

Nurse Becoming Ep.087 - How to Answer "What Are Your Weaknes..."

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SPEAKERS

Amanda Guarniere

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Hello, hello, welcome back to The Nurse Becoming podcast. It's Amanda. And do you want to know the question that instantly makes me sweat? The question is "Amanda, tell me about your weaknesses?" Woof. Right, that question...That question sucks. The truth is, the interviewers care likely less about your actual weakness than they do about your emotional intelligence and maturity. And so in this episode, today, I'm going to break down kind of what to expect with this question how to prepare your answer in a few basic steps, okay, because I know I cannot be alone in really, really despising this question and knowing that it's like kind of a trick, but I think as soon as you realize how to prepare for this question, it won't seem so intimidating. Okay. So like I said, the interviewers really care less about your weaknesses than they do about your self awareness, and your maturity and your emotional intelligence. They're really trying to gauge how self aware you are, as well as whether you can take action on things that need improvement, and whether you can even admit that you have areas that need improvement. So how do you answer this question? So let's break it down how you should prepare; we're going to do four basic steps in this episode. But before we get into this, those steps, I want to make clear that you know, even before we prepare, I think that you should try your best to answer this question truthfully. Okay, I know it's tempting to kind of like come up with this answer that they might want to hear. But I'm a big fan of honesty and integrity, and leading with those attributes will rarely steer you wrong. So you'll hear in these steps how there is truth in your answer. But you're also going to choose an answer that that makes for a good answer. Okay, so we're kind of in this happy medium of being truthful, and also giving the interviewers something to work with, that's going to work in your benefit. Okay, I do want you to think about this in advance. Because there are some answers that would be better than others for this question. Okay. So let's dive into these four steps on how to prepare for the question, what are your weaknesses? Let's dive in. So number one, I want you to get reflective, and write down a list of your actual weaknesses. Okay, so like pen and paper, open up a Google Doc, however, open up the Notes app on your phone, whatever is easiest. Obviously, don't do that if you're driving. But when you when you sit down to prepare, this is your first step, you're going to get reflective. And you're going to write down a list of your actual weaknesses. This can be uncomfortable, so maybe reward yourself at the end or do this while you're like listening

to some nice music or something. These could be things that you're not confident about, or feedback you've been given from supervisors before, or general things that you know, you're not the best at. So they could be hard skills like EKG interpretation, or IV placement or more soft skills, like being confident, saying no personality conflict, having patience. Don't rush this part. And since this list will be just for you, you don't have to, like send it to me or anything, nothing is really off limits. And this might be an exercise that you can set a timer for 15 minutes and do or it might be the type of thing where you, you know, put down the first list and then kind of sit on this for a little bit reflect over a bit of time and revisit that list a few days later. Okay, so that's step number one, getting reflective, and writing down a list of your actual weaknesses as it pertains to your job or your professional status. Next - step number two, is you want to read through this list and identify weaknesses that you are either actively working on improving, or have some concrete plans to work on. Okay, so you want to circle or highlight the weaknesses that you are actively working on improving, or you have plans to work on concrete plans. For example, I'm not great at EKGs. So I've enrolled in an EKG course okay, like that's how concrete you want these plans to be ideally, okay? This will be important as you prepare and frame your answer for your interview. Okay, so that's step number two, going back to the list, identifying weaknesses that you are working on or have plans to work on. Step number three is you're going to narrow down to about two to three weaknesses that you plan to focus on in your responses. And, you know, there's a little bit of strategy in terms of how you choose which weaknesses. And this is going to be different for everybody. And it's mostly going to be related to the role that you're in, and the role that you're going for. And you know, whether you are a new grad versus someone more experienced, or whether you're pivoting to a new specialty, okay, so, so in this step number three, where you narrow down the top two, three weaknesses, that you would bring up in an interview, really have the perspective of whoever the interviewer is going to be and try to put yourself in their shoes, and pick the ones that you would be happy to hear that someone is working on. Okay. So, for example, if you are a nurse, who just graduated from NP school, and you're applying for your first NP job, in the outpatient setting, you're not going to tell them that you're not good at IVs, because they don't really care. Right? And, and they don't want to hear that you're focused on something or bringing up something that's really not quite relevant to the role you're interviewing for. It is very rare, as a nurse practitioner, especially in the outpatient setting, that you're going to be placing IVs unless unless you work in outpatient oncology in a transfusion, or an infusion center. So So really try to, you know, be a little bit vulnerable, and know that you're going to bring things up that are our weaknesses as they relate to your future role, but also things that you are actively working on. Okay, this is a little bit tough, because it, it, I can't, I can't tell you exactly how to do this, right, it's gonna be really specific to you to what you have on your list into the jobs that you are applying for. But that's how you want to at least have this perspective and decide which ones which weaknesses, you're going to prepare. Okay, so that's step number three, narrowed down to two or three weaknesses that you will focus on in your response. Now, the fourth and final step is to prepare and practice your answer. Okay, I'm going to give you a general script to use. But keep in mind like this is you and your answer. You don't have to use this. But I think it can be helpful to at least have some sort of framework for you to come up with a response that, that you will want to practice and have in the back of your head, but doesn't need to be written down on paper, right? Like we want to avoid being totally scripted. But you want to be familiar enough with your response, that it can kind of roll off the tongue or you can appropriately add limit, so that you can, you know, give a good response. And a really meta example of this is kind of how, right now I'm delivering this podcast episode, right? So when I do podcast episodes, I write out an outline. But I don't script everything, word for word. And sometimes I go off in ad lib, which I am doing right now. So like my note said, prepare and practice your answer, you will want to use this general script for your response. But you can see how with that information that I know that, you know, I'm I

