

How Appearance Strengthens or Weakens Rapport

Whether we like it or not, appearance definitely affects our ability to gain and maintain rapport. Your physical appearance, your clothing, your office accessories, and your personal accessories are all part of your appearance. Appearance lies in the simple things that many people overlook, like being in shape and watching your weight, picking nice clothes to wear, paying attention to your accessories (i.e., jewelry, glasses, earrings, etc.) or having well-groomed hair. A study at the University of Pittsburgh shows that there is also a direct correlation between good appearance and higher incomes. The bottom line is that attractive people are more persuasive than less attractive individuals.

Appearance can be considered in the following areas:

- Hairstyle
- Clothing
- Weight
- Shoes
- Face
- Strange hairs
- Hands
- Nail care
- Jewelry
- Accessories

Physical attractiveness can trigger greater:

- Confidence
- Strength
- Assertiveness
- Candidness
- Warmth

- Kindness
- Friendliness
- Sensitivity
- Poise
- Excitement
- Nurturance
- Happy relationships
- Social and professional success
- Prestige
- Life fulfillment

As you can see, being “attractive” is more than just looking beautiful or handsome. It deals with the whole person, inside and out. When we come in contact with someone of the opposite sex, the attractiveness concept is magnified. Attractive females can persuade men more easily than unattractive ones, and attractive males can persuade females more easily than unattractive males can. This type of attraction works because it creates a positive association trigger, it captures attentions, and it builds esteem. When a persuader is likable and optimistic, these traits increase attractiveness.

How Similarity and Familiarity Strengthen Rapport

Similarity theory states that we like familiar objects more than less familiar ones. The same holds true with people: we like people who are similar to us. This theory seems to hold true whether the commonality is in the area of opinions, personality traits, backgrounds, or lifestyles. If you watch people at a party, you will see them gravitate toward those who are similar to themselves. As a persuader, you can increase your ability to connect with your audience if they feel that they have a lot in common with you.

Here are some ways great persuaders try to find common ground:

- Values
- Goals
- Interests
- Past history, experience
- Point of view
- Attitude
- Morality
- Appearance
- Socioeconomic background
- From same geographical region
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Here are some ideas (from great persuaders) for specific things you can do to help find your similarities:

- Share experiences and personal background.
- Exhibit a pleasant personality.
- Present a professional and well-groomed appearance.
- Focus on the positives.
- Share knowledge and information.
- Be an active listener.
- Engage in appropriate humor.
- Be a good conversationalist.
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People hate to be treated like children. Insulting questions, condescending attitudes, or pure arrogance are included in this category. As great persuaders find similar attitudes between them and their audience, the attraction toward these great persuaders becomes more positive.³⁶ People associate and interact with those they view as similar to themselves. Cliques are often based on such commonalities as friends, gender, age, school, educational background, professional interests, neighborhood, hobbies, and ethnic background. Great persuaders are able to find agreement in as many areas as possible.

