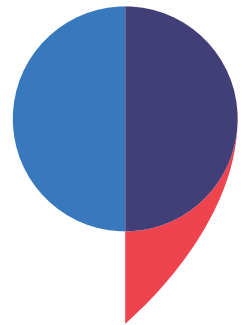




The 6 Deadly Webcam Sins... and How to Fix Them

Plus ... bonus advanced
web conference techniques!



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Are you using technology in a way that undermines your presence ...
or enriches your message?

More and more critical business engagements are being conducted virtually. If you're trying to create a connection through video, it matters how you look and sound. Many people ignore this fact at their peril.

Here are 6 common webcam mistakes and how to fix them—and ensure your message isn't being compromised by the way you're showing up online.

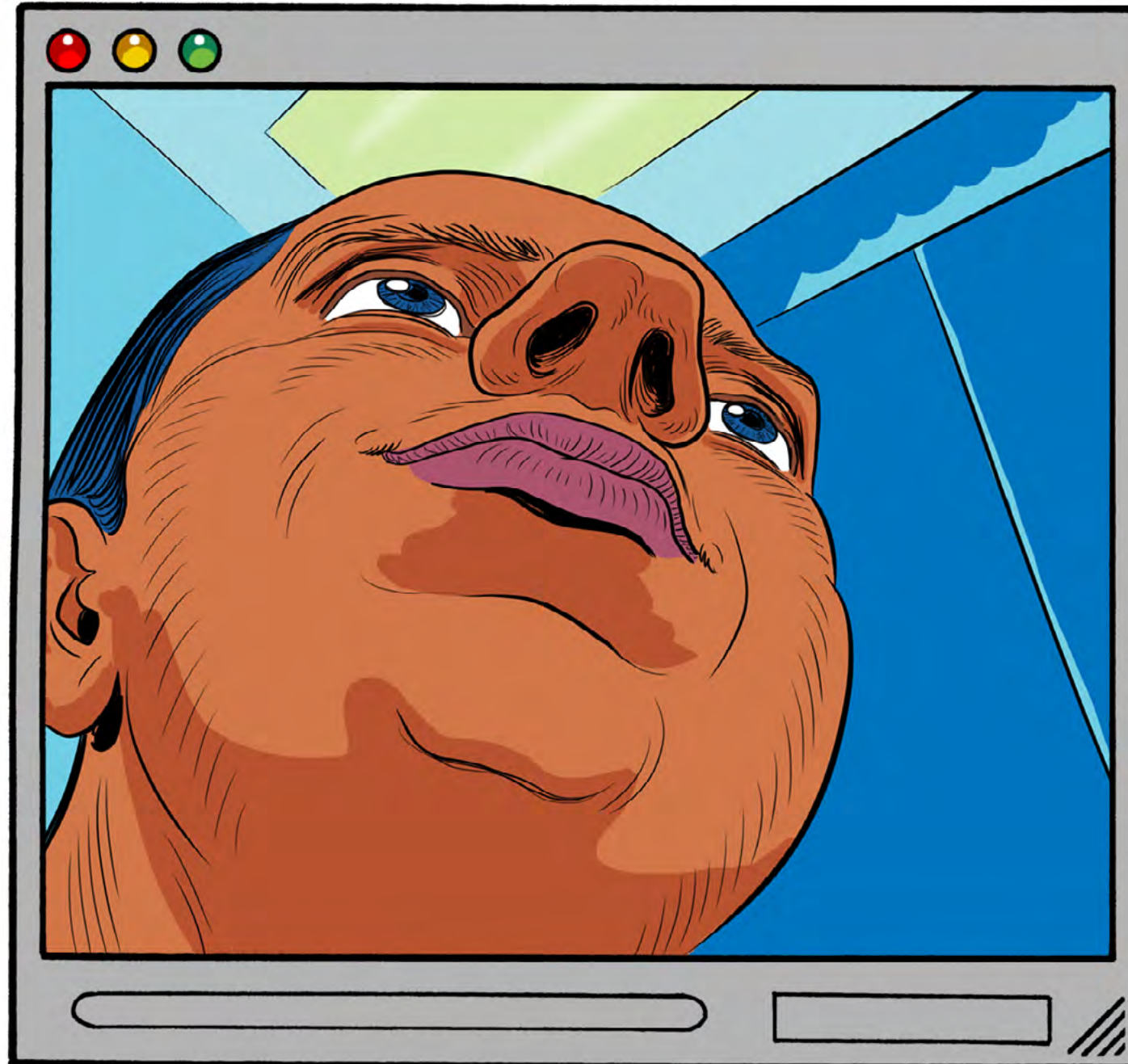


SIN
#1

NOT SEEING EYE TO EYE

EXHIBIT A

The “Nose Cam”



Nothing weakens a good message like a view up your nostrils.

