

Keri Glassman:

Hey, McKel. Thank you so much for being here.

McKel Hill:

Hey.

Keri Glassman:

I'm so happy, so happy and so grateful that you're giving us your time today, and I know my nutrition school peeps, friends, alum, students, everybody is going to be so happy to hear the incredible information, advice, tips you have today. So, all you nutrition school friends watching this, for those of you who don't know, we are here today with McKel Hill from Nutrition Stripped, and I'm sure you know her. If you don't know her, you have to go right this second and follow her on Instagram at Nutrition Stripped. She is a fellow registered dietitian, and McKel and I met the beginning of, I guess, almost about a year ago probably. We started chatting, and we met via... We were both copied on an email for something we were both interviewed for, and so we-

McKel Hill:

That's right.

Keri Glassman:

... That's how we first connected. So, we started chatting about some things, and then we started chatting on Skype. We're not in the same area, so we didn't sit down for tea or juice or anything. So, we started chatting on Skype, and it's been really so much fun getting to know you, McKel. And I know my nutrition school students will, too. It's been so fun. And again, we started off our careers differently, but we're both dietitians. We're both entrepreneurs and have many things in common, and it's really been fun sharing our different stories with each other. So, I know, students, you're going to love hearing from McKel, and again, if you don't know her, you'll check out her Instagram. Aside from being a dietician who's got, obviously, so much knowledge and so much great information to share as a dietician and an entrepreneur, but also specifically, I will say, in the world of photography because she has an incredible, gorgeous Instagram and website and really nails the photography thing.

Keri Glassman:

And yeah, I mean, as all of these students know out there, all you... I keep saying students, but alum, too. As all you peeps know, it's almost like we all have to be photographers in this day and age. So, McKel also... You want to check out also her website, Nutrition Stripped, and she also has the best healthy, meal-planning, wellness membership society. You definitely want to check that out, and, actually, attached to this video you will find information how you can purchase that with a special discount just for you students.

McKel Hill:

Yeah.

Keri Glassman:

So, that's pretty awesome. Thank you so much for giving that to everyone. McKel.

McKel Hill:

[inaudible 00:02:25]. Of course.

Keri Glassman:

Really appreciate it. All right, so let's get going because today the topic is your best, the best Instagram photography tips. I know I'm looking forward to hearing this. So, let's get going.

McKel Hill:

Okay.

Keri Glassman:

Where do we begin? What do we start with?

McKel Hill:

So, I'm really excited. You guys are so lucky to have Keri mentoring you and teaching you. She's been a personal mentor of mine, too, so I am so excited to share these. So, all right. Starting off, I think the biggest tip and number one is knowing your demographic, knowing your subject, right? Because most of you are in nutrition or food, so that's an obvious object. But some of you might be dabbling into fitness or mother nutrition for moms or for kids or something. So, knowing your demographic, that's really important because when you're shooting, you also want to shoot and create these artistic images that speak to them, right? So, you're not going to shoot kid's snacks for a college-student demographic. It just doesn't quite make sense. I think that's the biggest tip is just knowing who you're speaking and conveying that image to.

Keri Glassman:

What I really like about that point is I think so many of us have been taught to do that when it comes to writing or even, let's say, whether you're doing media, whether you're writing, or your doing something on your blog, I think it's, for some reason with writing that's more natural to maybe think about it that way.

McKel Hill:

Yeah.

Keri Glassman:

I don't know. When you think about visual items, especially for Instagram, I think so many of us just think, "Okay, what am I doing today? What about it?" And you forget to really think about the audience with as much care as you do when you're writing. So, I really love that you brought that up for the artistic side of things as well.

McKel Hill:

Yeah, it's all about intention, and you're setting the tone. I mean, that kind of goes into branding and just knowing your demographic period, but it's a lot easier for you when you're thinking about, "Oh, my gosh. I'm doing a million things. Sure, I want to show everybody every minute of my day." You can, but if you want to be really strategic about it and have a solid framework, it's easier for yourself to just know your demographic. So, that's the biggest one.

