

## **Chapter 7: Fundamentals of Being Talent**

### **Looking Your Best on Television**

#### ***What NOT to Wear:***

1. Color: Do not wear anything black or white, as this throws off the contrast ratio and will make you look worse. Bright reds should also be avoided, since this color bleeds on video.
2. Pattern: Do not wear herringbone patterns or other finely striped, checked, or patterned clothing. These will appear to wave on television.
3. Accessories: Do not wear jewelry that is highly reflective or might make sounds that will be picked up by the microphones. Turn off beepers or digital watch alarms.

#### ***What to Wear:***

1. Color: Stick with the middle of the palette: Blues, greys, and pastels.
2. Pattern: Stick with solids.
3. Accessories: Wear simple, small pieces of jewelry. Make sure that your socks reach under your pants when seated.

#### ***Makeup and Hair:***

1. Makeup isn't for women only! A little powder can make a big difference for anyone who perspires under the hot lights, has a heavy beard, or a receding hairline.
2. Use makeup as usual, but avoid dark reds or maroons which contain bluish tints that are exaggerated on video.
3. Make sure your hair is neatly combed.

#### ***Body Language:***

Body language is an important part of looking your best, and is also responsible for a large part of the message that gets picked up the TV audience. Here are a few tips:

1. Sit slightly forward in your chair and lean in towards the other people on set. This will show that you're interested and involved, and keep you from appearing too casual or slouchy.
2. Gesturing to reinforce your speech is fine, and certainly preferable to those more distracting habits such as playing with your jewelry or seizing the armrests of your chair.
3. You never know when one of the cameras is looking at you, so don't take your attention away from the interview. When talking to the host or other guests, look at them; when you want to make a point to the viewing audience, look in the camera lens. Ignore the movements of the camera operators and gestures of the floor director to the host.

### ***How to Act on Television:***

1. Be on time or early for the shoot.
2. Introduce yourself to the floor director: This person is your contact with the rest of the production crew, and it's their job to help you perform your best.
3. Expect that it will seem to take forever before the show actually starts, because of all the things that have to be set up. Ask the floor director what to do when the program is getting started, and what to do when it is ending. If you are not instructed what to do, here's some good tips:
  - At the beginning of the program, remain quietly seated until the host introduces the show. Keep your eyes focused on the host, and try to smile a little.
  - Do the same at the end of the program, and remain seated until the floor director says "That's a wrap. All clear." If you are wearing a clip-on mic, be sure that it is removed before you try to walk away.
4. Speak clearly. During the show, you should be able to speak with your normal tone of voice. Prior to the taping, the audio engineer will likely ask you to do a "mic check" so that he/she can adjust your microphone volume appropriately; all you have to do is talk with your normal voice, and continue talking until given the signal that the audio engineer has finished making the adjustments. You can recite favorite poem or practice what you plan to say during the actual taping.
5. Don't acknowledge cues from the TV crew, either verbally or non-verbally.
6. Don't make sudden movements; move slowly and/or give warning cues before you go to stand up or sit down. This way, the cameraperson can follow your movements easily.
7. Practice suppressing bad habits, such as playing with your fingers, or saying such things as "you know," "uh-huh," and "um."

### **Additional Tips for Interviewers:**

#### ***Be Prepared and Organized:***

- Research: Do your research on the guest/subject, and give your guests a list of questions in advance. Not only will the conversation be more informed, your rapport will be much stronger, adding spark to an otherwise lifeless chat.
- Key Points: Find out what is the most important information to be communicated by the program.
- Organize: Organize your questions in a logical order that brings out all the key information. It's great to build up to a peak, but don't get caught with too little time to get all the key points across. At the same time, have extra questions ready in case the interview is wrapping up too soon.

### ***Help the Guests Feel At Ease:***

It is natural for people to be uncomfortable when put in a new situation where they don't know what's going to happen or what they are supposed to do. You can help produce a better show by doing your part to put the guest at ease in this unfamiliar environment.

- \* Tell them how the show is structured, and what they should do before, during, and after the program has ended. For example, remind them to look at you and not the crew, and to remain quietly seated at the beginning and end of the taping. Agree on a signal, such as putting your hand on his/her arm, that you'll use to warn that it's time to wrap up the show. Help them display their visual aids for the cameras.
- \* Let them know what you as host plan to do, and when you plan to do it.
- \* Cool their nerves by reminding them that all you're really doing is having a conversation.

### ***Be a Good Listener:***

- \* A good interviewer lets the guest do most of the talking.
- \* Don't interrupt your guest; they're the star, not you. Similarly, don't upstage your guests by appearing to know more than they do.
- \* A good interviewer listens and reacts to the guest's answers. Yes, you should have prepared a well-ordered list of questions to help guide the flow of information; still, you should let the guest's answers guide the program flow as much as possible.
- \* Summarizing key points helps the audience retain the information, shows you're interested, and gives your guest time to breathe.

### ***Be a Good Questioner:***

- \* Set the tone of the interview: If you're lively, your guests will more likely be lively; if you're moody, they'll be moody too.
- \* Lead with a question that puts the guest at ease and that they will enjoy answering, and work your way toward the more uncomfortable or controversial questions.
- \* Don't ask uncomfortable or controversial questions unless you are prepared to deal with the consequences.
- \* Ask open-ended questions that require comment and interpretation, instead of factual responses or one-word, "yes" or "no", answers.
- \* Make your transitions from one question to the next sensible, but brief.
- \* Take control of the interview near the end of the program so your guest can summarize without being cut off.
- \* For interviews in which the questions will be edited out later on, help the guest restate the question in their answers. These types of responses need to start with a strong topic sentence.
- \* Always treat your guest with respect and dignity. After all, you not only represent yourself, but the viewing audience as well.