!

Problem: The camera is too low.

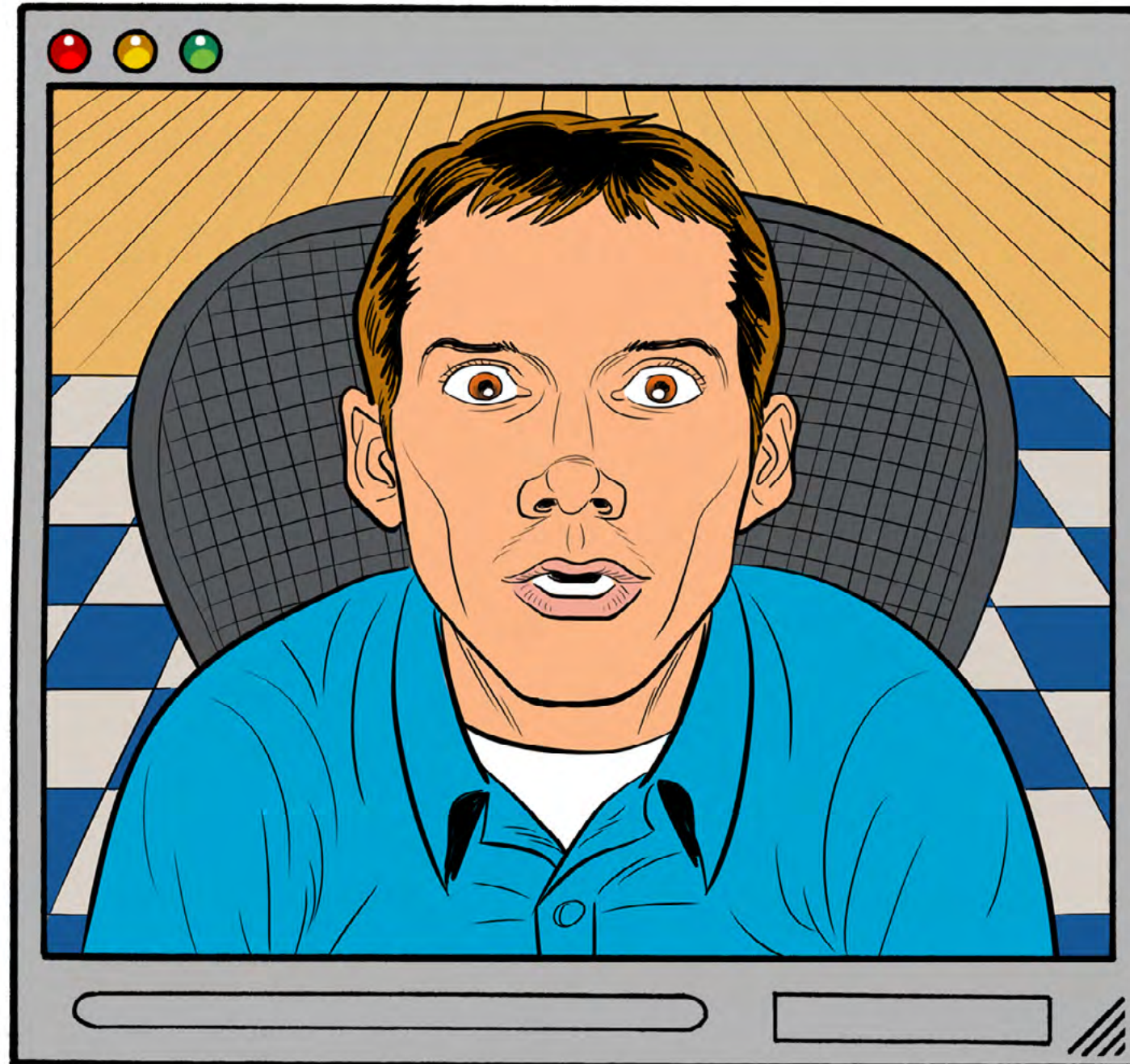


SIN
#1

NOT SEEING EYE TO EYE

EXHIBIT B

The “Helicopter”



Less common (but still problematic) is the “helicopter” shot — a high camera literally looking down on you — and thereby diminishing your status.