guess I'm referencing it, because it's like on my screen, and this won't be necessarily your situation and an in person interview. But you want to know what you're going to say well enough that you can then riff or ad lib, or or deliver it so that it doesn't sound like you're super rehearsed. Okay, so here's my general script for your response. "My greatest weakness is insert weakness here". Then you're going to give a background sentence or two about maybe how you discovered that this is a weakness or how it has affected you. And then you're not going to talk too much about that, right, like two sentences about the weakness itself. And then you're going to quickly pivot to this framed question or a framed statement, "To help myself improve in this area I..." and then you talk about what you have done, or what you're doing to improve. Okay, this is a really important question. And you want to say very explicitly "to help myself improve in this area", okay? Because you want to make sure that you're explicitly as clearly as possible, saying, This is my weakness, and this is what I have done to help myself improve. Okay. So that's really that's really it for the script. Okay, "my greatest weakness is..." background sentence or two, "to help myself improve in this area I..." and then you talk about what you've done. And just in case you are listening on the go, please know that you can always refer back to the show notes, especially when I do a solo episode like this, we have nice typed out show notes that have all this. So in case you'd like to read or in case you need to reference what I said. Okay, so do head to the link in wherever you're listening, tap on the link in the show episode description, or you can go to www.theresumerx.com/087 and then I'll bring you to the show notes page. So, once you come up with the script, I want you to review it a few times to be comfortable with it, you can practice it out loud. And I would consider preparing two maybe three of these responses, so that you can, in case you're asked about more than one in case you deliver that answer. And they're like, "Great, what else" You want to be not super caught off guard. So I definitely think that preparing two or three would be would be beneficial. And you know, another reason for that not just because they might ask you, "Okay, tell me another weakness". But as you go through the interview, as you read the room, as you tune into what they're looking for, what concerns they may have, etc., either you may end up already talking about a weakness in another question. So you might need another one. Or you may decide, "Okay, out of the ones that I've prepared, this is the best one that this employer needs to hear". Okay, so always be extra, extra prepared. So let's go over these four steps, again, to answering what are your weaknesses, the first step is to get reflective and write down a list of all your actual weaknesses. The second step is to read through that list and identify those weaknesses that you are actively working on improving or that you have plans to work on. And next, you're going to narrow down to two to three weaknesses that you plan to focus on in your response. And the way you decide this will mostly be based on the type of role you're in, and the type of role that you are applying for and that you're interviewing for. And the fourth step is to prepare and practice your answer scripted out a little bit in advance, and prepare two or three responses so that you are not caught off guard. And I really think this is a foolproof way of answering this question of preparing on how to answer this question. You will still probably get nervous and and that's okay. But it will be really helpful that you have thought about this in advance because this is the type of thing where if you are asked it off guard and you've never prepared this question before or even thought about it, you're at risk of your mind going blank and just having to really adlib in the moment which is less than ideal. I think being prepared is always, always always smart. So I hope this has been helpful. Let me know by tagging me on Instagram @theresumerx or sending me a direct message. I'd love to know if you liked this type of episode. Would you like to hear more interview content? Let me know! I'm always curious to get your feedback and love when you share these episodes and connect with me so that I can get that feedback from you. So I hope you have a wonderful week and I will talk to you next week.

