



## **Episode 39 -**

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TH: “How often have you heard somebody say, ‘I’m pretty confident about this interview, I’m a pretty good employee, I’m pretty sure about this?’ What if we left that word out of the conversation and said, ‘I feel confident about the interview, I’m sure I’m qualified’?”

HF: Welcome to The Doctor's Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. If you're questioning your career in medicine, you've come to the right place. I'm Heather Fork, a former dermatologist and founder of The Doctor's Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a nonclinical job, or something else. I started this podcast to help you discover the career path that's best for you and give you some resources and encouragement to make it happen. You don't need to get stuck at the white coat crossroads. So pull up a chair, my friend, and let's carpe that diem.

Hello, hello and welcome back to the Doctor’s Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. You're listening to episode number 39. In a recent episode, number 25, we talked about how to prepare for nonclinical job interviews. We covered how to answer hard questions such as “Tell me about yourself” and “Why do you want to leave medicine?” Practicing your answers to potential questions helps tremendously with feeling more confident and making a great impression.

Today we are adding another key element to increase your ability to feel confident as well as convey confidence. We all know how easy it is when you're nervous and trying to

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think of what to say, to use filler words such as, “um”, “uh”, “well”, “like”, “oh”, “and so”. That's one of mine “and so”.

In an attempt to appear humble and avoid coming across as arrogant, we may inadvertently also use language that makes us appear weak or lacking confidence. To help us out with choosing empowering language in our interviews, networking conversations, and correspondence, we're joined today by Tracy Hooper who wrote the book, “The NEW Hello: What to Say What to Do in the New World of Work”.

She has a background in broadcast TV news. It's the founder of The Confidence Project and has built a successful voiceover business with clients such as Disney, Marriott, and NFL films. I'm very honored and eager to welcome our guest, Tracy Hooper, to the podcast. Hi Tracy.

TH: Hello there, Heather. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to hear you and see you.

HF: Yes, it's great. I see this really great mike that you have and you told me you've had it for 30 years.

TH: I have.

HF: Wow. And it sounds great.

TH: Thank you. We're only as good as our equipment. You know that as a podcast host, you need to have good equipment. And part of the equipment that we offer when we're interviewing for jobs is our language. That's part of the equipment that makes us powerful and makes people want to interview us.

HF: Yes. Well, you're going to really help us out here. And I have to just be transparent and say that it makes me a little nervous to have you on the podcast because I realized when

I started podcasting that my filler words are “and so”. And so, the interesting thing is we can hear it, but where I really found out about it was when I looked at my transcripts. Because I could finish an episode and I'm like, “Oh, well, I really didn't use “and so” and “so” too much”. And then I looked down at the print and it's all over the page.

TH: That's right. When you record yourself, it is both humiliating and enlightening. And the only way we can change our language or any part of our lives is by having feedback. Sometimes we get feedback from a kind person who says, “Do you notice that you use the word “wow” all the time?” My mother said that to me one time. After a 10-day visit, she said, “Tracy, may I give you some feedback about your language?” And I'm very close to my mother. And I said, reluctantly, okay. She said “You said you use the word “wow” all the time”. I said, “No, I don't, mom”. She said, yes, you do. And of course, then all I could hear was myself saying, “wow”. “And so”, it's one of those expressions that we use as a transition, as a filler to fill up space so we can continue to talk or command attention, but it doesn't serve us at all. I'm with you. I understand. “So” was one of my weak words. One of my words to lose, as I say.

HF: Well, I'm going to be listening to these tips too, because I'm having a hard time breaking this habit. Where I'd like to start, Tracy is to take us into that setting where a physician is interviewing. They're a great candidate. They meet the qualifications, have a really beautiful resume, and they may be going, “uh”, “um”, “oh”, using some of these filler words. Would that kill the deal? Could that really cause them to lose this opportunity if they're otherwise a great candidate?

TH: Well, I don't believe it would kill the deal. I think it would make them less compelling. If they're five equally qualified candidates, same as when you're applying for medical school. So many qualified candidates, people deserve to be there. It's those people who stand out by their professional presence, how they carry themselves, how they dress, their grooming, their background, of course, and the words they use to express themselves. So, all things being equal, if you are like everyone else in terms of your

qualifications, but your language is stronger, you'll have a better chance of getting that job or getting to the next interview, the second round.

HF: Can you give us some examples of how these words end up getting into our vocabulary and the impressions that they tend to make?