!

Problem: The camera is too high (or your chair is too low).



NOT SEEING EYE TO EYE



Solution: An eye-level camera builds connection and conveys clarity. Make sure your computer's webcam is at the same height as your eyes. Raise your laptop (a stack of books will do in a pinch) or lower your seat.



SIN
#1

NOT SEEING EYE TO EYE

! Problem: Even looking at your screen (instead of the camera lens) can disconnect you.

💡 Solution: Look straight at the camera lens. This will take some getting used to, but it creates virtual “eye contact” with your listeners, giving them a much stronger sense of connection with you.

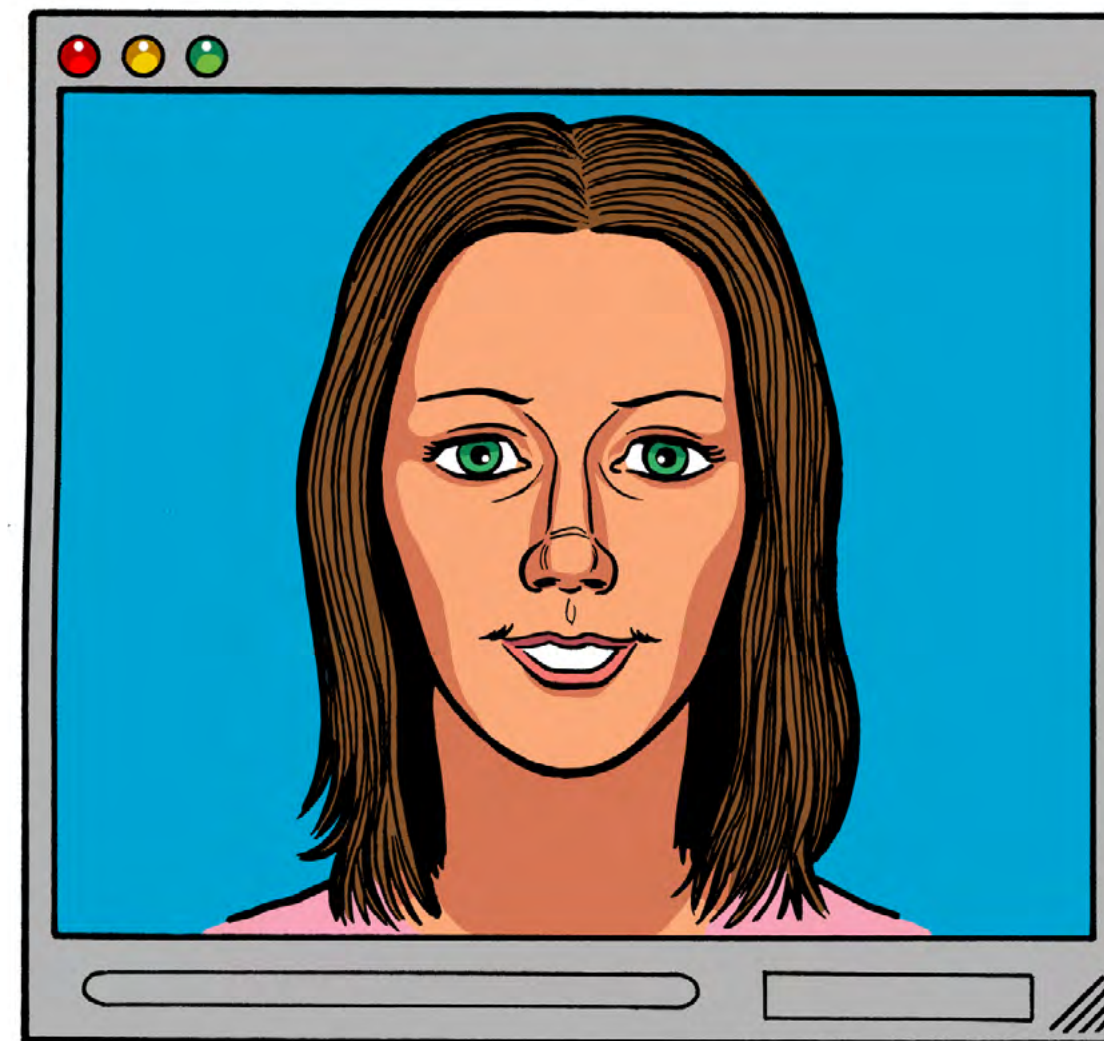
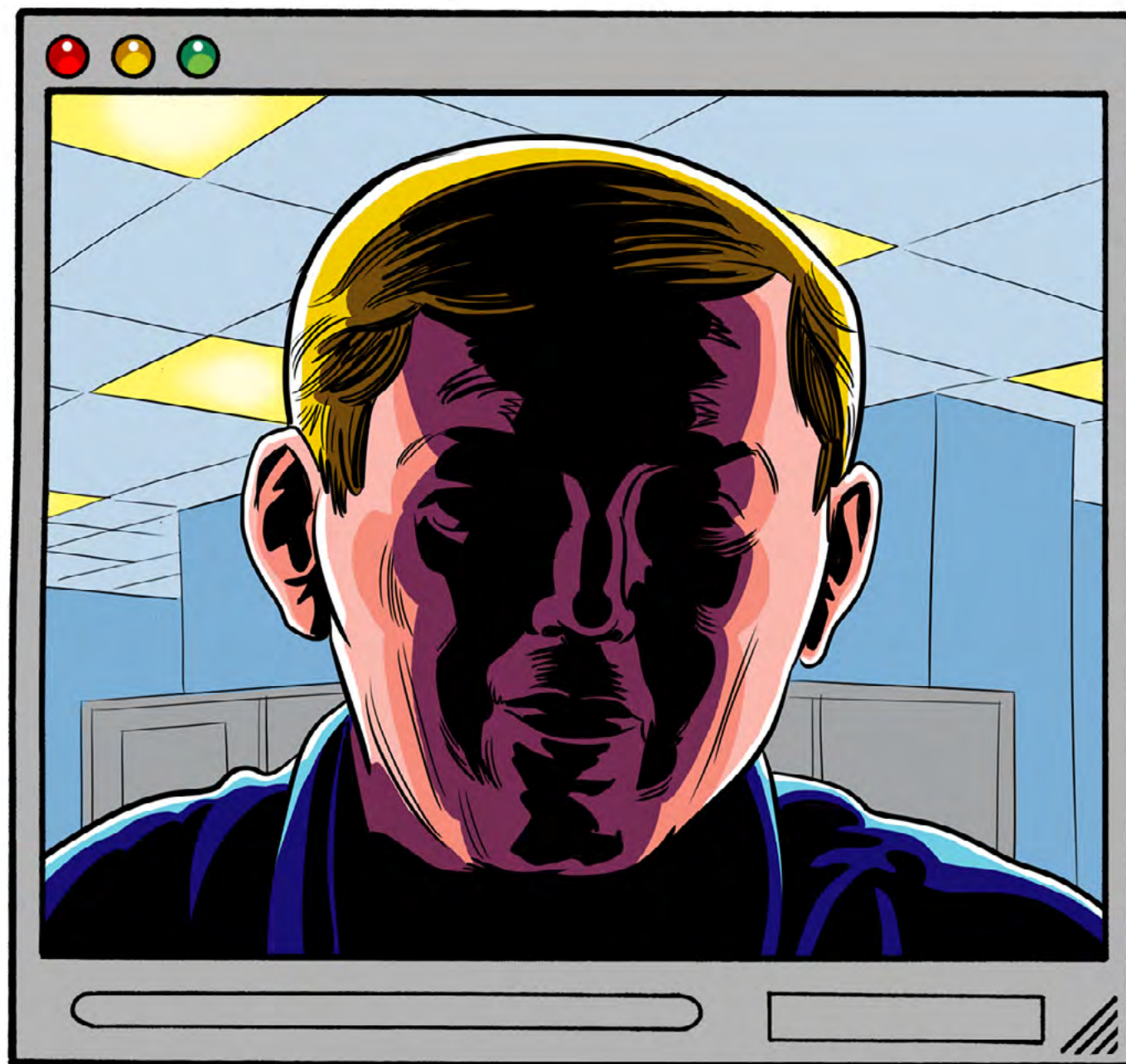


