

# How to Conquer the Five Most Common Fears People Have of the Media

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## **Fear Number # 1: Being Taken Out of Context**

- Keep your answers short and to the point. Otherwise it will be edited into pieces.
- Talk in sound bites - speak key points in 10 seconds or less.
- Insert pauses between sound bites to allow for clean edits for broadcast news.
- Your sound bites should be focused on the issue and be clear, concise and precise.
- Avoid vague answers which allows for varied interpretation.

## **Fear Number # 2: Being Misquoted**

- Record the interview and advise the reporter of this.
- Following an interview, ask a newspaper reporter to read back your quotes.
- For broadcast interviews, ask the reporter to tell you how they will paraphrase what you said.

## **Fear Number # 3: You Say Something You Regret Saying**

- Prepare by learning as much about the issue as possible and know what you are going to say and not say before the interview begins.
- Have a printed fact sheet for the reporter that they can rely upon for basic information. It will save time and allow you to focus on providing key messages on important issues.
- If a question is not clear, ask the reporter to explain what they mean. If you don't know the answer, just say you don't know.
- Always keep your emotions in check, if you get angry or defensive, you might become the story.
- Never lie or stretch the truth. You will regret this - your credibility is everything.

## **Fear Number # 4: The Media Has a Secret Agenda**

- Before doing an interview, ask the reporter the angle or focus of a story and what they expect you to contribute. Most reporters are trying to get the facts and report them, not trick you.
- Investigate the reporter. Do an Internet search on the reporter's name to gain intelligence on their character and style of reporting.
- Set the ground rules before an interview on what you can and can't talk about. If they depart from those rules, you can discontinue the interview.

## **Fear Number # 5: The Media Will Burn You**

- Try to be on the record at all times. Try not to "go off the record" unless you have a valid reason for doing so and you know and trust the reporter. Never assume what you are saying is not quotable. Avoid providing information "on background", this is nothing more than a leak.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions. Conjecture can get you in trouble. Say what you know based on the facts and circumstances of the situation.
- After you have answered the question, stop talking. Don't be tricked into saying more than you want to because a reporter stares at you and nods their head in dead silence. They will eventually move on to the next question.
- Watch out for live microphones and cameras. If you are in the presence of a reporter, assume that what you are saying is being filmed or recorded.

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