

# Media Interviews: How to be an Effective and Confident Storyteller

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*Building Safe, Healthy, and Drug Free Communities*



# Preparation

- Maintain a positive attitude
- Take the time to prepare
  - What is my goal(s) for the interview?
  - Who is my audience? Will my examples resonate with them?
  - What are the key messages I want to convey?
  - Are my answers concise enough?
  - Are they believable or do they need supporting proof points?
  - Are there talking points that I stumble on and need to rephrase so they flow naturally?
  - Do I have an answer for the question I hope they don't ask?

# Media Interview Techniques

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**Headlining** - state your conclusions first and then follow up with details as time permits.

- Key for broadcast interviews
- Makes you more quotable
- Ensures your key messages are delivered

# Media Interview Techniques

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**Flagging** - alert the reporter and audience to your most important points.

- The bottom line is...
- The most important thing is...
- What you should remember is...

# Media Interview Techniques

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**Blocking and bridging** – helps you guide the direction of the interview to your key messages. Effective spokespeople listen to the bigger issue behind each question and address that issue as they choose.

- That speaks to a bigger issue, which is...
- I think the more important question to address is...
- It's our policy not to discuss X specifically, but I can tell you...

# Media Interview Techniques

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**Don't repeat negatives** - correct the reporter and frame your reply as a positive statement.

*Reporter: Don't addicts bring this problem onto themselves?  
Why should we care if they get help?*

*Spokesperson: People with substance use disorders...*

# Media Interview Techniques

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**Ask for clarification** – it's ok to do!

- What specifically are you referring to?
- Can you give me an example of the situation you are describing?
- Can you rephrase that?

# Techniques in Action





# Media Do's

- DO speak in simple, laymen's terms. Avoid jargon.
- DO use facts/figures to support your key messages and demonstrate your credibility.
- DO use illustrations and anecdotes to humanize your topic.
- DO be engaging and show empathy when appropriate.
- DO always take advantage if a reporter asks, "Is there anything you would like to add?"
- DO respect reporters' deadlines.
- DO arrive early to in-person interviews.

# Media Dont's

- DON'T over answer.
- DON'T be afraid to pause.
- DON'T allow yourself to be provoked.
- DON'T assume the reporter knows more about the topic than you do. You are an expert on prevention.
- DON'T assume anything is off the record.
- DON'T fake an answer if you don't know it.
- DON'T ever lie to a reporter.

# TV Tips

## What to Wear

- Dress conservatively and in comfortable clothes.
- Keep accessories minimal. Don't wear noisy, large or shiny jewelry.
- If you can, wear contact lenses instead of glasses.
- If you are offered make-up, accept it.

## Body Language

- Remember to literally "lean in" to the interview. Sit forward to convey a positive image.
- Gesture naturally.
- Maintain a pleasant expression; smile when appropriate.
- Hold your "interview attitude" from the moment you are on air until the interview is over and the camera is off.

# Radio Tips

- In radio, your voice establishes your image. Keep up your energy!
- Don't speak too loudly or softly.
- Painting a picture of your story is very important in radio. Use examples and anecdotes to illustrate your story to listeners. Localize stories whenever possible.
- Feel free to have notes in front of you to remind you of key messages, talking points, statistics, etc.
- Try to personalize your delivery. Get to know the host.
- If responding to listener call-ins, don't let a hostile caller fluster you. Remember, your blocking and bridging technique and that you will be thankful for taking the high road.

# Print Tips

- Don't be surprised if the reporter has to cancel the interview at the last minute.
- It's not unusual for a reporter to tape-record an interview.
- If you accidentally provide misleading or incorrect information, correct yourself as soon as you recognize the error.
- Follow up with reporters in a timely manner.
- Feel free to ask if the reporter plans to write a story using the interview, and if so, when it is likely to run.
- Don't ask the reporter to see the article before it is published.

# Q&A

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Questions?