Keri Glassman:

All right. Love that.

McKel Hill:

Number two, if I'm going to number these. Style... Okay, so everybody has their unique style, and I think that that's the beautiful thing about photography and art in itself. I've always been really artistic and creative. That was one of my first majors. So, in high school I was a total... I had a 2.0. I just didn't care about school because I was going to go to art school, and all you needed was an art portfolio, right? I have always been inclined to be creative. So, it doesn't mean that you have to have my background or you have to be an art major or anything like that because everybody can tap into their own creative style, everybody.

McKel Hill:

It's just all about honing in on that and allowing yourself the space to do so. So, I think finding your style, whatever that might be... Maybe it's finding some inspirational Instagrams that you really like their photography style and you're pulling little aspects from all of these different inspirational photographers. But the key here is making it your own. You know? I mean I think Instagram, social media is really easy to take a look and just copy. But that's not fun because people want an authentic viewpoint of what you have to offer, and I think it's really important to create your own. So, find your style, practice, and edit how you will to find your style that speaks to you, and also it has to, again, rounding back to tip number one, it has to speak to your demographic.

Keri Glassman:

And do you suggest that when people are figuring out their own style that they even keep a running list of the things that they want to be consistent with? Because I know that sometimes you may know what you like and you know what feels like you and your style. But then you do this, and then you do that, and you feel like you're all over the place. It doesn't mean that they're not all you and there your style, but you still have to be consistent with it just like you'd be consistent with your writing and your tone.

McKel Hill:

Right.

Keri Glassman:

So I find it sometimes helpful to even write down certain things to sort of... Almost like your own little internal branding. Right?

McKel Hill:

Yeah, totally. Totally, I agree. It's very parallel to writing. Yeah, I think that's a great idea.

Keri Glassman:

Okay, awesome. What's next? I'm having these.

McKel Hill:

Okay, so now that you have that framework, the next one I think is a pretty obvious one, but having a camera. So, if we're talking about Instagram-

Keri Glassman:

By the way, that's not actually so obvious because I think everybody really uses their phones these days. But having an actual real camera, I don't think that's actually so obvious. So, I'm glad you said that.

McKel Hill:

... Yeah, so you can shoot with a camera. For example, on my blog I shoot all with an actual camera, a Canon DSLR camera. But with Instagram I'm typically only sharing photos that I'm taking on my phone. Right here I have an iPhone 6. I started with an iPhone 3, and the images were so grainy. But, I mean, that's just how you start, right? But it's having your equipment, so to speak. You don't have to have an iPhone. I mean, Androids or whatever other kinds of phones that you have are great, but the key is just having one that that can take a decent picture. There are a lot of little extras that you could look into. There's a really cool lens, call Moment lens.

Keri Glassman:

Moment?

McKel Hill:

So, it's Moments, M-O-M-E-N-T. It's a really cool company, and they make lens attachments that go on your camera. You can actually get the benefit of having a DSLR camera with different lens viewpoints, so you can widen the shot. Those are just little fun extras, but it helps when you're trying to create a scene or you're trying to, again, speak to your style and to your demographic, whatever that might be.

Keri Glassman:

So, that's a really good point, though. When you said having a camera, I thought you meant an actual real camera, but you actually mean just making sure that you have your camera even if it's your iPhone camera.

McKel Hill:

Yeah.

Keri Glassman:

Okay.

McKel Hill:

So, this is the point though. If you wanted to shoot from your DSLR camera you can actually just email yourself or copy it on your phone, and then you could share that picture.

Keri Glassman:

Okay. Okay.

