
Stress management interview questions

Use these sample stress management interview questions to discover how candidates perform under pressure and how they approach stressful situations at work.

Why ask candidates stress management interview questions

Most jobs have stressful aspects, like reaching a quarterly goal, presenting an idea to managers or meeting a tight deadline. Employees with good stress management skills perform better because they:

- Reach objective decisions
- Keep those around them calm
- Come up with solutions in trying times

Employees who can't manage stressful situations struggle to complete their duties, even if they possess the required skills and knowledge for the job. Some positions (like managerial roles) face more pressure than others. That's why it's important to identify candidates who can handle stress while remaining productive.

Here are some sample stress management interview questions to ask candidates:

Example stress management interview questions

- How do you prepare for a presentation to important [clients/stakeholders/the executive board] the day before it's due?
- How would you respond if your manager gave you negative feedback in front of your peers?
- What's the most stressful situation you've faced at work so far? How did you handle it?
- How do you prevent a situation from getting too stressful to manage?
- What advice would you give to calm down a colleague who's stressed out about a deadline?
- Can you describe a time when your stress resulted in making errors at work?
- How would you deal with frequent changes at work? For example, if stakeholders were indecisive about a project's requirements, or if new members joined your team.
- If assigned with multiple tasks at the same time, how would you organize yourself to produce quality work under tight deadlines?
- Describe a time you had to make a tough decision (e.g. fire a team member or choose between two job offers.) How did you make sure you were objective?
- How do you ensure that stressful situations in your personal life don't affect your work performance?

How to assess candidates' stress management skills

- Use a combination of [behavioral](#) and [situational](#) interview questions. You'll have the chance to find out how candidates handled stress in past positions, but also how they'll manage stressful situations in their new role, if hired.
- Generic questions like "How do you handle stress?" will yield equally generic answers. Ask candidates to describe specific work examples of when they beat stress.
- Deliberately being persistent or even aggressive won't give you a clear idea of how candidates react under pressure. Use realistic examples, instead. For example, if you're [hiring salespeople](#), ask how candidates would address the most common customer issues.
- Compare candidates' answers to common problems related to the position. Opt not only for people who offer the best solutions, but for those who are able to maintain composure even during unexpected circumstances.
- Candidates might already be prepared to describe a situation where they successfully handled stress. So, use the interview to gauge their stress management skills. Do they feel uncomfortable when you ask tough questions or are they able to remain calm?
- Don't be fast to reject candidates who seem on edge at first, as job interviews are stressful by nature. If, though, they remain stressed throughout the interview, you might want to reconsider their candidacy, especially in roles that require more socializing.

Red flags

- **They obsess over the stressor.** Identifying who or what causes stress is only the first step in dealing with it. Candidates who fixate on the stressor, instead of taking action, are less likely to actually manage the situation.
- **They cause stress.** Bad habits, like procrastination or poor time-management skills, put people in needlessly stressful situations. Hire candidates who can get themselves out of such situations and not candidates who create them.
- **They get stressed over little things.** Pay attention to what makes candidates get stressed. If they mention regular, daily tasks, rather than bigger challenges, they mightn't be suitable for this role.
- **Their [body language](#) shows discomfort.** Pose some tough, but realistic, problems to candidates. If they're nervous when trying to find a solution, they're likely to get stressed when actual problems arise on the job.
- **They never experience stress.** Most people get stressed by work at some point. Candidates who claim they never get stressed might take problems too lightly.

Don't miss: [The best interview questions to ask candidates](#)