EXHIBIT A

The Witness Protection Program (Backlighting)



Too often, speakers on webcams are under- or over-lit.



Problem: The light source is behind you, obscuring your face.



THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS (OR DARKNESS) OF BEING ON SCREEN



Solution: Remove lights shining from behind your head. Get a desk lamp with a flexible neck. Position it behind or to the side of your computer and point it toward your face.



SIN
#2

THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS (OR DARKNESS) OF BEING ON SCREEN

EXHIBIT B

The Ghost

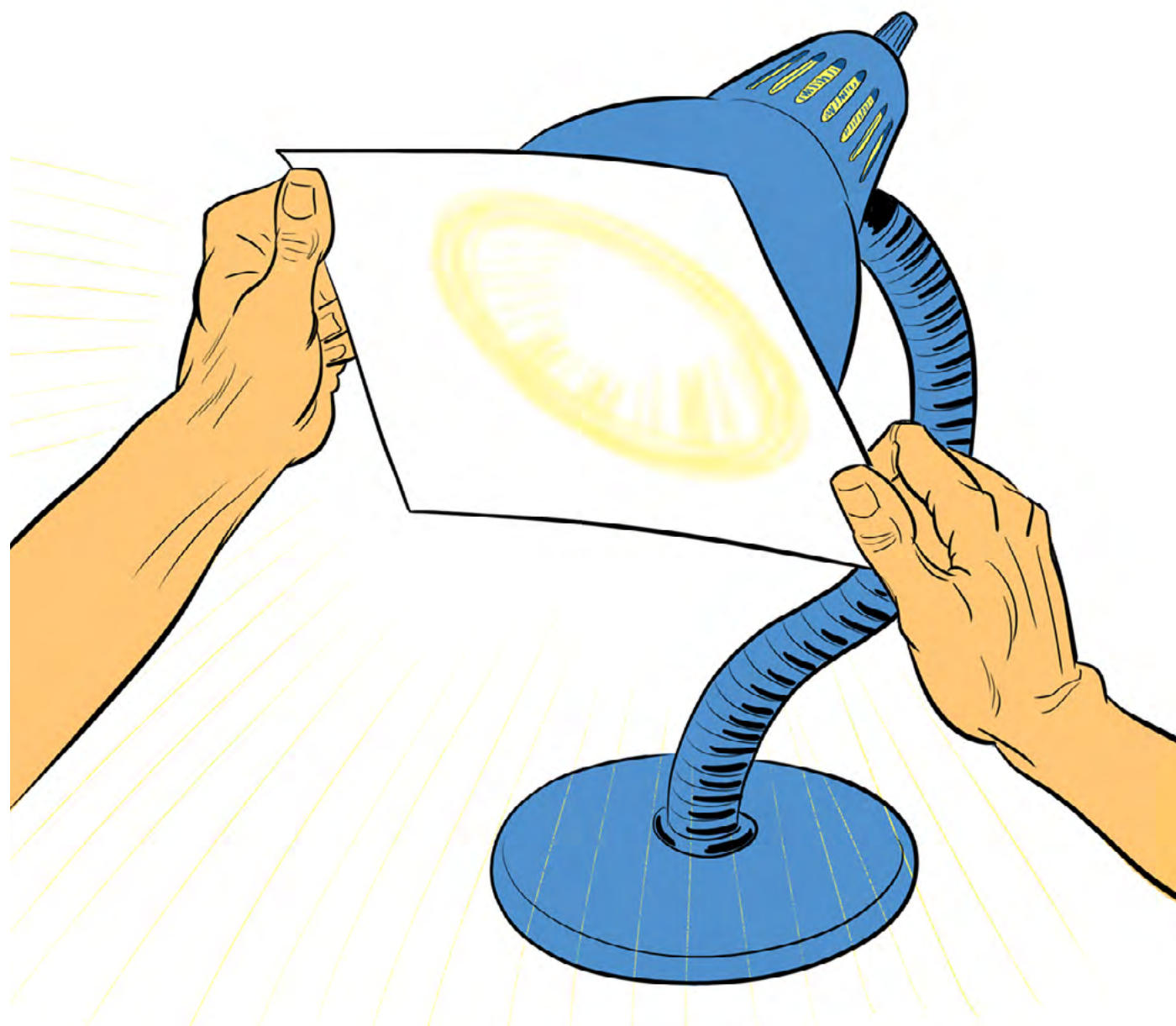


!

Problem: Too much direct light. You look washed out.



THE UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS (OR DARKNESS) OF BEING ON SCREEN



Solution: If you're appearing on screen as an overlit ghost, you may need to soften your light. Clamp a piece of paper in front of the bulb (parchment paper, which doesn't burn easily, works well for a traditional incandescent bulb; compact fluorescent bulbs are cooler, and you can soften their light with a regular piece of white paper).