TH: Yeah. They get into our vocabulary for three reasons. Number one, it's a habit. If we are comfortable with how we speak and we don't get any feedback, we don't have a friend or mother who says "You use the word "wow" all the time" then it's human nature we continue to use those words as comfortable. So, habit is number one.

Number two is culture. If we hear it, we say it. By virtue of the fact that we're human beings, we want to fit in, we want to belong. We don't want to be left out of the crowd. And therefore, we use words that we hear other people use. One of those words for instance is the word, "Right?" How often do we hear people say, there'll be talking and they'll say "right", as if they're waiting for us to agree with them all the time? That is very new in our culture. I would say in the past two years I've heard people with all kinds of education and all kinds of credentials say "right" in between a sentence or a conversation.

So, habit is one. Culture is number two. If we hear it, we say it. And number three, and this may surprise you, Heather. And this is that we choose words based on fear. I learned this from Linda Bryce, who is a world-renowned voice coach. And she says this, and I'll quote her. "Our biggest fear is that we will be shamed, humiliated or banished from the crowd if we speak up. So, we freeze and we can't access our thoughts and we literally stop breathing. And while we stand there trying madly, trying to gather our ideas, we use various words to mask our anxieties. And those words are fillers – "uh", "um", "like", "you know", "so".

And then hedges. Hedges are those words that make us sound hesitant. We don't want to come off too strong. We don't want to sound like we're being overbearing. So, we use hedges. And a hedge would be “kind of”, “sort of”, “just a little bit” “pretty”.

How often have you heard somebody say, “I'm pretty confident about this interview. I'm a pretty good employee. I'm pretty sure about this”. What if we left that word out of the conversation and said, “I feel confident about the interview. I'm sure I'm qualified”. There are all kinds of ways that we can practice the power of pause. I'm jumping ahead. But if we practice the power of pause, that'll give us a chance to gather our thoughts and give other people a chance to listen to us. Instead of using those filler words in those hedges, leave them out, pause for a moment, get yourself together, and then you can finish your conversation or finish your thought.

HF: Now, I liked these three categories that you gave us. It can be a habit, it can be cultural and it also can be fear-based.

TH: Yes.

HF: And when do we have anxiety? When we're interviewing.

TH: Exactly.

HF: There's a lot on the line. And it's interesting, I started noticing this when I was doing interview prep and my clients who didn't typically have the “um” habit, all of a sudden became pretty hardy “ummers.” And when I asked them at the end, and I said, “Did you notice any particular word that you were using a lot?” most of them had no idea what it was.

TH: That's why recording yourself is helpful. I tell people, “Pull a shelfie, put your cell phone on a bookshelf, press record and ask a friend or a colleague if you can record the

conversation. I did this once. I've done it many times. But one of the times it remains clear to me is when I was preparing to be on a talk show. I talked to the producer about the theme and the questions. I'd sent a list of questions. And about a week ahead of time, I was practicing the answers. So, I put my cell phone on the shelf, press record. And in the course of a six-minute mock interview between my cell phone and me, I used the word "so" 13 times. Once every 30 seconds I was using "so".

HF: I'm with you. That would have been me.

TH: And that's how you can help yourself if you record yourself and you know those words, then that's how you can get rid of them. And one suggestion I always give people is to be kind to yourself, pick the word that you use the most often that you want to get rid of. It's not that we have to get rid of all of these words forever, ban them forever. No, it's "be mindful" of how we overuse them. And then to lose that one word, it takes 30 days to lose that one word. Because it's too much to say, "Okay, I'm going to get rid of "just", and "a little bit" and "kind of", and "pretty". I'm going to get rid of those. That's way too hard for the mind to absorb. Pick one and then give it 30 days and then pick another one.

HF: Would you say that there's the chicken and egg here. That some of this language, maybe the more deferential language that you described as hedge words are coming from a sense of a lowered self-esteem. And part of changing the vocabulary is going to come from practice, but it's also going to come from a revisioning of who you are.

TH: I love that. Absolutely. It becomes this virtuous cycle where we begin to use words, we might not be able to embrace them immediately. But if you change from instance saying, "I think" to "I believe", or "from my experience" or "what I know for sure", or "from my perspective", if you begin to use that kind of language, then other people will begin to see you as more confident. And then you feel more confident because you're getting good feedback from them.