McKel Hill:

The only thing though... This is what I will say. I'm very strict about the images, right? So, if I were to upload a DSLR camera image to Instagram when all the other pictures of mine are from my iPhone, you will dramatically tell the difference because of the quality of a DSLR camera is extremely tight and sharp versus an iPhone. So, again, if you want to start shooting that, my tip runs into my next tip, is to be consistent.

Keri Glassman:

Right.

McKel Hill:

Be consistent with that viewpoint.

Keri Glassman:

So, wait, I just had a question there. You had a really good... Oh, I know what I was going to say there. Let's say you're spending a day in the kitchen, and this could be anybody also spending a day in a gym or doing exercise videos or something. Do you then take some photos for your blog with your DSLR camera, and then also take a few for Instagram with your phone? So, you gather both.

McKel Hill:

Yeah, that's a great question. Yes. Okay, so that's such a great point. When I'm shooting... I shoot at home actually in this room right here because I have a window that I'm facing right now. So it's the best [crosstalk] light.

Keri Glassman:

You always have beautiful light, by the way. Beautiful light.

McKel Hill:

It's lucky with this room. It's the winter right now, so my lighting hours are very restricted. But that's the key. So, I'll shoot for the blog with my DSLR camera, and I'll have my phone right by me. And I'm taking shots of the same thing.

Keri Glassman:

Okay, that's what I [inaudible 00:10:14].

McKel Hill:

That's how whenever I announce like, "Hey guys, I have a new recipe up." It's because I took it at the same time.

Keri Glassman:

Got it.

McKel Hill:

And it's just, again, consistency for me because I only share iPhone quality photos on Instagram.

Keri Glassman:

Okay, excellent. Okay, wait, and so you started with your next step that was going to be about being consistent, which I'm a freak about. I try. I try to be a freak about it with not just social media and Instagram and things but just everything, and it's tough. So what are, what are your tips there?

McKel Hill:

Yeah, so consistency on a lot of different fronts. Consistency in life, right? I mean, we all want to be consistent with... If we're blogging, Keri, you know that. You have a very consistent blogging schedule. Consistency with just scheduling in general, you guys are all familiar with it. Everybody can agree of how important having some type of routine is. So, the same goes for Instagram. Now that could be your posting times. It could be on a time management scale, consistency, or it could be the view, right? So, the style, again, consistent with your style. Consistent with who you're talking to. Your captions... Those are really, really important key points there which is just consistency.

Keri Glassman:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it sounds a kind of simple, but it's actually difficult to do. But when you do it, I think you reap so many benefits. You really have to be diligent about doing it.

McKel Hill:

Exactly, and like you were saying, writing down tips for yourself with style, same thing goes with Instagram in terms of consistency. Write down times of day that work for you to post because that's all that matters, or consistency when you're going to shoot Instagram photos for yourself. Maybe you take an afternoon, and you shoot just a bunch of random Instagrams, which kind of seems opposite of what Instagram was first designed for, right? Instant grams... You take a picture, instantly upload it. Instagram isn't really used like that anymore. It's used as a pre-planning marketing strategy.

Keri Glassman:

Exactly, and I think most people know that, and that's accepted and okay. I mean I think that that's part of it, and I think that makes sense. Okay, I have a question, and we've talked about this a little before. What about editing? How do you edit your photos so beautifully?

McKel Hill:

Yeah, editing. Okay, so this goes along with your style, hugely with your style. When you're thinking about your style, you're thinking about editing, you're thinking about your subject. For example, food bloggers, it might be a recipe. So, your subject is that recipe, that dish. Let's say you're in fitness. Maybe you're taking a gym selfie, or you're taking a picture of a client working out with them or something like

that. That's your subject, right? That's part of the style. So, that's the setup, too. And then composition, that is hugely part of your style. The last piece would be editing. So, after you've got all those little things aligned, then you have to edit. There are a lot of different editing softwares. I'm actually going to pull up on my phone right now so I can properly say all their names.

Keri Glassman:

Oh great.

McKel Hill:

So, I would say the most popular editing software for phones and for iPhone photography is V-S-C-O Cam.