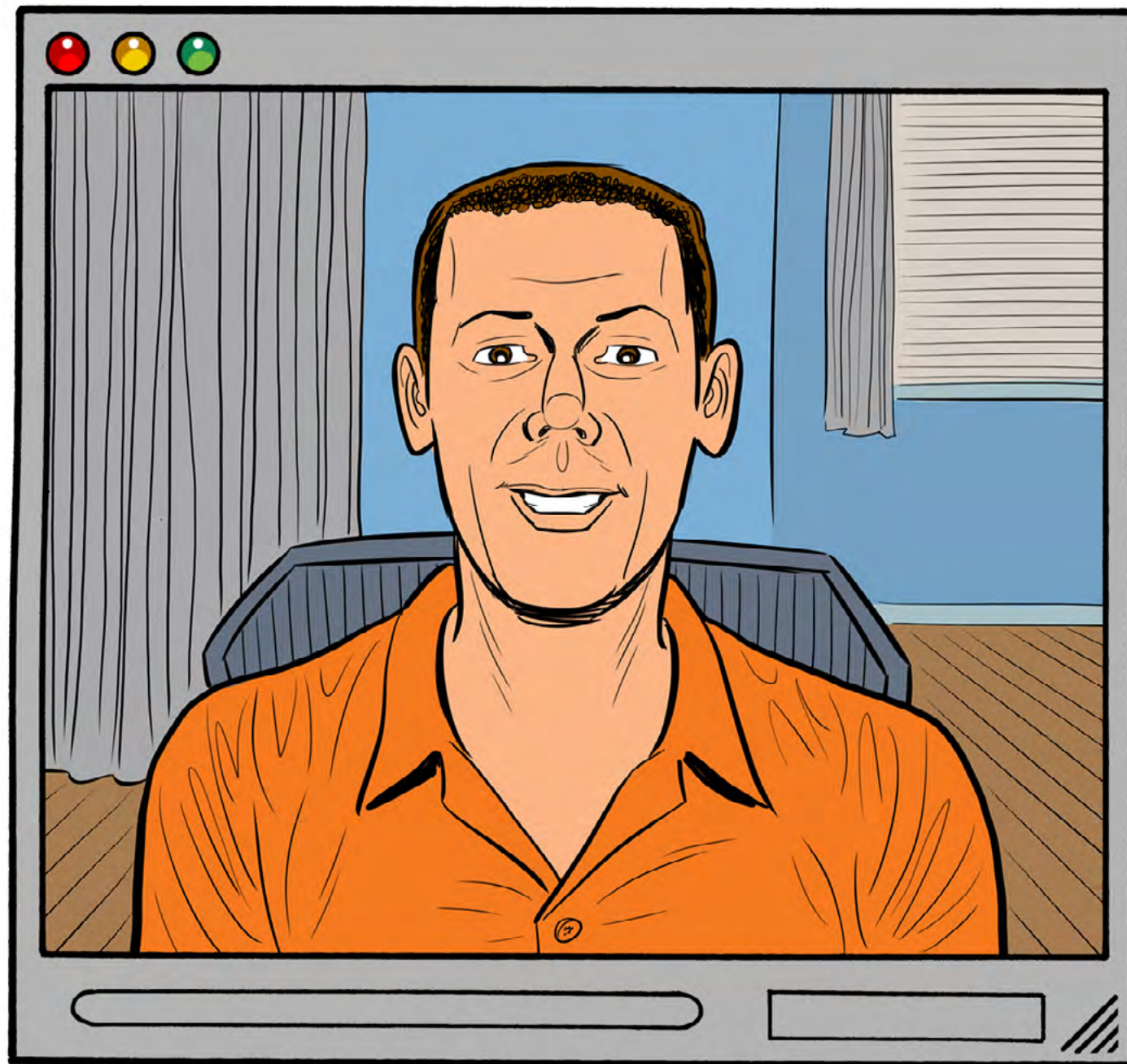
FAILED BACKGROUND CHECK



! Problem: The background pulls our attention away from the speaker.



FAILED BACKGROUND CHECK



Solution: Simplify your background. A drape, a plain wall or a bookshelf work nicely. Variety is interesting, but be careful that your backdrop isn't too busy.