So, it becomes this virtuous cycle of “The stronger the word you use, the more competent you get”. Other people have more confidence in you and on and on it goes. It's a very cool opportunity to change the way you present yourself in small, subtle ways that many people won't notice, except they will notice. You'll be different from other people. And isn't that one of the compelling reasons to prepare for an interview? We want to set ourselves apart. We don't want to be like everybody else. You want to be yourself, of course, but you don't want to sound like everybody else. Why would someone hire someone who is a cookie cutter of everyone else in the office or in the organization?

HF: Exactly. I love that you're bringing out that we can keep up-leveling who we are by being conscious of our language and choosing our words so that they empower us and accurately reflect who we are and how we want to be seen.

TH: Yes, how we want to be seen. And in my view, if you change your language, it will immediately give you a sense of controlling the conversation. The most important skill you can adopt besides recording yourself is to practice or say to a friend every time I say the word “right” or every time I say, “What do I know?” Have you heard people say that? I called these disclaimers. I don't call them linguists. I call these disclaimers. And this is a whole set of words where we want to seem humble and modest, but it doesn't make us sound strong.

People say, “Correct me if I'm wrong”. Why would we ask someone to correct us before we even opened our mouths? You've been doing this a lot longer. That could be true. This person could be doing it a lot longer, but you have your own experience that you can bring in so you could say “In my experience”. Instead of saying, “Oh, what do I know?” you could say “From my perspective”. And everyone who's listening has a perspective based on their own experience. “Oh, I could be completely overthinking this”, that's another one. “This is just my 2 cents”.

HF: I'm crazy.

TH: Exactly. Instead, you could say "Let's dig deeper" or "Perhaps we could try this". There are all kinds of ways that you can make that subtle shift. And it's fun. Once you begin to use these words, then you think "I am more capable than I thought. I'm more prepared for this interview than I thought I was".

HF: Exactly. And you didn't have to actually go out and do anything different. It can happen in the moment.

TH: Yes, yes. And that's where practice comes in. Before Jerry Seinfeld ever performed for the first time on The Tonight Show, he rehearsed his four-minute monologue 200 times.

HF: Oh.

TH: That's why it sounded so smooth. And we can do that too. I'm giving a presentation on Tuesday for a company in North Carolina. And I have practiced this one-hour presentation so far 10 times. I have a commitment to practice twice a day for the next four days until I give the presentation. And then it becomes second nature. And that's what I want to encourage everybody. Once you begin to practice these skills, it's like building muscle and then it becomes second nature. And then you can trust yourself to feel confident in high stakes interviews, conversations, and the like.

HF: I love that you're bringing out practice. I am such a proponent of doing the interview prep. And I've seen how with just a little bit of practice and one hour of a mock interview with my clients transforms them.

TH: What do you mean by transform? What is the difference that you see?



HF: They really get a sense of how when they're answering the questions that they're building a bridge from who they are and their experience to the interviewer and the company and showing who they are and what they've done can add value to this company and the person by building these connections. So, they're not just telling their story in isolation. For example, the question, "Tell me about yourself". It's with an ear to the audience and talking in language that's going to make them go, and I'm going to use your word "wow". "Wow, I really want this person because they're not speaking in a vacuum. They're speaking to me. They want to join our company. They want this job. They're clear on the reasons why, and their story makes sense to me".

TH: Beautiful. I love that. In my view, everyone's favorite subject is themselves. So, if you can make your interviewer about the other person, about their organization and how you can benefit their organization, they'll love you.

Think about this. You practice medicine, you practice medicine. This is a chance to practice your vocabulary, to take you to cross the bridge to your next career. And every time you perform surgery or saw a patient or had some kind of a procedure that you provided for a patient, you got better. Nobody wants to be the first person for a surgeon to operate on. I don't want this to be the first appendix this person has ever taken out.

Same idea with practicing interviews. I consider it a gift. And here's what I do. I love this idea. I call it a 10-penny practice. And if you're practicing your interviews, take 10 coins and put them in your right pocket. And every time you practice it, take a coin from your right hand to your left hand, and put it in your pocket. Right hand, left hand, put it in your pocket over and over again. And then, at the end of the day, you will have practiced your interview 10 times.

And practice in the shower, practice when you're walking the dog. Right before I give a presentation, my husband and I walk every morning in our neighborhood. And on the



days that I'm giving a presentation, I'll say to him, when we're about 20 minutes away, I said, "Can you go ahead because I need to practice my opening?"

And that is one suggestion I would give to everyone is to have a strong open and a strong close. People remember how you start and how you stop. You can fumble in the middle and we all do. But if you have a strong opening, how you really want to present yourself when you get into that interview and you can close strong, people will remember that. That's from the Public Speaking 101 book.

