Written by Julie Desmond
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Rynn is about to graduate. She is excited about her future and passionate about life. She wears her heart right there on her sleeve, but is that the best place for a heart during an interview? Yes, definitely.
Rynn had a phone interview for a position she wanted more than anything. She had prepared for days, thinking about the organization and the job, trying to anticipate the questions she would have to answer. She was ready for anything, but when she heard that most common interview question, "What was your greatest accomplishment?" she surprised herself with her response.

"It still makes me smile when I think about it," she said. Then she followed up with an explanation of what was so great and why.

Phone interviews are tough. Without visual clues, it is hard to read whether someone likes what you've said or is completely turned off. In person, you get credit for good looks, good posture, a timely laugh or smile. Over the phone, both interviewer and interviewee are dependent on word choice and inflection to get their messages across. Even email interviews might be easier because then, at least, you can toss in an emoticon here or there. (No, don't).

Be appropriate, but generous, with your personality during a job interview. Don't ramble or get off track with your answers, but do stand out by being yourself. Bringing something beyond a planned, pat answer - bringing your own personality to the phone interview - will help you become more memorable to the person who might have asked the same questions to a dozen candidates that day. What makes your Greatest Accomplishment any better than the next guy's? I'll tell you. It's all in how you tell the story.

"It still makes me smile," is a perfect way to secure the interest of the interviewer. It says, sit up, listen, because this might make you smile, too. And these days, who can't use a smile?

Sometimes the best way to calm your nerves is to let a little air out of the balloon. If you are thrilled just to get the phone interview with this organization, it's okay to say so. If you feel nervous, just put it out there. Let them know you are professional, but human, too. Pro interviewers and good managers will respond by helping you feel more comfortable. And if it makes you smile, say so.

Does it sound like I was sucking up? she asked.
Were you?
Not at all; it just came out that way.
Then you're good.

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