

ACING A MEDIA INTERVIEW

Am I ready to handle media requests?

If you share your story as part of a storytelling campaign, there will likely be opportunities to talk to the media. If you accept these opportunities there are several things to consider, including: preparation for interviews; understanding the good and bad consequences of talking to reporters; making time to do interviews; being prepared to answer tough questions on camera or on the radio; and being prepared for any response from the public.

Once you have...

- ✓ decided that you want to share your story;
- ✓ organized your support system;
- ✓ determined your goals and call to action;
- ✓ crafted your story; and
- ✓ shared your story,

You might have an opportunity to talk to the media about it. Here are some best practices when preparing for an interview with a reporter:

Logistics

- Make sure you are on time.
- If you feel comfortable, introduce yourself to the reporter and other staff (there may be a camera person or a sound person there to help with the interview).
- Wear something solid in color. Don't wear anything that distracts from what you're saying like giant earrings or clothes that have lots of text.
- Spit out any gum or food before the interview.
- You might get nervous but try not to fidget. Do your best to sit still, especially if it is a television interview.
- Look directly at the reporter, never at the camera.
- If you like to wear make-up, wear it but keep it simple.

Guide the Interview: Remember that you are the driver of the interview. The rules of normal conversation don't really apply in media interviews. You can guide it in the direction you want it to go. Lead with the key points in your story: who you are, your obstacles, your goal, and your call to action are most important.

Personalize and be yourself: Tell your own story in your own words. Practice beforehand to make sure you feel comfortable. Come to the interview as prepared as possible. You can bring a set of notecards with you to practice.

Use complete sentences: Keep in mind that reporters are looking for stuff they can quote. Incomplete sentences or one-word answers like "yeah" or "no" aren't useful. Answer with full, clear sentences. (It's ok if it feels awkward.) Try to be as brief as possible.

Practice what you're going to say: Just like anything else, practicing your story will make you better at reciting it. Interviews can make you nervous so it will help if you know your story really well. Before you start doing any real interviews, role-play some with your family and friends.

It's ok to say, "I don't know": If you don't know the answer to a question, it's ok to say, "I don't know." It's better to do so than to give a wrong answer. You can also say "I'm not sure," or "_____ might know the answer to that," and if a reporter asks something that feels too personal, it's absolutely ok to say, "I'm sorry, that's not something I'm comfortable answering."

PRACTICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

You can't control what a reporter will ask in an interview, and sometimes questions will be ignorant, irrelevant, or even offensive. These practice questions will help you prepare for different situations. Remember, you can always refuse to answer a question that is inappropriate, or even explain to the reporter why it's the wrong question to ask — and what they should focus on instead.

1. When did you know?
2. If you're trans, why don't you always present as [feminine/masculine]?
3. What restroom do you use?
4. Have you been bullied?
5. How has this affected your relationship with your parents/family?
6. Where did your name come from?
7. Do you fear traveling alone/being in public as feminine/masculine?
8. Have you gotten surgery?
9. How do you feel about *insert famous trans person name*?
(for example, Caitlyn Jenner or Laverne Cox)?
10. What do you want other youth to know?