HF: That's very true because that is more memorable. Our first impressions make a big difference and then what we leave them with. One thing I wanted to ask you is how do people practice so that they're a little bit nervous and it might recreate some of those tendencies that could happen in an interview versus if they're just practicing all by themselves at home?

TH: You mean, should they be practicing with another person?

HF: Yes. And maybe even someone they're not as comfortable with.

TH: I think that's a great idea. I like to first begin practicing with a kind audience. It could be a friend, a family member, but then you could ask a colleague or you could ask someone who you respect professionally and say "I want feedback". Feedback is a gift.

HF: It is easy. It is so valuable.

TH: It is. Yes. People would rather walk over hot coals than give someone feedback.

HF: I know, I know.

TH: You have to say to them, “Please give me some feedback. I want to get better at this”. It's a way to help everyone manage their careers. I was talking with a client a couple of weeks ago, and there was a word that she used, which I can't remember. And I said to her, let's switch that to another word. And she said, I never thought about that. It wasn't that it was offensive. It was just confusing. And that was my job, it's to point these areas out that she didn't even think about when you're doing it in a vacuum.

HF: Oh, exactly, exactly. That perspective is invaluable.

TH: Very much so. And thank the person who's giving you feedback. And what I also notice is, and you've probably noticed this too, Heather, when you're practicing interviews with your clients. They'll say, “Well, I'm just getting started at this and this isn't fully fleshed out and I'm not really polished at this”.

HF: Yes, yes.

TH: Don't make excuses, get going. Just get going. It's like a parked car. The only way you can move that car is if you turn it on and pull out of the parking spot.

HF: Yes, absolutely. I know some clients have said, “Let's not do the interview prep today because I'm not ready”. But then when they do, it relaxes them because they start getting more confident and then it's more fun to do the prep.

There's something I wanted to go back to Tracy. And that's when you talked about these disclaimers using “just”, or “a little bit”. And I'm wondering if there isn't a place for these sometimes, especially if you're emailing. For example, say you email somebody and write, “ I want to talk to you”. And they can't hear the tone. They can't see your face, or read body language versus “I'd just like to chat with you for a few minutes”. Are there some instances where it's okay to use words that maybe soften language, maybe even in a conversation, perhaps?

TH: Absolutely. And that's what I mean by you don't have to banish these words forever. Use them judiciously. What happens with words like just is? I “just” want to ask a quick question. I'm “just” a little concerned about it. It's as if we are trying to justify what we're saying. If you wanted to have a short conversation with someone and you're sending an email, you could say, “Are you available for a quick phone call, please?” instead of “Just wanting to know if you might be available for a phone call”? Are you available for a quick phone call, please?

HF: Oh, I love that. You're brilliant. This is great, yeah.

TH: This comes from hearing clients and you do too, hearing clients use language that isn't worthy of them, that doesn't elevate them. And I'm thinking about all the people who are listening to us today, you all are smart. You're competitive, you're capable. You are successful. You have made it. How many people love to say “My daughter, the doctor. My son, the doctor”. And I admire everything you all have given to build your career. And I also admire the fact that you're looking to make a switch to cross over the bridge and find another way to fulfill your life.

But all of that experience that you have, all that confidence that you had as a physician, you can carry to your next role. Believe me, there's an aura about a physician. Take advantage of that and then have your language marry it. You got it.

HF: Tracy, that kind of makes my eyes well up a little bit. I have to say thank you for those beautiful words. I also thank you on behalf of my listeners. And you don't know how much this means. I often hear a physician say, “I'm “just” a physician. I don't have any transferable skills”. I hear this a lot. It reminds me of a quote I heard that stopped me in my tracks, which is “Never say anything about yourself that you don't want to be true”.

TH: Oh, I'm writing that down, Heather.

HF: I use it on myself because when I'm saying something self-deprecating and it just happens, it's such a bad habit. I remember that quote and I remember that words are powerful.

TH: Yes, indeed.

HF: Another way that I like to use this is to say to people, "What you just said about yourself, if someone said that to you, like if someone said to a physician, 'Well, you don't have any transferable skills', how would you feel? You would be ready to punch them in the face".

TH: Yes, exactly. And one of the ideas would be for everyone, and I'm sure you do this with your clients is to take an inventory of your skills.

HF: Yes, yes, yes.

TH: What do you like about yourself? What are you strong at doing? And what do other people say about you?

HF: Bingo.