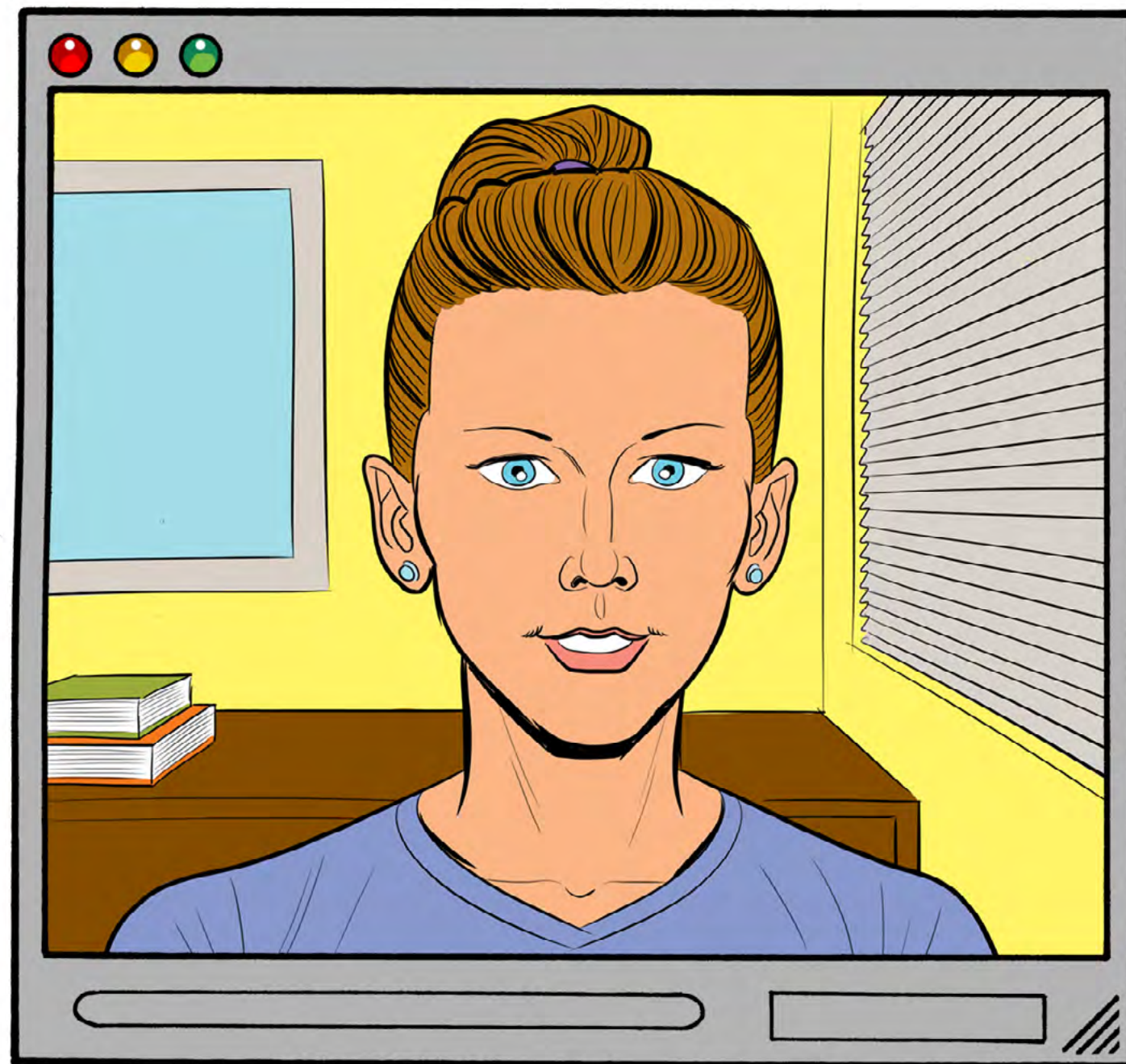
BUSY BODY



! Problem: Clothes with busy patterns (especially tight stripes), shiny jewelry.



BUSY BODY



Solution: Pay attention to what you wear. Solid colors are best. If you have long hair, pull it back so your face can be seen. Remove flashy jewelry and long, dangly earrings, which will catch the light and distract the viewers' eyes.



CANDID CAMERA



Problem: Forgetting that you're on camera.



Solution: Your Web conferencing software should allow you to preview your video before hitting "send." It may sound obvious, but it's worth repeating: don't sign on to a video meeting before you're ready to be seen.



SIN
#6 **AUDIO FAIL**

In virtual communications, your voice is critical. Use a landline instead of a cell phone whenever possible.



Problem: Faint, crackly or intermittent audio.



Solution: Invest in a good headset. Experiment with it before an important call. Find the right placement for your microphone: close enough to pick up your voice but not too close to create pops or hisses. A microphone rubbing on your clothes can produce distracting sound, too.



High Performance Webcam Checklist

- Level camera**
- Warm lighting**
- Simple attire**
- Plain background**
- Clear audio**





PART
2

ADVANCED WEBCAM TECHNIQUE!

Now that you're coming across clearly on screen, here are a couple of more advanced techniques for strengthening your "presence" online.



SMILE WITH YOUR EYES

There is a subtle difference between voluntary, false “social smiles” and sincere smiles of enjoyment. Forced smiles start with the muscles at the corners of the mouth. Sincere smiles (what psychologists call the “Duchenne smile,” after a 19th-century French anatomist) involve the muscles around the eyes.

