be used if you’re applying for a telework position. Be professional and plan to be in a quiet place, and remember to test your technology. Panel interviews typically include the hiring manager, your potential peers, and/or people from other departments. It is recommended that you treat the room as if everyone is equal. Make eye contact and direct your responses to everyone. If possible, include everyone in your line of questioning, especially if you know who will be on the panel ahead of time. Full-day interviews may include several one-on-one or panel interviews. So it may be beneficial if you’re able to get the schedule ahead of time. And behavioral interviews are when you’ll be asked how you responded to past scenarios to help employers gauge how you respond to certain situations. We will discuss how to formulate answers to behavioral questions. But behavioral interviews and questioning theorize that past behavior is
an indicator of future performance. So you always want to tie your responses back to how your experience and what you have learned and proven over time will benefit them in the future. Audition interviews are performance-based and might include proficiency tests, presentation skills tests, or other tests related to your career field and industry. And lunch interviews could be a standalone interview or part of a full-day interview. The main tip here is to always remember basic etiquette and avoid ordering any messy food. You will also want to compile a list of questions to help you with your preparation. We have a few questions here. And the MySECO Portal holds additional resources to help you find even more sample interview questions, including the Interviewing Skills Module, and Preparing for a Interview, which include over 20 common interviewing questions. The more responses you can create and practice, the more confident you will feel in your ability to shine during your interview. This practice can help you ensure you are truly responding in an effective way to the question and that you are fully present during the interview. When a question is thrown at you that you are not prepared for, you will jump into reaction mode rather than responsive mode, which might limit your ability to answer the question in the best possible way. So some of these common questions include tell me about yourself, what is your greatest strength or what is your weakness, why do you want to work here, and behavioral questions such as tell me about a time, when you had a conflict with a coworker, you disciplined one of your employees, or you experienced a tight deadline. So we want to get started at the beginning. One of the first questions you will most likely be asked during an interview is tell me about yourself. The greatest part about this question is it puts you in control, and you can fully prepare for it, almost like you would prepare your elevator pitch. You want to prepare a response that focuses on the professional you, who you are, including what you are doing now, what you do or what you have done in the past and describe your professional skills and accomplishments and what you hope to do in the future, so your motivation for applying for the position. For example, as you get started with the now and the present, you could say or share something like, for the past six years, I have been a stay-at-home mom, a decision my husband and I felt would provide a firm foundation for our children. Then you can move into the past. During this time I have served as FRG Events Coordinator and Fundraising Chair, fundraising in excess of $12,000 over a 3 1/2-year time period to assist military families during the deployment of a service member. This is an extension of my previous role as an assistant director of annual giving at a local community college, where I led the most successful fundraising campaign seen at the college in 10 years. And then you can move into the future. Now that my children are older, I’m ecstatic about the opportunities to use my strong interpersonal skills and business connections towards the fundraising efforts of ABC Company. So insert the company name there. Another common interview question is what is your greatest strength. And this can actually be asked in many different ways. For example, another way you might hear this question is what do your coworkers say about you? As you are preparing for the interview, align several of your strengths and skills with the job posting. This will be your golden answer. I know as military spouses, especially, you have to have many different strengths, because you wear so many different hats. But the employer really wants to know why you are the best fit
for the position. Your strengths include both hard skills, such as accounting, computer knowledge, mechanical aptitude, and soft skills, such as problem solving, teamwork, and customer service. Many military spouses also come to me and ask me about the weaknesses question, what is your weakness. Employers are not trying to trick you or make you feel uncomfortable here. They want to get a better idea of your level of self-awareness and transparency. So if you can think about a real weakness, or better yet, an area where you lack experience, and without getting too personal, explain to the interviewer the steps you have taken to improve, whether it is taking a class, reading a book, or finding a mentor. This will not only demonstrate your commitment to self-improvement, but also your ability to change, adapt, and grow. It is a great chance for you to show how you have progressed over time. My one recommendation here is to prepare a few responses ahead of time. But make sure the weakness is not directly related to the job for which you are applying. Behavioral questions give you another chance to tell your story. Even if you cannot pick the exact behavioral question you'll be asked, you can use the STAR Method to prepare several stories in advance. One way to find stories is to begin with your resume. What are