



LIGHTS
CAMERA
EXPERT
EXPERT

20

CRUSH IT ON AIR

Media Training Techniques & Strategies

**The time has come to up your game and really deliver. On air. You ready?
Amidst all the excitement comes this nervousness, right?**

"Oh god, what if I mess up?"

"What if I forget stuff?"

"What if they ask me something I don't know?"

Anyone who's ever set foot in a TV studio has those fears. Don't worry, we'll get to all of that.

BEFORE YOUR SEGMENT

- **Go over the script.** The producer may or may not send a script. Note, the script is what the anchor reads, not what you read. That means it'll have the intro to the segment and the questions that anchor will ask you. You should be prepared to answer them.
- **Prep your segment.** Don't assume that the studio will have everything you need. For example, if you're demonstrating how to make a smoothie, make sure you bring all the ingredients—including the blender! Don't assume they have anything.
- **Draft responses based on what the script says.** The purpose of this is not to create a script to memorize, but to become comfortable with the content and flow of the segment, and give you something to practice with. If you don't receive a script, the producer will lay out the order of the segment, and what information goes where.
- **Practice with someone.** Give someone a copy of the script or questions to go over with you. Actors do it all the time; it's called running lines. It gives you the chance to do this interactively so that it feels like a real conversation, which is what it should be.
- **Record yourself giving the answers.** This can be pretty low tech. Use your phone, or the web-cam on your computer, and record yourself giving the answers. Then watch it. I know it's not easy. But look, this is what you're signing up to do, right? Talk on camera. And the more you do it, the better.

- **Then, stop.** Beware of over-rehearsing—and yes, there is such a thing. If it's too rehearsed, you risk sounding stiff or canned or like a robot. Once you know it cold, you don't have to cling to notes or worry about exact wording. You want to sound like you! Be conversational - how would you tell a friend or client about this information? Keep that in your head when you're practicing.

REMEMBER

- **You already know everything you need to know for this segment.** That means: Between now and when you go on air, you don't need to become somehow smarter, thinner, better looking, more credentialed. Trust the producers. They know what they're doing.
- **A media interview is a conversation.** It's just preloaded with content and then enacted on the air. It's acting for real people. You know what you're going to say, but the trick is to make it seem unrehearsed and natural.
- **The entire segment is scripted.** The producer doesn't want surprises, and neither do you. You will go over exactly what will play out with the producer.
- **Leave your ego at home.** Producers want low maintenance, helpful guests who deliver their message in a clear, conversational and compelling way. In short, don't be a diva! You're there to serve the producer, her network, her audience. And experts are a dime a dozen—so what will make you stand out is not only being a solid presenter, but also being a dream to work with.
- **Leave your nerves at home.** Fake it if you have to. Everyone gets nervous and excited doing media! Even us! You just don't want your nerves to get the best of you. You can confide in your friends how nervous you are, but the producer is not your friend; she's depending on you to be the person she believes you are. So be it.

Quick tip:

Try this breathing exercise before you enter the building:

**Inhale for a count of three, and then exhale for a count of three.
Repeat three times (or as needed).**

Feel yourself settle into your body.
This works! We've used it.

DURING YOUR SEGMENT

- **One goal, not ten.** You're thinking, "How am I going to cover so much stuff in a three-minute segment?" Don't think of it as stuffing a segment with information. Think of it as accomplishing ONE goal. That goal is like the trunk of a tree, and each talking point is a branch on that tree. Your segment a success is if you land a few solid, clear points that show viewers how and why it matters.
- **Be natural, but still.** If you're doing a seated segment, plant your feet on the floor, or cross your legs if it suits you. Rest your hands in your lap and use them to gesture as you would naturally. But just beware of generating any visual noise, which distracts the viewer; i.e., don't touch your hair or clothing, which can read as insecurity. Also, don't fiddle with the mic or let your hands go anywhere near it.
- **Sit tall.** The right posture makes you look attentive and engaged; the wrong posture will be unflattering. You may end up looking slumped or nervous. Sit away from the back of the chair or couch. You're not meant to be "comfy" in your seat on the set! Do not rely on the furniture to hold you up. If you're on one of those high stools, cross your ankles and tuck them into the foot support.
- **Have a strong starting line.** This does a few things: Helps you get past the initial hump, and be less afraid of freezing up. Think of it as a runway. Of course you don't want to blurt out just anything -- it should be organic and relate to your segment. When asked why she wrote a book about lists, Paula says, "Lists changed my life" -- it's her go to and kick starts the conversation.
- **Keep your energy up.** Part of presenting well is being able to maintain your energy level from start to finish. Sometimes an expert will start strong but lose steam. This is a performance so you want to make sure you finish as strong as you begin. Even if your host or anchor seems low energy, make sure you stay lively and engaged.
- **Know it cold, but deliver naturally.** You do need to practice your segment, but you're not "reciting" points; you're discussing them. The best media experts deliver things they know well as if they're saying them for the first time—meaning, they sound natural.
- **Speak like a human.** What you'd write in an article isn't how you'd talk to a person. You want to sound natural on air, so that means using regular, everyday words. Know the key ideas and then say them the way you would if you were talking to a friend.
- **It's OK to push back.** You wouldn't expect to hear that, right? But fact is, you're not there to be a "yes" man or woman. The most interesting conversations it makes for a way better conversation. You don't have to just be a yes man. We're not saying pick a fight! You're there to offer your expert take, so don't be afraid to do it.

- **Steer the conversation.** Let's say the host hasn't gotten to the meat of your conversation yet —your tips. The next time you get a chance to speak, just start in on one of your tips. You could say: "It's interesting that you say that because one of my tips to being less stressed is controlling that inner voice." That may trigger the anchor to get back on track. And this will keep the producer happy.
- **Do not go into unexplored territory.** You may be tempted to go off script; don't do it. You may be having a great time, and want to present a whole new tip you hadn't practiced. Resist the urge! You do have a job to do, and it's to get through the material your producer has approved. You don't have much time to play around with. It's one thing to ad lib here or there, no problem. But make sure you stick to what's been planned or else you could throw the segment off.
- **Go with the flow.** It is live TV (even live-to-tape is treated as if it's "live"), and you never know what will happen; there's always that possibility that something happens in a way you did not plan for or expect. It's OK! Sometimes those moments make for the most memorable segments. How you handle it is everything. Be easy, flexible, and ready for anything.
- **Put it in perspective.** Every segment is important, but don't assume your life is hanging in the balance here. This is one of many segments, and you'll continue to get improve. Remember why you're really there: to change someone else's life. You could influence someone in a powerful way. Bear that in mind.

AFTER YOUR SEGMENT

- **Zip out of there.** You'll be ushered out much quicker than you came in. The producers are on to the next segment, and won't have time to debrief. They will say, "Thank you! Great job!" (hint: they say that to everyone).
- **Follow up for feedback later.** Right after your segment is not the time to ask how you did. Better to reach out after via email to thank the producer and ask if she has any feedback.
- **Ask for a copy, but be prepared to track it down yourself.** It's fair to ask if you can get a copy of the segment, but understand you may not always get it. On the producer's list of to-dos -- this task falls way at the bottom. At the very least, they may be willing to ping you when and if the segment goes online.
- **Send a thank-you note.** Be sure to send a thank you email or note. Many experts don't do this -- and it will help you stand out and get asked back.