Keri Glassman:

Yup.

McKel Hill:

VSCO Cam.

Keri Glassman:

Yup, I use that.

McKel Hill:

Everybody uses that. I like that one because there's a wide variety of library presets, and you can purchase them all. I mean, they have a lot of free ones as well, but that's great to start with. You can, again, figure out what kind of vibe is speaking to your own personal artistic style and then also to your demographic. So, for example, I'm going to use children's nutrition as an example. When I think about that I think bright, colorful, fun, messy, just inviting, right? And then, if I'm thinking about a fashion blogger, I'm thinking super clean, minimal, maybe muted tones, very, very different. So again, that's why your demographic and the editing is going to feed off of that.

McKel Hill:

So, VSCO Cam is one. There's so many. Afterlight is another one. Snapseed is another one. So, that's S-N-A-P seed. So, again, all of those are pretty much the same thing. You have filters, and then you can actually build upon that. My editing style... I mean, when I first started I was using Instagram filters, which I think rarely anybody does because there's not a lot of control over how you can manipulate the photo just within Instagram. I don't recommend using those.

Keri Glassman:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

McKel Hill:

I only recommend using those editing apps. So, you can edit the saturation. You can make the colors more bright. You can make the picture overall more bright, if you're shooting in a dim room and you need to bump up the exposure. You can fade the image, which is really cool, too. So, again, it's all about you having to play around with it and finding your style, but once you find it, it goes back with consistency. Be consistent about it. Remember those filters that you use. Remember the style, and do that all the time.

Keri Glassman:

Well, that's what I was just going to ask you is it seems like once you play around with these, I mean, I know that I always end up using the exact same amount of a shadow. I mean, obviously, depending upon the light of that picture, but the shadow, the saturation, the filter, it usually ends up being... I mean I would say it's 90% it's about the exact same that I use.

McKel Hill:

Exactly.

Keri Glassman:

I mean, and you obviously do a way better job at the photography thing than I do. That's not as much my thing; however, I still find that I end up still going to the same. So, do you find that once you find whether it's on VSCO or whatever, do you find that you end up using the same filter over and over and the same amount of shadow, the same amount of saturation?

McKel Hill:

Yeah, totally. If I look back to my first photography my style was very different, and that's just because I've grown as an artist in terms of how I view photography now and brand growth, et cetera. You all just can remember that. You don't have to stick with the same style for years and years. Be free to experiment with what your current phase is, and that's okay. But once you land on it, really try to land on it and stick with it.

Keri Glassman: Yeah, like anything else, you can continue to grow. So consistency doesn't mean you never can change. I always say... I mean, even this isn't the best example because it's not a healthy example, but even McDonald's changed their arches.

McKel Hill: Right.

Keri Glassman: I always go back to that whenever I think like, "Well, I can't change that or change that." And I'm like, "What? Oh, yes, I can."

McKel Hill: Yeah. Exactly. [inaudible 00:17:09].

Keri Glassman: Apple could change their logo. It's okay. It happens. We can all change and tweak what we're doing, but while we're in a certain zone is to stay consistent there. I think that's a really good point you brought up there is that you have to continue to grow. You can grow with it, and you can change. And that's a good thing, but while you're doing what you're doing to be consistent. These are such good tips. I love it.

McKel Hill: I was going to say, one tip on that, too. If you guys want to have a little actionable step or homework is take one picture. Do a still life. It can be a plant. It can be an apple, whatever. Okay. Start experimenting with your style on that one picture.

Keri Glassman: Right.

McKel Hill: Do a bunch of different filters. Do all these types of edits. Save them all, and look at them. And go, "Okay. Hey, is this speaking to my demographic? Is this what I like? Do I even like this style? Is this repeatable? Can I repeat this in different situations?" I think that's a really good starting point for those of you who are just complete newbies at photography or who are just interested in honing in on their unique perspective.