some of your major accomplishments, big projects, or major conflicts and challenges you have faced along the way? Describe the first time you did something or when you were the first person to tackle a certain type of project for the company. People love to hear about firsts. You can also think about a time when you overcame odds, made a mistake, or maybe you almost made a mistake. Sharing a story of success in the face of adversity will capture their attention. Remember, you want to capture their attention and help them remember you above all over candidates. So pick an example that is effective in showcasing the skill set you want to demonstrate. As you are developing your stories, organize your responses using the STAR Method to help you formulate a specific order. All great stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end. And they are also short and simple while keeping your attention. So you want to set the story up by briefly explaining the situation and tasks at hand. Spend most of your time in the A and R section of the formula. I usually recommend picking three clear actions that you took and then sharing the results. You want this response to be two to three minutes, tops. Finally, at the end of your answer, I always like to add something that connects your story back to the job description. Theodore Roosevelt stated people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. So remember, we talked about concentrating on connection first. If you want the interviewer to care about you, you have to make them believe you genuinely care about them. So by linking this past behavior with your motivation and future aspirations for joining their team, the interviewer will naturally begin to do less evaluating of you and your past and they will begin to envision your future impact with them. This is a huge shift in perspective from past in evaluation mode to the future and imagining you, again, as part of their culture and overall mission. So now we are going to bring up a little activity. We are going to use the STAR Method to brainstorm potential action steps you could take to include as part of a STAR Method response to a behavioral interview question dealing with conflict. So for this example, we are going to briefly set the stage with a story, with a situation and task. So let’s say we once had a conflict with a coworker over the budget for a professional development conference.
So we’re gonna open up this answer pod that we have opened up over here where we can brainstorm together. If you could please list one action step you could take to resolve a conflict with a coworker. As you all are thinking about your responses, I wanted to briefly discuss what areas of evaluation there are for this question. With any behavioral question dealing with conflict, whether it’s your boss, a coworker, a tight deadline or a customer, the interviewer wants to know do you as a candidate have strong interpersonal skills and the ability to be flexible and to compromise when appropriate, and will you get along with team members. Okay, so I’m seeing a lot of action steps already coming in, this is wonderful. Don’t take it personally. Excellent, communicate directly. Active listening. I see a lot of communication. Understanding, active listening. Respectful confrontation. Setting up a meeting one-on-one. Discuss the situation face-to-face to address all issues. Thank you all so much for participating. Fact first and don’t accuse. These are excellent examples. Yes, communication and active listening. You always want to have something to say about communication. Like you said, maybe sit down with the coworker and make sure there’s no communication gap. Also hand-in-hand with that is managing expectations. Sometimes this can create a conflict. So as many of you said, understanding the other person’s motivation. Sometimes there can be hidden motivations unrelated to the disagreement or conflict. So there may be something else going on in the background. So putting yourself in the other person's shoes. Your first priority should be to understand the other person’s views and why they think what they think. Also many of you mentioned running the numbers. Especially with a budget or a lot of things now where we can track, double check the analysis. Run the report. Make sure that you get the facts. Also you could say something about compromise. And a lot of you mentioned mutual respect, teamwork. Maybe you utilized additional resources that you didn’t know were there when you finally got a chance to go together. One tip, of course, there is always going to be conflict at work. But try to stay away from speaking about conflict of personality traits. So no one said that here, so that’s great. You guys all stayed very positive and were asking open-ended questions, keeping an open mind. So always stay positive, no matter what the outcome. So you could say something like first we set up a meeting to break down the budget and manage your expectations of the event. I learned that my coworker was factoring in transportation costs into the totals. Then we ran the budget report, as you mentioned, to check the numbers and realized how we could allocate additional funds and travel resources to eliminate transportation costs before, during, and after the event. In the end, focus on coming together, teamwork, making decisions, and saving time and money. So once you have shared the results, you can then emphasize how these skills will benefit the role you are interviewing for. Again, this helps shift their perspective from evaluation mode to imagining you on the team. And this helps you show your skills and strengths in the context of them and in the context of that company. So thank you all again so much for participating and using the STAR Method for this sample behavioral interview question. Now when it comes to rehearsing your responses, challenging questions can be like the elephant in the room questions. And they are different for everyone. They could be employment gaps. Why did you leave your last job? Describe your ideal boss. Or do you tell them that you’re a military spouse? So we do have some
