

My name is Danielle Benzon and it's my job to help you create exciting, authentic, engaging videos so that you can get your message out into the world.

I want to talk very briefly about authenticity and I want to share with you my three most important tips on how to create authentic videos. Now this is a huge topic and we could talk about it forever, but I want to just give you my top three because I want to get you started on the right foot.

It's really important that videos feel authentic and real and candid. This is not about being perfect. This is not a perfection medium. This is a relationship building medium and it's wonderful. When we can get over ourselves and we can get over our insecurities and be really real on camera - it is so freeing!

So I want to help you out with that.

The first tip is that you have to make best friends with your camera.

You have to build a relationship with your camera. If you're going to have a relationship with your audience through your camera, you've got to have a relationship with your camera first. And this may feel weird because it's not a human being, it's a machine. It may feel a little bit alien, but we anthropomorphize things all the time so it's time to anthropomorphize your camera and really build a relationship with it.

When you sit down or stand up in front of your camera and you're ready to record, it should feel like a safe space. It should feel like you can share anything with your camera and that it's safe and it's welcome and that you are heard.

There are a couple ways to do this. The main thing is practice. So just practice talking to your camera.

Practice relaxing.

Really challenge yourself:

How authentic can I be?

How real can I be speaking to this lens?

If you're having trouble with that I have an exercise called the Video Journal which really helps with this. It's a kind of a personal challenge so you don't share it with anyone. It's just something that you do in an intimate space on your own. For me that was a huge game changer. It completely changed the way that I relate to my camera and to my videos in general so I give that to you. Try out the video journal exercise, I think it's really powerful.

For the Video Journal exercise, the idea is to record yourself being as REAL as you can be for 10 minutes. As long as you are being real and connected to the camera, anything goes. You can't ignore the camera, you can't stop and start, you MUST turn the viewfinder away or cover it so that you're speaking to the lens not to your recorded image, you MUST be recording, you must KNOW that no-one will ever see this.

The video journal is an intimate exercise: practice being present, being in your physical and emotion body. Not thinking or planning, just releasing self consciousness.

Stream of consciousness speaking is ideal. If you get really stuck, use these conversation starters: <http://www.getstagejoy.com/blog/conversation-starters-with-yourself>

You can see snippets of my personal video journal challenge here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcGV6qTmrCI&list=PLcNjV4m-w7etT-dEn9fCdxSeQMOJOWegr>

The second tip is that you have to make eye contact.

Now when I say eye contact I mean your eyes need to be looking at the lens because your audience needs to feel like you're making eye contact with them. So if you feel like you're making eye contact, like if I'm looking at a picture of the person that I'm talking to, or if I'm looking at myself in the viewfinder, I may feel like I'm making eye contact, but I'm not. I'm looking somewhere else.

You can tell when I'm looking at the viewfinder. You can tell that I'm not looking at you. You have to look at the lens when you are connecting with your audience. It's really important for that relationship that they feel like you're making eye contact with them.

Now the viewfinder is also important because you want to make sure your lighting and your framing don't go haywire halfway through the shoot, so you've got to keep that in your peripheral and as best you can. Don't look at yourself, don't look at your hair and see what that's doing, and don't look at the pictures that are distracting like Skype pictures or Zoom pictures or whatever if you're doing a webinar. Don't look at the pictures of the people. Look at the lens.

This also means that you can't read. You can't read notes and you can't read your autocue. I'm sorry but it's true.

If you are reading you are disconnecting from your audience and I don't care how eloquently you read you're not going to feel like you're present and there with them in the same way as if you were speaking from the heart.

Now if you're doing a really long video I do have a technique to help you feel like you're speaking from the heart - to actually extemporaneously speak but still stay on topic, I

have that, but if we're talking about just shorter videos right now like three to five minutes, you really can do that off-the-cuff. It may take a little bit of rehearsal. You may need to jot down: point one, point two, point three, but you should be able to do it from the heart. It makes such a difference in the way that your audience responds to you.

Remember it's not about being perfect.
It's not about me being eloquent.
It's not about me appearing intelligent,
it's about me really connecting with my audience.

That's what video is for. It's about building relationship.

It's not about disseminating information, you can use a brochure for that or something else. Video is about creating relationship first and foremost, so you've got to make eye contact, no reading autocue and no memorizing your script either because that ends up being about the same.

You've got to be connected with your audience and that means looking at the lens and speaking from the heart.

The third tip is that it's not about you.

The third most important thing that you can remember and keep at the front of your mind to help you make authentic, real videos is to remember that it's not about you.

It's not about the person in front of the camera. It's about the person who is watching the video and that really helps take the pressure off because I think a lot of us feel really self-conscious. You know: I want to make video but my hair is never right, or I want to make video but I always screw up what I'm saying and I say "um" and "ah" and we have all these judgments about ourselves and we feel like we have to be perfect to be on video but we don't because it's not about us!

It's about your audience.

If you can keep that in the front of your mind when you're creating video, when you're overcoming the fear and starting to create video and also when you're planning your video, it can really help you.

When you're creating your content:
What kind of content does my audience want? What will serve them?

When I'm speaking on camera: what kind of length of video is going to serve them?
What kind of energy that I show up in is going to serve them? How can I structure what I'm saying in a way that serves them?

It's all about them.

It's not about you (or me) and that really takes the pressure off and it allows you to be yourself. It allows you to be your weird quirky wonderful weird self in a way that is going to serve them and connect with them and just make this whole experience more fun, more real and really just more engaging.

If you haven't already checked it out, I did create a video on the three technical things that you really need to know in order to create professional-looking videos, so if you haven't checked that out - check that out!

Because tech is important.

If you're being yourself but no one can see you or hear you it doesn't matter. But if you've watched that and you understand the technical side, now you understand the authenticity side. Please go out and create. Get out there. Go out and make some videos. Connect with your audience. Share some of yourself, some of your expertise, some of your passion, and see how people react to you.

I can't wait to see what you create.

Much love,
Danielle Benzon

