Make a Strong First Impression Anywhere

It is said, “Don’t judge a book by its cover,” but we all make quick judgments as a natural part of human behavior. As soon as you enter a room you have just seconds to make the impression you want to stick with you. Clothes, hair, accessories, your walk, facial expressions, mannerisms, body language—everything is being judged subconsciously by everyone in the room. Once the impression is made, it can very difficult to change.

Be Prepared

Whether you have a scheduled interview or just happen to bump into someone you have been meaning to meet, it is important to be prepared. Having an elevator speech prepared can be very beneficial for the off-chance encounters that could impact your future career. For an interview, it is important to review some potential questions and answers as well as go over your accomplishments. You can never be too prepared when it comes to making a strong first impression that will last.

Dress for Success

What you wear is the first thing people will notice about you. If you know you are going to be meeting new people whether at a party or interview, it is important to look your best from your hair all the way down to your shoes.

**Interviews**: It is important to dress a “level” above what would be appropriate for the interviewers. For example, if the office is business casual, you should dress business professional. Females should have an appropriate amount of make-up and jewelry on and males should pay special attention to facial hair and additional accessories (watches, earrings, chains, etc.)

**Social Events**: Here it is important to follow the dress code for the event. Make sure you know if jeans or dress shorts are appropriate or it is a business gathering. Jewelry size and make-up are equally important here for females. For males a clean look is most appropriate as well.

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Did you know...?  

Communication is made up of:
- 7%-What you actually say
- 38%-Voice (tone, quality)
- 55%-Body Language
Know Your Purpose

Take the time to know what kind of interactions you are going to have with what kind of people. For an interview know that you will be the one being questioned, but it is your opportunity to shine and show off your assets. For social events where there will be a plethora of people to meet take the time to think about what kind of impression you want to leave and what kind of conversations you want to have. By taking this time it will help to create the specific impression you are looking for.

Body Language

With what you say accounting for such a small amount of communication, body language is SO important for first impressions. Simply by being aware of their body language most people notice significant improvements. It is important to consider how you angle your body, eye contact, and how you carry yourself as you enter a room. A smile and some confidence will go a long way when making a first impression. When meeting someone new it is important to do introductions with a hand shake. The handshake is so important while interviewing because it can say a lot about you. While talking with someone make sure that your body language matches the conversation to show you are engaged and care about what they are saying.

Talk with your Hands: Do not be afraid to use your hands to talk while you are interacting with someone new. The important thing is to know what you are doing. This is something that can easily be over used or underutilized. Take the time to practice while talking with someone you are comfortable with who will give you honest feedback. It is also important to remember to maintain an appropriate distance while talking to someone new and avoid unnecessary touching of the new person.

Put Distractions Away

This is so important for all communication, but especially first meetings and interviews. In our society where technology consumes our life, we must remember to pull ourselves away when interacting with others. For interviews especially, put the phone, tablet, or whatever it is away and OFF. Nothing is more embarrassing than an alarm or phone call coming in while you are trying to make a strong impression. In social settings electronics are more acceptable, but it is still important to be in the moment. Be engaged with the people around you. People will feel disregarded if your nose is stuck in your phone during the entire conversation.

Learn Names

Once you learn someone’s name, use it. Often. Whether you are willing to admit it or not, the sound of your own name is one of the best things to hear (unless it is a parent using your full name to yell at you!) If this is a person with whom you will be interacting again, take the time to learn names of important people in their lives. If you can use a name from a spouse, sibling, child, or pet in a later conversation with the person it will help to ensure them that their first impression was correct.
Do not underestimate the importance of a first impression. It is going to stick with you as long as you know the person or work for a company. Take the time to be prepared and make the best first impression you can! Just remember confidence and attention are two of the most important things when meeting new people.

Sources:

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