tips for answering these challenge questions as well, no matter which one it might be for you. Number one is to prepare for it. Also, be honest and positive. For example, employment gaps, they are not a deal breaker. They are your opportunity to tell a story of self-motivation, resilience, and determination that qualify you for the job. Genuinely acknowledge the gap and briefly explain why they exist. And then confidently list what you have done between jobs. Maybe you took a class, read a book, or obtained a certification. The MySECO Portal holds tools and resources to help you connect to a lot of these resources, especially if you are currently in an employment gap, including profession development, entrepreneur, and volunteer opportunities. Many military spouses also wonder if they should talk about being a military spouse. When you are researching a company, check to see if the company is part of the Military Spouse Employment Partnership by connect to the MSEP job search tool on MySECO. These companies, and there are over 390, have joined MSEP because they are passionate about hiring, recruiting, retaining and promoting military spouses. They want to know that you’re a military spouse. If you are applying for a company and you are unsure where they stand on their attitude towards the military community, we usually recommend focusing on your professional skills and accomplishments throughout the interview. However, if the opportunity presents itself, it is usually a personal decision if and when you disclose you are a military spouse. For me personally, I have shared in the past that I am a military spouse, because I feel that I am more flexible, resilient, and independent as a result of my experiences as a military spouse. By disclosing, I was also able to see what the company’s response was for the military community, especially if my sponsor was deploying or going to be away a lot. My goal was always to find an employer that is supportive of me at my job, but also all the roles that make up my career, including of course, one of the very most important ones which is being a military spouse. The former head of Military and Veteran Programs for LinkedIn, Dan Savage, stated, "I would say be proud of your status "as a military spouse, because then you can help "the companies that want to find you find you." SECO is also here to help with rehearsing your responses to challenging interview questions and more, by scheduling a video mock interview. SECO career coaches provide personal assistance with crafting your best responses to interview questions, answering questions you may not have on your list, refining your delivery and answers, conducting research on the organization, gaining overall confidence, and following up after an interview. To help you get a better idea of what to expect, prior to the mock interview, your career coach will email you with information to download the site call software. And we will ask you to email us some additional things that we can help, that we need to prepare for the interview, like your resume and the job posting. The consultation is then treated like a real interview. So be sure to dress for success. Consultations last 45 minutes, beginning with an introduction. And the question period usually lasts about 20 to 25 minutes. You will then have an opportunity to share questions you prepared for the employer, and you’ll receive feedback at the end of the session with a followup email with helpful resources to help you continue preparing for the interview. Along with rehearsing your responses, you will also want to prepare questions to ask, as we just mentioned. The goal of these questions are to ensure the company and position are a great fit, and to
continue selling yourself. So some tips for formulating your questions include asking questions based on your needs. This is where researching yourself can help. Just because the company is a great company does not mean it’s the best company for you. Also, anticipate the interviewer’s responses and prepare followup questions, especially for leadership roles. This will show you care, that you are well-researched, and that you are willing to put in the work. We do have some sample questions that we can share with you today. For example, what do you think will be the company’s greatest accomplishment at the end of the year? What is a typical day like for someone in this position? What do you like about working here? What are resources that I will have access to that will help me perform my job duties? What is your management style? And what are the qualities of people who are most successful in this position? You’ll see these sample questions vary. Some refer to the company as a whole. Others are directed more towards the position, the boss, or toward the person doing the interviewing. What will I be surprised about during my first week? When will I hear from you? Remember to use the information that you gained to gather and fuel your responses during the interview and during the next round of interviews. We are now going to bring up a couple poll questions. If you could please take a moment to respond. The first one states true or false, you should ask about teleworking opportunities during the initial interviewing process. Great, great, I’m seeing some responses are coming in now. And it looks like we have some answers going both ways, true and false. There’s a few more coming in for false. And the answer is, that is correct, false. We usually recommend not asking about pay, benefits, or special allowances like working from home until after the job offer has been extended to you. Unless, for example, the position that was advertised maybe was for a telework position. Then of course you could definitely ask about it. But for this case, we’re assuming that it is not one that already had