After meticulously preparing your cover letters and resumes, you send them to carefully selected companies that you are sure would like to hire you. You even get a few job interviews. But all of your return correspondence is the same: “Thanks, but no thanks.” Your self-confidence melts and you begin to question your value to an employer.

Sometimes, we begin to dread the “BIG NO” so much that we stop pursuing additional interviews, thereby shutting off our pipeline to the future. Remember, fear of rejection doesn’t have to paralyze your job search efforts. Let that fear fuel your determination; make it your ally and you’ll learn a lot.

Eight Guidelines to Ward off Rejection

1. **Look at the big picture.** Employers may get as many as 500 resumes for one job opening; how can you and the other 498 people who don’t get the job, be no good?

2. **Don’t make it all or nothing.** Don’t set yourself up for a letdown: “If I don’t get this job, I’m a failure.” Tell yourself, “It could be mine. It’s a good possibility. It’s certainly not an impossibility.”

3. **Don’t blame the interviewer.** Realize interviewers aren’t in a hurry to think and behave our way. Blame your turndown on a stonehearted interviewer who didn’t flatter you with beautiful compliments, and you will learn nothing.

4. **Don’t live in the past.** When you dredge up past failures, your nervous system kicks in and you experience all the feelings that go with failure. Unwittingly, you overestimate the dangers facing you and underestimate yourself.

5. **Don’t get mad at the system.** Does anything less pleasurable exist than hunting for a job? Still, you must adjust to the world rather than make the world adjust to you. The easiest thing is to conform, to do what 400,000 other people are doing. When you sit down to play bridge or poker or drive a car, do you complain about the rules?

6. **Take the spotlight off yourself.** Sell your skills, not yourself. Concentrate on what you’re there for: to find out the interviewer’s problems and to show how you can work together to solve them.

7. **See yourself in the new role.** Form a mental picture of the positive self you’d like to become in job interviews, rather than focusing on what scares you. All therapists agree on this: before a person can effect changes, he must really “see” himself in the new role. Just for fun, play with the idea.

8. **Keep up your sense of humor.** Nobody yet has contracted an incurable disease from a job interview.
What should you do after receiving a rejection letter?

1. **Take time to reflect.**
   - It’s okay to feel disappointed for a minute, but then you must get back into the game. There are some things you want to do right away. First of all, address how you are feeling about this rejection. It is reasonable to feel hurt, even depressed. Don’t become obsessive about a rejection, or even a number of them. A rejection letter is not personal, it is business, and you need to treat it as such.
   
   - Talk about your experience, to a friend, professor, parent or significant other. That kind of support is not only good for these tough times, it is invaluable throughout life. A listening ear can be of significant comfort when you are feeling down.
   
   - And whatever you do, don’t shred that rejection letter, at least not yet. It will come in handy, as we will explore later. When one door closes, another one opens and you have to be ready to walk through it.

2. **Take time for evaluation.**
   - Now it’s time to look at your job search approach to see if you could have done something better. Find out what happened, and be open to change if necessary. Do you have a mentor? Is there someone in your career field to whom you look for guidance, advice, and direction? If so, use this person as a sounding board. Let them know the details of your interview experience and gain the benefit of their insights.
   
   - How did you select this employer? Did you apply for only the “plum” jobs at the premier companies for which there would be the most competition? Did you put all your eggs in one basket, declining to interview with employers other than your first choice? After the campus interview, did you speak with the career center? Many employers will provide feedback about the students they interviewed, especially those they are considering inviting back. You will want to seek this information to help you adjust for future interviews.
   
   - Did you remember to research the company and its employment offerings after the campus interview was over? A site interview is longer and more detailed and may focus on the company, its products, industry, and prospects. Did you visit the company’s web site, review their campus folder or other materials, and conduct your own independent research to determine whether the position really met your needs?
   
   - Did you practice interviewing with a career advisor before you had the interview? Knowing the common questions interviewers ask, and framing your answers ahead of time, will make you feel more confident and appear less nervous.

3. **Take action.**
   - Now, fish that rejection letter out of the trash can! Compose a letter to the company representative who sent it, expressing your thanks for their courtesy in getting back to you regarding the status of your application. Make sure they know that your interest in their company remains strong and that they should feel free to consider you for other, relevant openings. Ask for their views of your performance in the interview process, and how you could improve for the future. Be prepared for constructive criticism, and be ready to change that which makes sense to change.
   
   - During your on-site interviews, you probably collected business cards from the supervisors, alumni, human resources personnel and others you talked to as part of the interview process. Now is the time to use them. Ask about the qualifications possessed by the successful candidate that gave them the edge. Call for advice, references and leads. Recently placed college graduates routinely get calls from agencies and competitors seeking to woo them from their new employers, and if they are happy where they are, these employees may pass those leads on to you or mention you favorably.

4. **Take off!**
   - Now that you have evaluated your first interview, made adjustments as necessary, and sharpened what you did well, it’s time to get back in the game. Other companies have undoubtedly been scheduled to appear at your campus. Select those that appear to meet your career objectives, then get on their schedules and approach your employment search with renewed intensity and drive.

* Rejection may sting for a moment, but success is its own reward.