How to Ace the Interview

So you’ve applied for a position and you get THE call for an interview! Remember to stay confident in your abilities and be yourself! Follow these tips and you’ll be well on your way to securing that job:

A. Before the Interview:
   - **Know the process:** Determine what type of interview you will have. Is it a phone, panel or group interview? How long is the interview? Who will be conducting the interview? If it is not clear in the invitation, it’s acceptable to ask so that you can prepare effectively.
   - **Research the organization:** Explore and learn about their mission, values, initiatives, etc. Dig deep and don’t just memorize the first lines of their website. Look for community initiatives, new projects, or news surrounding the organization. This will show the employer how motivated and interested you are in the position, as well as your resourcefulness.
   - **Practice:** Anticipate possible concerns such as gaps on your resume and determine the best way to approach these issues before the interview takes place. You can also practice in front of a mirror or with a friend/parent to get feedback on your posture, eye contact, voice, etc. Keep an eye out for any possible nervous ticks you may have, such as fidgeting or shifting in your seat, so that you can develop a strategy to overcome these nervous gestures.
   - **Prep your references:** Choose managers/supervisors from your top two to three most recent positions that can speak about your work. Call your references before the interview to give them a heads up that they may receive a call and offer to send them the job description so that they can tailor their information to the role you are applying for. Bring your references to the interview, and ensure they are in a similar font and style as your resume.

B. During the Interview:
   - **Dress for the job you want:** If you are applying to a swanky downtown office, dress to look professional by wearing a suit and tie. Show you care by appearing well groomed and polished.
   - **Know how to answer certain types of questions:** Be prepared for common questions such as, “What is your greatest weakness?” Always give examples to add credibility and never end on a negative note. Tackle behavioral questions (e.g. Describe a time when…) with the acronym STARS: Describe the situation, the tasks that needed to be done, the actions you took to do those tasks, the result of the situation, and the skills you learned and demonstrated.
   - **Summarize and inquire:** At the end of an interview, summarize your key strengths and why you’d be the right person for the job. Always have at least two questions ready to ask the interviewer to demonstrate your interest in the position and organization. Ask what the next steps will be, if there are follow-up interviews, or when they expect to make a decision.

Once the interview is over, send a thank you note. Self-reflect to determine what went well and what you could improve on. No matter what the outcome is, remain positive and keep moving forward!