telework in the job posting. If you’re interested in learning more about salary negotiation, be sure to check out tomorrow’s session at 9:00 a.m. eastern time. Know Your Worth, How to Negotiate Your Perfect Fit. One of my fellow SECO career coaches, Julie, will dive deeper into these types of questions, along with the timing of when to discuss and ask them. The second question stated true or false, your ability to stand out as a candidate ends at the conclusion of the interview. And most of you are agreeing that answer is false. Following up after the interview is one of the ultimate ways to stand out from the crowd of job seekers. The job search process is a journey. And as with all races, we want to finish strong. We want to help you now know when and how to follow up, along with what comes next. So we usually recommend following up within 24 hours of the interview with a sincere thank you email. The way that you can go about doing this is number one, obtain a business card or business cards of the individual or individuals that you met with. This not only allows you to remember their names and their contact information and how to spell their names correctly. You’re gonna be getting so much information on the day of the interview, so this can be really helpful. Number two, reflect. Even though you want to respond quickly, you want to take some time to reflect on what went well, what could have gone better. Reflecting on the experience will help you use words that add value when you are ready to create and send your thank you email. This can also help with preparation for a second interview. And finally, create and send your thank you
email, which we recommend including the follow statements. Number one, offer a sincere thank you. Number two, restate how you will add value. This could be something specific to help reference and remind the interviewer who you are. Or you could possibly add something here that maybe you forgot to mention during the interview. And finally, reaffirm your interest with the company. For example, you could say something like, after speaking with you, I was more excited about the opportunity to work for this company because, and then you could share what made you even more interested and be genuine after the interview process. And one question that we usually get a lot when we talk to military spouses about the interview process is what’s next, how to follow up after an interview. We usually recommend waiting at least one week, unless directed otherwise. That’s why one of the great questions to ask at the end of the interview is when can I expect to hear from you. They might say in a couple days. They might say in a week, or we’ll get back to you in a month. That will kind of help you gauge that timeline for the followup phone call. And finally, always keep up the hard work. Continue to network, send resumes, interview, and follow up on positions. You do not want to slow down or stop the race until you receive the job offer you want. Remember to have the mindset and confidence that nothing and no one compares to you. I want to thank you all so much for joining me for the fourth session of the symposium. Together we concentrated on connection, planned for success, focused on the fundamentals, rehearsed your responses, prepared questions to ask, and finished strong by discussing how to follow up in order to ace your next interview. Remember, SECO career coaches are available to assist you with all areas of your education and career goals. Our program has specially designed coaching packages that cover a variety of topics. Please give us a call by dialing 800-342-9647 to schedule a specialty consultation so we can help you take your career goals to the next level. We will adjust our screens in just a few moments, as we prepare to take your questions. Please make note, we have included several links discussed during today’s session in a pod for you to access. If you want to take a few moments to access these resources, that would be great. We are now going to open up the floor to take questions. Please share your questions by typing them in the general chat pod. As you are gathering your questions, I wanted to share that we are excited to finish the first day of the 2019 Virtual Military Spouse Symposium with a Facebook Live event, featuring the MSEP partner Accurate Personnel at 3:00 p.m. eastern time. And be sure to come back tomorrow for the final day of the symposium, where we have more sessions to help you prepare for your next pursuit, along with a special announcement from LinkedIn, exclusively for military spouses. Okay, great, I’m seeing a couple questions coming in now. So I see one coming in from Angela. How do you answer an off-the-wall opinion question that I wasn’t prepared for? Angela, this is a great question. A lot of times, if a question does throw you off, I tend to, if you’re not really sure how to answer it or what they’re looking for, it is okay to sometimes ask a followup question, just to make sure you’re on the same page or really the response that they’re looking for. And I always like to try to take a deep breath, just take a moment to get your thoughts together, and try to think about what would be the reason that they would ask that question. You might have Googled, or you might have seen some pretty off-the-wall questions before from