TH: That is a great way for you to reinforce all the areas where you are strong. I have a quote to share with you, Heather, ready? "Whatever follows 'I am' is going to come looking for you".

HF: Oh, oh, my gosh. Do you know I have a technique called "The I am I am Technique"?

TH: No?

HF: Yes, that's one of my podcast episodes. I think it might be number 18, I'm not completely sure. But I believe that that phrase "I am" is as powerful as you just said. So, thank you for reminding us of this.

TH: You're most welcome. It's exciting. "I am capable. I am smart. I am ready. I am prepared. I am excited". And in terms of getting ready for interviews, we're varying off a little bit from... Here, I am saying a filler word "a little bit", but I think it's important to talk about getting yourself physically ready for an interview. For instance, when I was getting ready for our conversation today, I power-posed.

HF: Amy Cuddy!

TH: There has been some controversy in the world about whether that's duplicatable. As far as I'm concerned, it makes me feel ready.

HF: Would you go down like a slug on the ground? Did you do that one before an interview? I don't think we need research to tell us what's empowering in terms of posture.

TH: Exactly. But what do we do before an interview? We hover over our cell phones. We think, "Do I need to check one more text? Let me look at this person's credentials before I go into this meeting". And the next thing you know, you're hovered over your phone and you don't have that., that's a personal powerlessness pose as Amy Cuddy calls it as opposed to a power pose.

That's one of the areas I focus on. I smile, and it's not that everything you're saying is going to be smile worthy, but it gets you ready, gets you prepared, and you can turn your anxiety, your fear, your nervousness, and switch it and say, I'm excited.

There was a study at Harvard. You probably know this one where it was the difference between saying "I'm anxious" and "I'm excited". They had people who were ready to...

They asked them if they would be prepared to do some karaoke. And they wanted to determine accuracy of lyrics by people's phrases that they would say to themselves, their own self-talk. So, they divided the group into three parts. The first part was told to say, "I'm anxious" and then get up and sing. And by the way, the song was "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey. Everybody knows that one from every high school reunion and wedding receptions.

So, a third of the group was told to say, "I'm anxious" and then get up and sing. The middle group was told to say nothing, neutral, please start singing. And in the final group, the final third was told to say, "I'm excited". And the accuracy rate of those people who said "I'm excited" was over 80%.

HF: Wow. And "wow" it's a great word. So, I'm going to use it.

TH: "Wow" is a great word. Yes, you're using it appropriately.

HF: I love it.

TH: Yes, indeed.

HF: This is fabulous, Tracy. And I'd love to keep going on, but I want to respect your time. Is there something we haven't covered or a final thought you'd like to share?

TH: Well, there are many things that we could cover, but I would like to say this about language. That elevating your language, fortifies good communication. Our good communication is our personal currency. It attracts us to each other. It impacts our ability to be heard. It leads us to greater self-awareness and empathy for other people. And it ignites curiosity. People want to talk to people who are exciting and who have strong language. And if you embrace these words to use, one by one, you will see



yourself and other people will see you as calm, capable, smart, eloquent, optimistic, and confident.

HF: And who doesn't want all of that? And it's who we are. I love that homage that you gave physicians. And I think if they ever need a lift up, go back and listen to those words that Tracy gifted you and own them.

TH: Yes. Wonderful.

HF: How do people get in touch with you and find out about your book and what you do?

TH: That's very nice of you to ask. They can reach me through my website, which is [confidenceproject.com](http://confidenceproject.com). And I am also on LinkedIn under Tracy Hooper. And the book is called "The NEW Hello: What to Say What to Do in the New World of Work". And lots of what we've talked about in terms of words to lose and words to use is all in chapter 7 of my book.

And I also have a monthly video that I make available for anyone who wants to sign up. You can do that on my website. And it's two to three minutes of a confidence building video, a technique, a tip, a skill, that you can practice. And it's really fun. It's a really interesting way to get a quick tip in a couple of minutes every month.

HF: Oh, that's fantastic. I didn't know about that. I will make sure to link to all of the ways to get in touch with you and find out about your resources as well as your book in the show notes for people can find you. And I just want to extend another big thank you for coming on the podcast with us.

TH: You are very welcome. Thank you for the opportunity and the honor. And best of luck and good wishes to all of your listeners.





HF: All right. Thank you. Thank you.

All right, guys, this has been a lot of fun and I want to empower you to live from your truth, speak it, sing it from the mountaintops and let it carry you to live your dreams and carpe that diem. Bye for now and I'll see you in the next episode. Take care.

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*Podcast details*

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