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What to do when cameras are coming

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A TV Interview? Relax.

Getting yourself or your client on television can be a dream for some and a nightmare for others.

Where do I look? How do I look? What do I say?

Here is some very practical advice for those occasions when it is planned and pre-arranged for the camera to be aimed at you.

Wear clothing that is neat and comfortable. It should be something that makes you feel good about yourself & helps get your message across. Avoid small patterns of stripes or checks. American television is still fairly low resolution, and tight patterns will start to jiggle and look like they are going through a Star Trek transporter and be a distraction. Also bright red will bleed into the background, and solid white can also be overpowering. This is just how current technology handles things. Solid dark colors, beige and light pastels work very well. Men should not wear hats unless it is a sporting event. The brim will shade your eyes from the viewer, not just the sun. If a man is balding, it might do to put a little baby powder on to eliminate the shine. You want to look good. You don't want highlights from jewelry, etc. taking focus off your message.

Don't talk directly to the camera unless you are asked to do so. Talk to the interviewer, or in a panel situation, to the person you mean to address. Eye contact is important. Darting glances come off as untrustworthy. If you can't look at a person, pick something to focus on. If you are passionate about your message, just tell it and try to convince the person talking with you. Gestures are fine for emphasis. Don't be threatening, however.

Finally, **the message**. You must be passionate and you must be truthful. You must not have more than three points to make. Anything that is to be edited later can misconstrue what you intend unless you have a few "sound bites" where there is no room to edit. For example, "Smith Company wants to show Suffolk County they can come through for the

Special Olympics," "The Dress For Success Program gives women the clothes and the confidence they need to be successful in the interview and successful on the job."

If you get an unexpected question, don't answer right away. Collect your thoughts, and don't say "ummm". Silent pauses are better.

Don't ever tell a reporter not to talk about something. Guaranteed, it will force them to ask about just that. And, if you really do not have an answer or it is a subject about which you are not permitted to speak, say so. "I don't have that information right now, but I will have someone get back to you." (Mayor Giuliani does this very well.) "That event is still under investigation, and we will release information when we are sure of our facts, or at a later time."

Stay focused. If you are asked a question off topic, lead the discussion back on topic. "This particular spill has to do with this particular material with this limited effect." "I can't comment on what Mr. Jones has said, but our position is..." Sounds like it's all politics? Well it is. If you are prepared, if you have no more than three points to make, and if you make them in short, concise sentences, you stay in control of the interview.

Cameras are all around us. Get used to it, and be yourself whether it's national TV or the wedding videographer. Relax. Some people like to rehearse in the mirror or in front of a home camcorder. It isn't brain surgery. And remember, whether you are brilliant or not, most viewers who don't know you and are not directly affected by your activities, won't remember anything about it after a few days.