some different companies. So you could try to look at some of those and think about are they looking for seeing a personality trait, like am I a team player, am I a hard worker, am I great at communication skills, or do I have excellent technology skills, or if I’m a quick learner. So they might be trying to gauge a specific skill. So that way you could try to answer the question based on that specific skill or that specific personality trait that they’re looking for. Also, it’s great, a lot of you raised your hands that you’ve had an interview question, had an interview before. I kinda make a list of some of those different questions that you have experienced. That way you can prepare answers. You might have been able to kind of compile that list, and that will help when you’re rehearsing your different responses to kind of be ready, and it’ll kind of help you in your reaction time. Again, we want to try to be as responsive as possible, not necessarily in reactive mode. So that can help you as you’re kind of preparing for the different interview questions. Looks like Priscilla says, is it appropriate to flip through the pages of your resume to give answers in a virtual interview event after preparation. Priscilla, I would probably ask a couple more questions about this. It looks like, especially if they can see you, whether it looks like you’re mentioning specific to virtual. I think eye contact is a very powerful thing. So the most eye contact that you can have with the camera, which is essentially eye contact with the interviewer, is a great thing. I think it would be okay if you needed to glance at your resume, especially if they’re asking a question like, walk me through your resume, or asking a specific question about a project, if you needed to glance at it just to kind of get some memory. But that’s where it can help with your preparation, really try to know your resume forward and backward. And some of you might have actually participated in the resume event that was just at 11 o’clock eastern time today. If not, it was recorded. But that can also be helpful, because one of the things that we highlight is not having everything that you’ve ever done on your resume. You want to keep it short and concise, usually one to two pages long. So hopefully you can be as well-versed in that as possible with your resume. And again, if you have any followup questions, if you have a followup question to what my answer is, you can definitely include it so I can elaborate a little bit further. Julie mentioned, how do you answer what does your husband do. I know this technically an illegal question, yes, but I’ve been asked this and felt I would make things more awkward by not answering it. Yes, that is true, Julie, you do not have to answer that question. I think that may also relate to if they know that your sponsor is in the military or not. So this may also be a personal response. Again, you do not have to answer that question. If you do choose to say that you’re a military spouse, I know it might be a discussion that you have with you and your sponsor. Or if you said something, maybe the branch of service that they are in, or just mention the military. You don’t have to give any specifics. Again, it is a personal question, but you do not have to respond to that question in terms of answering that. But if you would like to share something brief, again, just to kind of clear that and kind of move forward with that question, again, you can say something very briefly. Maria wrote, how do you explain bullying in the workplace as a reason to resign. So Maria, that is a great question. I know we briefly talked about that when we were referring to some of the different answers, in terms of a conflict. Again, I always want to be honest when responding to interview questions. But if possible, I want to try to spin
it in a very positive way. So for example, if the bullying took place with a coworker, or maybe with a boss, you could say something like that you want to join that company because you see the potential of teamwork, of mutual respect. You want to try the highlight all the things that make you want to join that company and not necessarily talking negative about a former boss or a former coworker that you worked with. So try to spin it in a positive light by trying to focus on things everyone would want in a coworker. You would all want, a lot of you mentioned in the behavioral question that we practiced, active listening, mutual respect, using the software to check numbers, maybe scheduling a meeting. So just being able to connect with your boss or connect with your coworker in a respectful way. So we always want to try to focus on that. Karen wrote, how do you respond to changing or not staying at a job for more than every two to four years because of a spouse transfer. So a lot of times with employment gaps, sometimes when they’re asking about that you look almost like a job hopper question that you’re asked, you don’t want to fall into the trap of feeling like you need to explain every single time that you have moved jobs. Maybe you’ve had three or four different jobs within a 10-year, within a five-year span. You don’t want to necessarily elaborate on every single job hop that you’ve had. That’ll kind of get lost, and it can drag out a little bit more. So you want to keep your responses brief. As we kind of discussed briefly with the employment gap question, you can briefly acknowledge it. Sometimes it can be helpful if you can lump some of transfers or changing jobs together into one category, and then talk a little bit more about what happened and why that happened. And then also, hopefully, if there’s a reason why it wouldn’t happen here, maybe your sponsor is separating, or maybe you will be there for another three years, if you can add a statement of why you will be there for a little while, that can always be helpful. Also, especially if it’s because you are a military spouse, again, it’s a little bit of a personal decision whether you would like to disclose that or not. You could have another reason of why you changed different positions. Or it could be that the position that you are interviewing for might use a different type of technology. Or maybe you can connect with people on an international level. So there might be a specific reason that’s different than the company that you’re current leaving, is that you wanted to leave of why you wanted to join that company, to kind of focus on the positive, and focus on what those opportunities look like. Also, I know a lot of these are going to be very specific to each individual situation. So I did want