Your Resiliency Toolkit

Lauren Perez, Founder, Summit & Stone Advisory

> **Rejection is a data point, not a reflection of your worth.** Use this toolkit after every "no," and use AI to sharpen your search without losing what makes you worth hiring: you.

1. Your bounce-back plan

When a security team has an incident, they don't panic. They follow a plan, learn from it and get stronger. Do the same after every "no."

Step	What to do
1. Pause	Give yourself 24 hours to feel it. Don't fire off a reply or rage-apply to 20 jobs.
2. Get the facts	Where did it end: resume, recruiter call, interview or final round? That tells you where to look.
3. Find the pattern	Look across several "no"s, not just one. Stalling at the same stage every time? That's your clue.
4. Patch the vulnerability	Change one thing: tailor the resume, sharpen a story, build a skill. One change at a time shows you what worked.
5. Recharge	Reconnect with your wins, your peers and your routine before the next push.
6. Write it down	Keep a running list of lessons. Over time it becomes proof of how far you've come.

> **Close the loop.** Send a short thank-you note and ask to stay in touch. A "no" today is often a "yes" for the next opening, and hiring managers remember candidates who handle rejection well.

2. Debrief every "no" without blaming yourself

The goal is to learn, not to find proof you aren't good enough.

What happened?

- ☐ Which role, company and stage did it end at?
- ☐ Did I get any feedback? If not, can I politely ask for one piece of it?

What went well?

- ☐ Which answers, stories or skills landed?
- ☐ What would I keep exactly the same next time?

What would I change?

- ☐ Where did I feel unprepared or unsure?
- ☐ Was this role a real fit for my skills, level and interests?
- ☐ Is this the same stage I've stalled at before?

What will I do next?

- ☐ One change for the next application or interview
- ☐ One skill, certification or project to work on this month
- ☐ One person to reach out to for advice, a practice interview or a referral

> **Combat imposter syndrome with a list of your wins.** Name the feeling, reframe it ("I'm still learning, and so is everyone else"), then prove it: write down three things that show you belong. Reread the list before every interview.

3. Make AI work for you

Many employers use software, and increasingly AI, to sort applications. You can use AI to prepare, as long as the work and the judgment stay yours. Rule of thumb: AI does the legwork, you do the thinking.

Use AI to	Try asking
Decode a job posting	*"What are the top five skills this posting wants, and which match my background?"*
Match your real experience to their language	*"Which keywords from this posting am I missing that I actually have?"*
Research a company	*"Summarize this company's business and what its security team might be working on."*
Practice interviews	*"Interview me for an entry-level security analyst role, one question at a time, and give feedback on each answer."*
Shape your stories	*"Help me turn this project into a short story: the situation, what I did, and the result."*
Close a skill gap	*"Build me a four-week study plan for cloud security using free resources."*
Debrief after a few "no"s	*"Here are notes from my last three interviews. What should I change first?"*
Follow up	*"Draft a short thank-you note. I'll add the details that make it mine."*

> **Be ready for AI on the other side of the table.** Some employers use one-way video interviews or AI-scored assessments. Practice on camera and answer out loud, in clear, complete examples.

4. Keep it human

Pitfall	Why it hurts	Do this instead
Copy-paste applications	Generic AI text sounds like everyone else	Use a first draft, then rewrite it in your own voice with your own details
Inflated experience	Claims fall apart in the interview	Include only what you can talk about in detail
Keyword stuffing	It may pass the software, then lose the human reader	Use the posting's words only where they're true for you
Pasting private data	Sharing an employer's or school's private information is a red flag	Remove confidential details before you share anything with an AI tool
AI in a live interview	Employers see it as dishonest, and it shows	Practice with AI before the interview, then show up as yourself
Trusting it blindly	AI can be confidently wrong	Check important facts yourself

5. Interviews are a two-way street

You're interviewing them, too. Remember: you actually have to work there on the other side of the offer. Always have at least two questions ready.

Ask about	Questions to try
The work	What does a typical week look like? What would success look like in the first 90 days?
The manager	How do you like to give feedback? How do you support people who are new to the team?
Growth	How do people learn and grow here? Where have past people in this role gone next?
The culture	What do you enjoy most about working here? How does the team handle mistakes?

6. Your next seven days

- ☐ Start your list of wins with three things.
- ☐ Debrief your last "no" with the four questions above.
- ☐ Try one AI practice interview, out loud.
- ☐ Write two questions you'll ask in every interview.
- ☐ Reach out to one person for advice or a referral.

> **Reflect, refine, retry.** Technology keeps evolving, and so can you. Every attempt makes the next one better.

Sources for statistics in the session: Ladders recruiter eye-tracking study (2018); Bravata et al., Journal of General Internal Medicine (2020); Greenhouse AI in Hiring Report (2025); SHRM Talent Trends (2025); Jobvite Job Seeker Nation Study (2018); ISC2 Cybersecurity Hiring Trends Study (2025).