Keri Glassman: I love homework, and I love actionable steps to improve something. So, I love that.

McKel Hill: Yeah, of course you do, right?

Keri Glassman: That's fantastic. I love it. I have another question that we didn't touch upon too much yet is lighting. Again, we said how you've got such gorgeous lighting in the room where you shoot a lot, but what do you suggest about lighting, whether having lights, using light properly, natural light properly? What's your tip there?

McKel Hill: Yeah, that's a great question. Also, remind me about props. I want to [inaudible] on that, too. Okay. Lighting... So, yes, Keri, like I told you, I have a huge window. I'm blessed within a certain window of time when I can shoot in here. So, I'll try to plan accordingly. That's the best tip is if you can shoot in natural light, shoot in natural light, especially when we're talking about food because food, vegetables, fruits, which many of you I'm sure are shooting, they're so beautiful in itself. Their colors are beautiful. They're vibrant. The textures are beautiful. So, natural light really has this beautiful way of just picking up on those details that artificial lighting doesn't.

McKel Hill: Artificial lighting can definitely be useful, but number one, I am way too lazy and busy to set up an artificial lighting thing. It's too [crosstalk 00:19:34].

Keri Glassman: I think that's good to know because your pictures are so beautiful and I think a lot of people feel like, "Oh, these people have the certain lights out, and they're always using lights and the whatever. The..." You know what I'm talking about? What's the big board?

McKel Hill: Yeah, shadow box?

Keri Glassman: Thank you. Yes. Yes, and they think that everybody has this perfect studio set up to have these gorgeous... The light boxes and the lights and the this to have these beautiful photos. But I think it's good to know, and it's inspiring, I'm sure for everybody listening, to know that you don't have to depend on all that.

McKel Hill: No, and, I mean, that's where editing will be your best friend.

Keri Glassman: Right.

McKel Hill: So, if your lighting isn't favorable you can edit that a little bit.

Keri Glassman: Yeah, absolutely.

McKel Hill: No, I mean, 90% of the time I'm in this room. the computer right now is on my dining room table, and that's where I shoot. Or I'll shoot in my living room, and I have a huge marble coffee table. It's just my home.

Keri Glassman: Right.

McKel Hill: I'm not setting up anything that's crazy. For the cookbook, yes. I mean, that's a whole other story because it's a professional environment. I had to have artificial lighting, but for the majority of you, natural light. Okay. So if that's in your home, that's great. Let's say that you... And this has happened to me a million times and now I've learned, but let's say that you cook a recipe or you made dinner, and you really want to Instagram it. You're really stoked about the way that you styled it. It looks beautiful, and your lighting is just kind of crappy.

Keri Glassman: Right.

McKel Hill: Go outside. If it is still daylight a little bit... Gloomy days, days with a lot of clouds actually create beautiful images.

Keri Glassman: Oh, that's [crosstalk 00:21:11].

McKel Hill: You kind of think the opposite, right? You think sunshine and a lot of light are going to give you the best images. No. Cloudy, gloomy days like today right now in Nashville is a perfect day to do photography, so I probably will do some. But again, it just gives that life and movement to it because of the shadows.

Keri Glassman: What were you going to say about going outside?

McKel Hill: Yeah, so when you go outside, pick a spot with some of that natural light that naturally is there. If you have a sidewalk or even in the grass or something, sometimes that can help being outside, obviously.

Keri Glassman: Okay. That's [inaudible 00:21:47].

McKel Hill: And then, I mean, another option is to do some artificial lighting, but I was just trying to keep it simple for you guys. So, natural lighting is the best.

Keri Glassman: Yeah, I think natural light always looks the prettiest. It really does. It always looks the most beautiful, and, I mean, you can tell. And, again, sometimes you have to depend on artificial lights, and, obviously, like you said for a cookbook shoot or something, you're going to use artificial light. But like I said, it's inspiring to know we don't have to have a whole studio set up every time we want to take a beautiful picture.

