



## **EPISODE 231 Episode 231 – From Silence to “No”: How to Handle Delays, Ghosting, and Rejection in the Nonclinical Job Search**

**With Heather Fork, MD**

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HF (00:00.098)

Delays, ghosting, and even outright rejection. We're going to look at a few ways this can show up and most importantly, talk about what you can do about it so you'll be less discouraged and more empowered and confident that there's still a right path forward.

HF (00:27.182)

Welcome to the Doctors 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 Doctors Crossing. As a master certified coach, I've helped hundreds of physicians find greater happiness in their career, whether in medicine, a non-clinical 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.

HF (01:16.718)

Hey there and welcome to the Doctors Crossing Carpe Diem podcast. I'm your host, Heather Fork, and you're listening to episode number 231, From Silence to Know, How to handle Delays, Ghosting, and Rejection in a Non-Clinical Job Search. Today we're talking about something that can be super confusing, disheartening, and let's be honest, really discouraging. It's that stage in your non-clinical job search when you're in the interview process

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and start running into delays, ghosting, and even outright rejection. These moments can shake your confidence and make you wonder if maybe you should just give it up, and I really don't want that to happen to you. So in this episode, we're going to look at a few ways this can show up, try to understand what might really be going on behind the scenes, and most importantly, talk about what you can do about it.

So you'll be less discouraged and more empowered and confident that there's still a right path forward for you because there is. Trust me, my friend, I've seen this happen many times over. So if you're struggling a bit though to even land those first interviews, I want to let you know about podcast episodes 154 and 155. Top reasons you're not getting non-clinical job interviews, parts one and two. So I will link to those in the show notes.

Well, let's talk about what's happening for those of you that are in the interview stage and may be experiencing these delays and challenges. So in an ideal world, recruiters would be transparent at every step of the interview process. After your screening interview, if it wasn't a fit, they'd say simply, hey, we've decided to move forward with other candidates. So you could go on your merry way and not waste emotional energy waiting.

But that's not what always happens. Some recruiters are great communicators, but others, well, no response often ends up being an indirect no. Still, one of the most puzzling and discouraging situations is when you've gone through multiple rounds, gotten great feedback, and everything seems to be heading towards an offer, and then suddenly things stall. So you're left in what I call this holding pattern.

HF (03:37.794)

I've seen this happen a number of times recently, which is one reason I really want to talk about it. So what does that look like? So you have your initial screening interview, and then you go through the full interview process, and along the way, you're getting good feedback. And then at that point, the recruiter may say something like, the team really likes you, things have gone really well, I'll be back in touch. And then next week comes and you're feeling good, like, wow, I think I really have a...

great chance here, they liked me, I'm getting good feedback. And you check your email and there's nothing, you wait a couple days, still nothing. You shake your laptop thinking

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maybe this will bring an email into your inbox, it got stuck somewhere. But that there's nothing. And then you're like, well, should I just wait longer? Should I reach out? And so two weeks pass, which I think is a reasonable time to wait to then follow up and ask politely.

Hi, I'm still really interested in this job. I just wanted to know if there's anything else you need from me. I'm looking forward to hearing back. And hopefully the recruiter will get back to you and say something such as, things are just taking longer than normal or we're interviewing. If we're wrapping up our interviews, we're still in process, but we'll be back in touch. Okay, well, that's good. It's not a no. And then you wait some more. Sometimes not even.

A couple weeks or a month pass, it can even be a couple months that go by and you still don't hear anything in spite of reaching out. So instead of getting a response like you were initially, you're getting ghosted. You're not getting any response at all. It's like you're up there in your airplane at 30,000 feet circling around, staring at the fuel gauge and thinking, how long can I stay in this pattern before I have to make an emergency landing?

So this is where I've seen my clients get discouraged and then they even can start to get a negative feeling about the company, which is completely understandable. So let's look at some of the reasons for the possible delays. So one could be, it's just exactly what they're saying, that they're still interviewing. It can take a good amount of coordination for a team to be able to schedule their interviewers.

HF (06:01.998)

Especially if they're group interviewers and coordinate with the candidate schedule and do all these logistics. And they may have a number of people they are still wanting to interview. So it could just be legitimate delays. Another reason could be that they've actually given someone an offer and they're keeping you in the number two position. So numero uno got a job offer from them.

and they're actually in the negotiation process. And obviously they're not gonna tell you that because they want you to still think that you might be number one and just hang in there because this candidate could fall through and then they would hope that you'd still

be there. Sometimes the person they're offering that job to could be an internal candidate, somebody in the company who maybe knew about this job before it was even posted. They're already courting this candidate and perhaps things are just taking time.

