Helen Tinner's Ultimate Guide to looking your best in Virtual Communications

1. Lighting Advice for your Virtual Photoshoot

To achieve a flattering appearance for your virtual photoshoot or any other type of virtual communication, ensure your face is evenly lit. This way you will avoid any hot spots, showing as bright glare in certain areas.

The most effective type of lighting is when its directly facing you. So, station yourself either in front of a window and use the natural light, or use artificial lighting. In this instance you need to get as much light into your face as possible. The aim is to see sparkle in your eyes. If you find you need extra light try the following tips: -

- Get a desk lamp(s) and turn it onto your face
- If the light looks too bright; try spreading it around. So, turn your light source to a wall in front of you; preferrable a white wall (as colours can cast hues). This will bounce light back into your face, instead of being directly on you, which can look quite harsh. The effect creates a softer look
- Use the torch on your phone
- If one side of your face is dark, use a mirror (of any sort) to reflect light back from your light source. This will highlight the dark side of your face and balance the overall lighting up
- If needs be use books to elevate your lighting sources(s)
- Bring the lights closer to you
- Watch around and behind you for unwanted shadows. A direct light source can cause unnecessary shadows – (see below on how to eliminate shadows)
- You if see shadows then direct another light source onto them. This will have the effect of blowing them out
- Overhead lighting can create unflattering shadows under your eyes, so consider moving to another area, or use another light source to bring light back into your eye sockets

If you choose to go outside, then find a spot which is shaded to avoid hot spots, particularly on the top of your head.

2. How to make your background look great for your Virtual Photoshoot via Zoom

- Keep your background simple and free from unwanted mess
- If the background is too bright, shut your blinds if you have them, or consider moving to another part of your house or office where the light is less invasive. You don't want people focusing on your background and not you

Utilising an integrated virtual background for Zoom or other video communications

This is an image which you can upload into Zoom or other online video communications systems.

Getting the best results

- Use a plain wall, preferably white
- It will not work if there are mixed objects in any part of your background such as furniture or pictures
- Please spend some time practising with this prior to your photoshoot to ensure you are satisfied with the results and are photo ready

3. Managing Your Personal Image: ways to improve your smiling techniques for the Media and your Global Audience

Are you worried about smiling 'on screen'?

Pre lock-down I used to teach courses in 'Posing' and learning how to 'Manage Your Personal Image' for aspiring actors, models and business leaders wishing to know how to find their 'best side'. So, in this section I'm going to tackle one of these issues which is smiling.

Why is it important to know how to smile?

Choosing your smile is very much part of your personal branding, so knowing how to confidently throw out a practised smile is an important life skill to have.

3. Managing Your Personal Image: ways to improve your smiling techniques for the Media and your Global Audience (Cont....)

How to avoid uncomfortable smiles?

Many people are conscious of their smile, perhaps because they don't like their teeth or they feel it makes their eyes go squinty. Whatever their reason, when faced with a situation either online or when posing for photos it's easy to tense up.

What happens next?

The natural reaction if you dislike smiling is to purse your lips. However, this look isn't very flattering or friendly looking and in business we want to be seen as confident and approachable so let's look at how we can remedy this.

How to improve your smile

Smiling on demand can feel awkward and strange, so the best way forward is simply to imagine you are acting and fake it. Try the following three smiles. Practice these in-front of a mirror so you know in your mind's eye how you look, then when you need to smile it will come easily and you will be able to do this naturally.

1. *Small smile* with no teeth showing – keep your lips together, but relaxed, slightly lift the edges up. Feel the muscles in your cheeks rise up
2. *Half smile* – open your mouth slightly to reveal your teeth and note the difference in how you look and feel
3. *Big smile* – involves an open smile as if laughing (for some this may feel uncomfortable to do, so as suggested just imagine you are acting and fake it)

And Finally

Add some emotion when you smile, otherwise your expression can look blank and your eyes dead. Try a 'before and after' smile so you can see the difference.

After you have completed these exercises, decide which smile you feel most happy with. Once you are confident with one smile you can then move on and try another smile. :0)

4.   Tops Tips For 'Managing Your Personal Image'

a)   MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL…

I am always being asked if it is possible to look good in mirrors and the answer is YES! Here are some more top tips from Helen Tinner Photography to help boost your self-confidence.

Are you worried about your reflection in the mirror?

Don't be hard on yourself. The glass in mirrors - like camera lenses - is shaped differently and this gives a warped sense of reality. What you are seeing is not a true reflection of yourself.

What can I do to look good in mirrors?

1. Choose one or two mirrors in your house which are flattering and only remember this image of yourself - ignore all others
2. If you are looking at yourself closely, perhaps using a bathroom mirror, don't use this image as your reference. In real life no-one is going to be standing that close to you or inspecting you in the same way as you are
3. The most flattering angle to hold a hand held mirror is high up, at a distance with soft lighting
4. For the best effect refer to mirrors which have built in straight on lighting which emits a soft warm light
5. Once you have mastered how you like to see yourself, you can then use this reference for social media in video and mobile communication calls

Which mirrors are the worst culprits at making you look bad… and subsequently making you feel bad about yourself?

- I would have to say changing rooms are the best for making you look awful. This is largely because of the use of cheap mirrors and downward lighting, which create nasty shadows
- Avoid any mirrors that are slightly tilted upwards
- Similarly, anything with harsh side lighting

4.   Tops Tips For 'Managing Your Personal Image' (Cont...)

Other points to consider...

Avoid looking in car windows or shop windows. These also have the same effect of creating a warped sense of reality.

b)   POSING

Seeing yourself 'on screen' can be slightly unnerving to those of us who are not used to it. Having looked at a variety of ways to help manage your personal image and I want to explain how getting your pose right can also boost your confidence.

How to pose for video communications

It's important to remember that with any type of video communication it will not immediately show your best side. So be prepared. As explained before you have to work at it! Knowing how others see you will be a great advantage, so the best way to find this out is to set up a Zoom video meeting with yourself and get some practice in beforehand.

Some posing tips to help improve your image:

CHANGE THE ANGLE OF YOUR FACE

It's not always about looking straight on, try some new angles. For example, notice the difference if you:

- Turn your face slowly from left to right
- Tilt the angle of your face from side to side
- Lift your head up or down

POSITION OF YOUR BODY

- Turning your body side (so that it isn't straight on) can be very slimming
- Cross your arms and lean onto the desk
- Trying sitting up straight, shoulders back
- Sit slightly off centre to create more interest
- Tilt your body to one side

4. Tops Tips For 'Managing Your Personal Image' (Cont...)

c) WHAT TO WEAR

Video conference calls have a tendency to bleach us out so here's some tips to stop this happening:

- Avoid wearing white; it'll really bleach you out. Strips with white are OK, but just not white by itself. Also, if the light facing you is bright, you'll get terrible glare. Finally, if you're integrating a background and don't have a green screen, a white wall will be needed so wearing white will mean in some shots you may completely disappear. Not a good look!
- Choose strong colours to wear instead
- If you're wearing makeup pick a bright lip colour. Or go for bronzes which give a lovely warm look. Consider making up your eyes. You can always take advice from a friend or seek professional tuition. Have some fun!
- Consider wearing earrings – don't be frightened to go bold
- If you're looking for a healthy glow, just fake it and tan yourself up
- Practice with Zoom before your photoshoot so you feel happy with your look and photo ready

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