McKel Hill: No. Yeah, super simple. And then props... Is that a good [crosstalk 00:22:23].

Keri Glassman: Yeah, that's perfect. No. No, props is perfect. I was just going to remind you if you forgot.

McKel Hill: Okay.

Keri Glassman: You said to remind you, but you remembered.

McKel Hill: I think props are important. In terms of the presentation, when you look in the overall shot you're looking at, again, the subject, your style, the composition. Composition is really fun because you can play around with the layout of a photo. Again, if we're talking about an iPhone or most cameras can give you the option of shooting in square, shooting in photo. I shoot in photo, but for Instagram it's obviously a square. So, shooting in a square, again, it's a simple change, but that can sometimes keep your view perspective in knowing like, "Okay, this is how it's going to be laid out in Instagram's world."

Keri Glassman: Right.

McKel Hill: So, that can be really helpful, just that setting alone. So, yeah. Anyway, just looking at food props... So, backdrops, whether it's a wood table, again, it's all about your style. Do you like wood? Do you like a lot of linens or napkins or your lap holding a salad bowl? I mean, I think the more that you can have some variety within your style is really important, and you can get food props from anywhere, from antique shops to Amazon, finding cool textures in your own house. Possibilities are limitless there.

Keri Glassman: Absolutely, and I just think the key there is to just have your little tool box of things that you use and go to. So, you have them on hand, and you have them ready to go. Sort of like you said. You play around. I love that tip you gave, the homework you gave, about playing around with that one

photo, and then you develop what the type of saturation you're going to use and the type of filter you're going to use. The same thing I guess goes with the props. You have a few things ready to go. You start playing around. Maybe you end up not liking them, so you switch them out. You try a few other things, but having a few things ready to go is probably a good idea and just go along with everything else, being prepared and being consistent. Right?

McKel Hill: Exactly. Exactly. I really just love minimal things. That's my style, but I wasn't always like that. I went through a phase where I loved a lot of rustic things and props, and it was beautiful. I just grew out of that. Again, it's all about just finding your creative space and what makes you happy and what you like and having those go-tos. The toolkit, that should be another homework assignment, right?

Keri Glassman: Right, create a little toolkit.

McKel Hill: [crosstalk] toolkit of your favorite little props.

Keri Glassman: Yep.

McKel Hill: Yeah, I love that idea.

Keri Glassman: I love that. McKel, I love that you gave us homework. I love it. Thank you so much. This was so incredibly helpful.

McKel Hill: [crosstalk 00:25:01].

Keri Glassman: I am going to wrap up, sort of summarize here, so everybody... You can go back and watch this video again, but just a little summarizing here. First, knowing your demo. Amazing tip. I love that. Again, we think about it for writing. We don't always think about it in terms of our photography and our artistic side. So, knowing your demo. Finding your own inspiration to find your own style, really having your own style. Having the correct camera. Being consistent. Editing properly, using something like a VSCO Cam or one of those other apps you mentioned like Snapseed or Afterlight.

Keri Glassman: And then the homework you gave with experimenting with one photo to really help you find your style and what you like and what works. Using natural light and only using other light if you have to, but really maximizing your natural light, knowing the times a day that are best. Don't be afraid to get outside if you have to. And then having your toolkit of props. Love it. Such amazing, amazing tips here. Really valuable. I cannot thank you enough. Really.

McKel Hill: You're so welcome.

Keri Glassman: This was amazing. Thank you. Thank you. Enjoy the rest of your day.

McKel Hill: Thank you.

Keri Glassman: We're so appreciative of your time. I know we will be chatting more soon.

McKel Hill: Yes, totally. [inaudible 00:26:17].

Keri Glassman: Lots of love to you. Thank you again so much for joining us.

McKel Hill: All right. Bye guys.

Keri Glassman: Bye.