

# HAVE YOU DUG YOURSELF INTO A CONVERSATIONAL PIT?

## USE THIS PHRASE TO SAVE THE DAY (AND THE INTERVIEW)

There is an all-purpose phrase you can use to save your dignity as well as the interview.

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We've all been there. You hear yourself talking but even you've lost track of the point and by the look on the other person's face, so has she. It can happen if you're nervous or maybe excited, or maybe you've just distracted yourself. The conversational pit, where you're still talking....and talking....and talking, and the pit only grows deeper. Nowhere is the pit more unwelcome than during an interview. If you find yourself in a pit, do not despair. There is an all-purpose phrase you can use to save your dignity as well as the interview. As helpful as the phrase is, however, it's just as helpful to avoid the pit in the first place if possible.

First and foremost, the purpose of an interview is to determine if your resume is, in fact, accurate and you are able to perform the functions of the job. Most interviewers will ask you a series of behavior based questions, in which you are asked to provide examples of times you did this, that or the other. When you are providing the details behind the question, your best bet is to remember Who, What, When and How. Where (one of the 5 W's) is usually irrelevant and 'Why' can lead to too much backstory and...the pit.

Another purpose of the interview is to give the interviewer a chance to get to know you and see if you are a cultural fit. The reverse is true as well. This is your chance to see if this company is one in which you want to work. Because of this, you may be asked questions about the type of environment you like, your favorite previous boss/company, or least favorite. Stick to job-relevant points if possible, and especially try to avoid mentioning any of the 'HR-Forbidden' zones like religion, marital status, etc. Here, too, it is easy to get carried away and find yourself rambling on trivial concerns as a desire to be thorough inadvertently leads to...the pit.

The reality is, any time you start supplying the whole back-story, or extraneous details, you are starting to build the pit, but that's okay. The most important part is realizing it and employing THE phrase. It's simple, but effective. "I'm sorry, let me rephrase this." That's it. Then you pause, start over, and succinctly answer the question. The beauty of this is, you don't have to continue digging and you also demonstrate social intelligence because as mentioned, everyone gets into a pit sometimes, but not everyone can get out of them. "I'm sorry, let me rephrase this," also allows you a second to collect your thoughts and organize what you really want to say. It shows poise and also quickly shuts down an unproductive conversation.

So before your next interview, work on your previous examples using Who, What, When and How and start practicing "I'm sorry, let me rephrase this." Just in case.