to mention, again, if you want to give us a call to schedule a SECO video mock interview, or just to schedule a specialty consultation where we can dive a little deeper into your career goals, your background, your resume, we can really look at these things together and how you can go about it again to make sure you’re the best possible candidate for the position. Okay, let’s see. And Corinne wrote, how do we ask why we aren’t hired so that we can improve in the future. I’ve never done this, but would love to get feedback so I can improve. I just feel it might be asking too much. Corinne, no, that is an excellent question. I’m so glad that you asked that, because the best thing about applying for jobs is that sometimes the company may not have a job that is publicly posted. So following up, especially if it is a company that you are passionate about, you feel that it would be the best fit for you, the best fit for your family, I would highly recommend connecting with them on LinkedIn,
maybe sending a followup email to the hiring manager, or a direct message where you can say, you know, I really am interested in this position or any other position that you think I would be a great fit for. And you can mention that you would love, you could set up an informational interview, just to get to know the company a little bit more. Any way that you can network to get your name circulating within the system. Again, send a thank you email, maybe send a thank you card. Ways that you can add those connections is just gonna make you more memorable. That way, whether it’s that same position that they maybe are able to call you back for, or if it’s a new position that they’re able to connect you to in the future, they would be able to provide that with you. Again, usually it could be a couple different things. Again, they might say that the reason is, and again, sometimes you can actually say this during the interview, is there anything that gives you reservations about hiring me. I know that can be a little bold for some people, but you would be able to ask that question. And then usually they will answer it in one of three ways. They’ll either say, you know, that there is a specific reason that they have a reservation. And then it could be a misconception. So a lot of times with interviews, biases come into play because you just have such a short amount of time. So people tend to make assumptions as they’re trying to come up with who might be the best candidate. So a lot of times it’s a misconception. Then you’ll be able to restate, well, actually, I didn’t tell you about that, but I’m glad that you mentioned it, because I actually have this experience that would fit perfectly for what you’re thinking. It could also be that it is a valid reason of why they’re not able to offer you the position. And number one, then you could say, is there any other position that I would be a good fit for. Or then you would know what do you need to do so that you can improve your chances in the future. So again, knowledge can be very powerful in just gaining experience and figuring out where to go. So I think that’s a great idea to follow up and just kind of get some more information, either during that interview, or Corinne, as you mentioned, maybe in the followup, how you can improve. And if, again, if you have any other questions like that, or followup questions, please let me know. I really appreciate your time today, and I appreciate you asking me these questions. And Corinne, I know, as you had mentioned, you just feel like it might be asking too much. A lot of times, military spouses have that same feeling, especially when talking about networking. So I know I mentioned LinkedIn and the special announcement they have for military spouses tomorrow. But it is a great resource. And additional networking resources are on MySECO, like Blue Star Families, the National Military Family Association, and so many more. These resources that connect you to other military spouses, and the MSEP job search feature on MySECO that connect you to companies that want to know that you’re a military spouse. These allow you to make those connections, build those relationships. That’s one of the fastest, most effective ways to job search and to get your resume through the applicant tracking system or through the hiring manager’s process so that you can get the call for the interview. So a lot of times, people are very willing to help out. A lot of times, people get incentives if they are able to recommend or network with people. So I think it’s a great tool that you can use. And again, please give us a call so we can help you with practicing that. We would love to hear from you and kind of help you give you different ideas of how you can connect, send direct messages, and
network as a military spouse. And let me know if anyone else has any questions. Kimberly wrote, I’ve been told I’m aggressive and others feel intimidated. As a military spouse, we have these traits and big hearts. How do we move through this? Kimberly, I believe that, you know, having a big heart, and it sounds like just all the traits that make you a military spouse, that you’re probably very resilient, hardworking. You’re probably a quick learner. You’re probably a natural leader and team player. So I think those are all excellent traits that you’re probably bringing to the table. The one thing, if you’re being told that you’re aggressive or you’re making others feel intimidated, I might ask some questions about maybe the kinds of jobs you’re interviewing for. Maybe are you interviewing for leadership roles or who is it that’s interviewing you? Is it potentially your boss or a hiring official, maybe someone from Human Resources, or is it a peer? Sometimes your approach to the interview might have a lot to do with who the actual interviewer is. So sometimes getting some of that information can be really helpful. Also, because we talked about concentrating on connection first, friending the interviewer, or