

## Key Tips for Psychologists Working in Media

### Responding to a request

- News media is a critical source of information and education for the public
- Media's goal – make money, present commodities (your knowledge!)
- Carefully evaluate potential media engagements.  
Avoid topics that:
  - put you in a compromising position
  - are out of your range of expertise
  - are in panel format (panel discussions are often meant to be debates, with panelists picked for extreme differing points of view)

### Preparation

- Prepare 3 – 5 main points, practice rephrasing them
- State conclusions first, then supporting points
- Keep stories and case studies short
- Prepare answers for any controversial or easily misinterpreted areas of work
- Research the media agent (newspaper, magazine, television program) that is requesting the interview to familiarize yourself with format and content
- Preinterview – opportunity to speak with the interviewer prior to the official interview, to educate them on the subject (in order for them to provide better questions) and for them to introduce the types of questions they will be asking (so you can better prepare your answers).
  - Print media – reporter might call and expect the interview to commence immediately. Decide on a convenient time to conduct the interview and use the initial phone call as the preinterview
  - Radio – use the few moments before the reporter starts recording the interview as the preinterview, or agree to call back at a convenient time once you have decided
  - Television – television producer will call once they have developed a segment and need an expert. Use the initial phone call as a preinterview, agree to phone back once you have decided

### Delivery

- Print media
  - preparation and organization is key, you will most likely not get the questions in advance and not have the opportunity to read the story before it is published
  - Select main points in advance and stick to them
  - The reporter will have an agenda for the interview, introduce new facts, insightful information, and fresh perspective if the line of questioning isn't meshing with your main points
  - Reporters will often ask you to draw conclusions from inconclusive and/or preliminary research, "I don't know" is an acceptable answer if the topic is out of your range of expertise
- Radio
  - Most radio shows will conduct interviews by telephone, and present them live or taped
  - Rephrase your important points several different ways, as listeners will tune in at different times throughout the program
- Television

- A media representative will contact you prior to the interview to arrange details (travel arrangements etc) and might conduct another preinterview to ensure you are the right candidate for their segment
- If extensive travel is required, plan to arrive the day before the interview. Otherwise, arrive early to familiarize yourself with the location and review your statements
- Attire – DO: wear conservative clothing; women should wear strong, solid colours; men should wear neutrals, light gray or blue shirt, navy suit, burgundy tie. DON'T: wear checks, stripes, or busy patterns; sunglasses or light sensing glasses that could darken; heavy makeup (except for powder which eliminates shine in studio lighting)
- Speak in short, succinct sentences and maintain your key points (max 30 second)
- Be passionate! Natural hand gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact show enthusiasm
- Your knowledge and expertise distinguish you from other guests and staff of the show, don't wait to be asked the right question, phrase your answers to convey the key points. You can shift the direction of the interview by saying things like,
  - “That’s a good question, but what is really important is...”
  - “I’d like to make this point before I continue...”
  - “Let me give you the latest information on...”

### **Follow Up**

- Record all pertinent information about the interviewer and program, so you can watch/listen/read the interview once it is public
- Thank-you card or note is appropriate, feedback could be appreciated
- Self-evaluation is useful for future interviews
- Take advantage of media training opportunities (workshops, lectures etc)

### **Relationships**

- A memorable interview will likely lead to more interviews
- Develop a rapport with media personnel and they may recommend you to other media outlets or request further interviews

## Checklist for Media Interview Preparation

(Please note that this checklist is to be used after a booking has been confirmed.)

1. Name of the publication/program/show: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Other people Interviewed/scheduled to appear on panel:  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Subject: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Interview message points: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Interview date (print) or tape date (electronic): \_\_\_\_\_
7. Published date or broadcast date (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

### Interview Message Worksheet

Message

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Point 1: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Point 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Point 3: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### Self-Evaluation List

This form of self-evaluation will help you to objectively locate areas of strengths and weaknesses and will give you positive directions for improvements.

	Rating
1. Did I make my points?	1 2 3 4 5
2. Did I control the interview?	1 2 3 4 5
3. Did I wait too long to make my points?	1 2 3 4 5
4. Was my appearance professional?	1 2 3 4 5
5. Did I mention psychology?	1 2 3 4 5
6. Did I correct misinformation by the interviewer?	1 2 3 4 5

Personal notes for improvement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Source: <http://www.apa.org/pubs/authors/media/checklist.aspx>