Try both now: first, smile just with your mouth. Next, smile only with your eyes, not your mouth. Feel the difference?

The problem is that, in pressure situations, we often revert to forced smiles, even though we may truly feel enthusiasm.

Next time you’re speaking on a webcam, look directly into the camera and smile with your eyes. You might just create a



warmth and brightness that travels across continents.



KEEP THE BALL MOVING

Our final recommendation is related not to your appearance but to the dynamic of a Web conference.

Monologue is deadly in person, but if you ramble on and on during a Web conference, your colleagues' attention won't last much longer than it takes to say "Facebook status."

Interactivity is key to an engaging virtual meeting. If you're the leader of a call, you've got to keep it moving. Call on others by name, but be conscious of how you're inviting them in:

Instead of, "What do you think of our new project timeline, Jim?" give him a cue that you're going to ask him to speak:

"Jim, I'm interested in your opinion about the project timeline, since you've been heavily involved all along. Thoughts?"

By placing Jim's name at the beginning of your question, rather than the end, you're giving him fair warning. Even a second or two helps someone from feeling put on the spot.

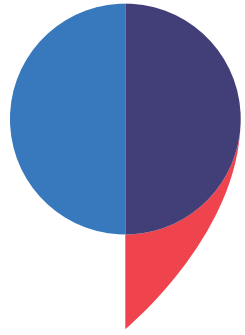
As a general rule, try to speak for no more than three minutes before asking for feedback or "passing" to someone else.



With a little extra preparation, you can deepen your on-screen “presence” significantly and heighten the levels of engagement on any call.

In today’s virtual environment, that extra edge can make a definitive difference.





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