trying to make some kind of connection, maybe you are from the same university or from the same hometown, or maybe you like the same sports team. Just any kind of connection. A lot of times that has to do with either researching them ahead of time on LinkedIn, or different ways that you can research who you’re interviewing with. There’s a lot of ways to research nowadays. Or in those first couple minutes of the interview, if you could observe, if you’re in their office, or what they’re wearing, or they have a certain coffee mug or water bottle. Sometimes kind of making those very seemingly small connections can make you more likable. So that’s something that you always want to go for. You want to be genuine, but you also want to be likable and memorable when you’re applying for these different positions and going through the interview process. So that’s something that might help with that. Also, people tend to like people that look like them. So something that can also be helpful is if you are able to actually kind of mirror, maybe mirror the language that they’re using, or mirror how they are talking about the process, about the hiring process. Again, not that you don’t want to be genuine, you don’t want to be yourself. But just kind of picking up on some of the human connection cues might also be helpful in those situations. And Kimberly, again, please give us a call. It sounds like you have so many amazing qualities. I would love to talk to you. Or any of our SECO career coaches, we can just get to know a little bit more about you, and especially the specific positions that you’re applying for. Looks like Carla said I have a three-year employment gap in my resume. How should I address the employment gap on my resume? So Carla, usually when it comes to employment gaps, we recommend trying to figure out what did you do during that timeframe that made you better. So always, as time goes by, we’re always either getting better or getting worse. So I know you were gaining life experiences, whether you were a stay-at-home mom, or if you took some time to go to school. So trying to hone in on what experiences have you had that have either taught you multitasking or honed in on your skills for multitasking. Or maybe you learned or obtained a certain certification. Or maybe, I know a lot of times nowadays, you can have a business right from your home. Maybe you were an entrepreneur, went on small business venture. So some of those different things are ways that you can fill in that gap. Again, it’s not usually a deal
breaker. Usually employers just want you to acknowledge it and briefly explain what you have done within that timeframe that allows you to continue to progress, continue to hone in on your skills, gain new skills and experience that will help you through the job. A lot of times, employment gaps are also stories of resilience, where you’re getting back into the workforce. You are rejuvenated, you have energy. And so a lot of times, just focusing on that, focusing on being ready and excited to be a part of that team is a great way to kind of briefly address the gap, but also make sure that they know you’re a good fit for the team and you’re ready to get started. And Carla, if you are in that employment gap right now, I did briefly mention this, but be sure to check out MySECO. There are a ton of courseworks that you can take. You’re here right now, which is amazing that you’re doing this webinar. But there’s also professional development courses that you can take, such as Institute for Veterans and Military Families. They have a lot of recertification courses for military spouses that you could go and sign up for that right away. So be sure to check some of those out, too. There’s volunteer opportunities on MySECO, even virtual volunteer opportunities. So there’s different ways that you can kind of fill in those gaps.

- [Mininia] All right, this has been a wonderful session, Kristina. Thank you so much for all of the insight. And thank you to the military spouses for the engaging conversation and wonderful questions. Kristina is actually going to be available via the chat pod. So please feel free to type your questions in the chat pod. Again, thank you so much, Kristina, this was great.

- [Kristina] Oh thank you so much. Thank all of you so much for joining us, too. It was great seeing everybody.

- [Mininia] All right, thank you. So to download the available handouts from this session, including the presentation slides, and our SECO program flyer, as well as the SECO career coaching fact sheet, please highlight the document and click the Download File button. The items will download to your computer in a compressed file. If you’re connecting from a mobile device and are unable to download the files successfully, you may enter your email address into the Trouble With Downloads chat pod to receive the materials after the event. If you have trouble, please let us know in the Need Technical Assistance chat pod. In the Web Link pod, you will find two links. The first link is for the session survey. We would love for you to provide any feedback about your experience today. The second link is where you can download your certificate of participation. And this concludes our presentation. But we hope that you will join us at 3:00 p.m. for our Facebook Live to discover new employment resources and services by connecting with human resources professionals and hiring mangers from Accurate Personnel. And that link is Facebook, so it’s www.facebook.com/DoDMiSpouse. So we will type that in the chat pod. We hope that you will be able to join us for the Facebook Live event at 3:00 p.m. eastern standard time. And we know that Accurate Personnel is definitely looking forward to your questions and sharing more information about the company. So again, Kristina is here to answer any questions that you have in the
chat pod for a few more minutes. But thank you again for joining. This concludes this session, and have a wonderful day.