Maybe there's even a couple positions that that internal candidate is considering within the company. And so they're interviewing and trying to decide what they want to do. So behind these curtains, a lot can be going on. It could also be that it's summertime and people are on vacation. So someone that might be a key decision maker could be away or there could be a death in the family or an illness or just other life things that happen to slow things down.

There could be something even going on with a company where hiring for this position has even come up in question. It could be maybe they lost a big candidate or a big project that you would be working on or working with. And so they're even revisiting whether they should hire for this position. And then there could be geopolitical things. So there's a lot that we are not privy to, unfortunately, unless we have an inside connection. So sometimes

I do have internal connections when my clients are interviewing and sometimes I can get a little feedback of what is going on, but typically we're in the dark and we're playing the waiting game. Well, let's look at it. If you find yourself in this holding pattern at 30,000 feet and your fuel gauge is dropping, what can you do? I suggest that for the first time when the recruiter says, I will get back to you and you're not hearing anything, is to give it about two weeks.

HF (08:27.512)

Some people would say more, some people less, but I think that's a very reasonable timeframe and just follow up politely and restate your interest. Mention that there's anything else they need from you that you'd be more than willing to provide it and say you're looking forward to hearing back from them. Now, if this happens again, you don't hear anything in a couple of weeks, should you email them again? I would say maybe wait a little bit longer the next time. And if you still don't hear anything, I'd probably give it a month. And at this point, there's a good chance you may not hear anything back at all. But you've followed up, you've done your due diligence. And the main thing is you don't want to burn any bridges. Because we want to avoid like what we might want to say,



which is, hey, you told me you were going to get back to me. I've been waiting. Did I miss something? Or just not reach out at all? Because I've definitely heard situations where something took a lot longer than expected.

And the person did end up getting hired. And I asked the recruiter, this is my client. How do you choose my client after these long delays? And they said, well, she did keep letting me know that she was interested in a respectful way. So you can kind of play it by ear how often you feel you want to be reaching out or continuing to reach out at all. Another thing that's important to do is don't put all your eggs in one basket. What can happen sometimes is we do those first interviews, we're getting a lot of positive feedback. So we don't continue looking because we're thinking, oh this is it. I don't want to necessarily get going in a different direction, but it can be helpful if this kind of situation does occur because you may be getting a competing offer from another company or even a couple offers. And what this enables you to do is honestly reach back out to the recruiter and say,

I just wanted to let you know that I do have an offer from another company. I'm very interested in this position with you, and I'm wondering if you can give me any guidance on the decision-making process. So it's really helpful to have at least one competing offer. And the last thing is to stay open-minded because you never know when people might circle back to you. I have seen situations where that number one candidate left the job after six months and they reached back out to my client who was number two. I've seen situations where even a year later, a recruiter might reach back out. And what else can happen too is sometimes they will finally get back to you and say, I'm sorry, we went with another candidate, we're really interested in you, but we have this other position, would you be interested in this? So that's another reason why it's really great to just stay respectful.

Stay in appropriate communication until it's really obvious that nothing's happening and then you never know what door could it open for you. Now we've been talking about what happens when there are delays, when you're getting that indirect no or you may be getting ghosted. But now let's shift gears and talk about when you do get that no. When you are rejected and told no, we're not choosing you. Like ouch, that hurts.

And we often are familiar with this in our personal life. Like maybe when we were dating, we went on a couple dates and we're ready to tell that person, no, it's not a good fit, but then they beat us to the punch and they reject us. Like that stings, but we take it as part of the process. However, as a physician, you're often used to getting these clinical jobs, having recruiters beat down your door.

They may be emailing you quite a lot and you actually are the one who aren't responding to them. You may be even ghosting them just because they're bothering you and you didn't even ask for them to reach out to you in the first place. So we may end up taking this rejection a lot more personally than we really should. And I want to share this story from a recent podcast episode number 229 with my wonderful guest, Dr. Michelle Mudge Riley. Michelle had been doing coaching and consulting for a number of years.

And then she decided to make a big out of the box change and try for the medical science liaison position at the MSL in pharma. So she had gone through several rounds of interviews and was doing well. She felt very confident. And then she got the email that she didn't get the job. And she felt like devastated. She thought she had done really well and nailed that final interview. She didn't get the job. And she even said like she felt like

HF (13:14.488)

There was something not good about her and she gave her some PTSD. She said, I felt awful and I kind of wanted to give up, but I still had some interviews to do with other companies. So she just kept going through the motions with these interviews and things ended up being not just okay, but really great. She got three competing offers and later she reflected.

Looking back, that job would not have been right for me. Like I know that now. And we often don't see that in the moment. And it made me think of that quote, which you probably heard before, which is, rejection is the universe's redirection. Or some people say, rejection is God's redirection. And typically, like we do not see this until we have the hindsight and things have changed. So in that moment that happens to you,

There are number of things that we want to do to work through this rejection process. I call it the three P's. So the first P is to process your emotions. Like it's just normal not to

feel great. Let yourself feel it. Maybe you want to get out in nature. You want to yell. You know, sometimes you just need to get some anger out. So if you feel really broadsided.

Talk to a friend, might want a journal about it, eat some chocolate, watch some cat or dog videos, whatever. It is helpful for you to not get stuck and discouraged. So the second P is to do a post-mortem with compassion. So the thing to look at is what did you do well? And I think it's helpful to write these things down almost as if you are speaking to your inner self, sort of as a coach or a consultant or a good friend. So you can almost write a letter to yourself and say, this is what I think you did really well in this process and write it all down because it's important to capture that because we often take for granted all the things we did really well. Maybe you had some really great examples and stories that you used in the interview. You were able to think fast on your feet.

HF (15:34.326)

You got people laughing. You followed up with a nice thank you email within 24 hours, like list all the things that you did really well, especially putting yourself out there, getting outside of your comfort zone. There's going to be many, many things. And then you could ask yourself, what kind of feedback did I get in the interview process? Were there any clues that things were going well, things that were not going well, just some little subtle clues you were picking up? So try to think about it from their perspective, what were they seeing or noting about you and what kind of feedback did you get? And then ask yourself, what would I do differently? Almost like your own coach or consultant, and you could give yourself a little bit of advice, like maybe, well, I needed to practice those behavioral questions a little bit more, spend a little more time coming in with examples such as how do I handle conflict? What did I do when something didn't go the way I thought it would, et cetera.

Maybe give yourself a little more time to get on Zoom and be prepared. Whatever it is, write down a few suggestions for yourself for next time. And then it's really always a good thing to try to get feedback from the recruiter or anyone else who could be helpful. And there's nothing wrong with reaching out and saying, you very much for the opportunity to interview. I really enjoyed meeting the team and the process.

I'd be most appreciative if there's any feedback you would like to share because I'm always looking to learn and grow. And often they will say to you, no, everything was

great. We just had a lot of really qualified candidates, but sometimes they will actually give you concrete feedback. And so you'll never have the chance of getting that if you don't ask for it. Another thing you can do is to reach out to a physician or several physicians who are in the role that you interviewed for.

Of course, not necessarily at the company, but people that you could find through LinkedIn, on Facebook groups, through your network, and let them know what happened and talk through the process and get their objective feedback. Because they might look at your resume and talk to you and suggest, well, it might be helpful if you did this course or did something to beef up your platform as a candidate. They could maybe go over some interview questions with you.

HF (17:54.102)

So try to get a little help or informal coaching, and just strengthen your chances for next time. And so if this is your first rodeo in interviewing for non-clinical jobs and you feel like you got bucked off, just dust yourself off and get back on the horse because that's the only way to keep learning and get that chance to enjoy the ride and have that horse take you somewhere really enjoyable. When I was a kid, I was really into horses.

I remember my riding teacher, Simon saying, you're not a horseman until you've fallen off seven times and gotten stepped on seven times. I think it ended up for me being a lot more than that and also included a broken arm, but I hope you don't get any broken bones metaphorically in this process. So stay patient, stay in motion, keep the faith that the right door is already opening. And remember this quote by Helen Keller, don't stare too long at the door that closed or you won't see the door that's opening for you. Because sometimes success comes after several applications and sometimes it can take a hundred or more. Now, if you'd like some support, we have some freebies at the freebie tab at the [doctorscrossing.com](http://doctorscrossing.com) website. So just head on over to [doctorscrossing.com](http://doctorscrossing.com), hit the freebie tab at the top and we have a number of freebies, including one on interviewing, using your LinkedIn profile,

and also customizing your resume for non-clinical jobs. And if you'd like some personal guidance, I love helping doctors. It is my favorite thing to do, to do one-on-one coaching. You can reach out for an initial one-off consultation. Just email us at team at



doctorscrossing.com. That's T-E-A-M at doctorscrossing.com. And my assistant, Kati, will help you out with the details. Okay, and two more things here.

Don't forget that if you're still working on trying to get interviews, but it's not happening, circle back to episodes 154 and 155 for more strategies to strengthen your approach. These episodes will be in the show notes. And then if you haven't listened to it already, check out episode 230, how to prepare for your first screening interview with a recruiter. And as always, thank you so much for listening.

HF (20:17.388)

I love that you're out there. My goal is to be helpful to you. So thank you so much for being part of the community. If someone you know could use a little encouragement, please share this episode with them, hopefully before the sun sets tonight. And as always, don't forget to carpe that diem and I'll see you in the next episode. Bye for now.

HF (20:44.618)

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