



Using the media as your campaign ally

Interviewing Skills and Spokesperson Training Tips

✓ a checklist

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A world of advice

A plethora of publications offer advice on how to conduct a successful interview. Hundreds of communications agencies offer workshops and “inside” tips on effective interviewing before, during and after the conversation with the reporter.

This “tip” sheet is a compendium of constructive advice. Yet, protocol varies from country to country. The World Stroke Organization (WSO) encourages members to adapt, and regionalize pertinent parts of this presentation and adopt relevant portions as your own.

Employing these easy tips and tactics, together we will help empower advocates involved in the global fight against stroke with skills for shaping public opinion through the media.

- JJ Divino, WSO Senior Campaigns Officer (2010)



AGENDA

- ✓ Do's and Don'ts
- ✓ General Tips Before, During and After
- ✓ Print Scenarios
- ✓ General Broadcast Tips
- ✓ Radio Scenarios
- ✓ TV Scenarios



Do's & Don'ts

- ✓ Never lie to a reporter
- ✓ Respect reporters' professionalism
- ✓ Never wing it
- ✓ Translate for real people
- ✓ Speak in sound bites
- ✓ Return reporters' calls
- ✓ Meet reporters' deadlines
- ✓ Use words to create an image or paint a picture of your story
- ✓ Remember: "there is a trend"
- ✓ Visualize your story for TV
- ✓ Personalize your story
- ✓ Think strategically
- ✓ Do not answer reporters' questions, respond to them



General Tips: Before the Interview

- ✓ Know your audience and the outlets (watch the show, research the reporter's past work, understand who reads, watches, listens)
- ✓ Know deadlines and honor them
- ✓ Know the interview format and prepare yourself for the specific type of interview
- ✓ Prepare for distractions and interruptions
- ✓ Think through what questions you can expect to be asked, especially the 'harsh' or 'negative' questions you can anticipate
- ✓ Think about what 'the opposition' will say
- ✓ Find the emotions that fit the situation and use them; articulate your anger, don't emote it
- ✓ You hold the power in this situation; don't be intimidated



General Interview Tips: Before the Interview

- ✓ Control the interview
- ✓ Think about multiple angles, pegs and hooks
- ✓ Know your talking points and be well practiced; practice in front of the mirror, in front of your friends and if possible even in front of a camera
- ✓ Ask the reporter a series of questions before you begin
- ✓ What kind of story is planned? (how long, what angle, etc)
- ✓ What topics will be discussed?
- ✓ Who else is being interviewed?
- ✓ When will it run?



General Tips: During the Interview

- ✓ Remember you have something important to say
- ✓ Build up your self-confidence and project confidence in the interview.
- ✓ Remember that this is your interview, the reporter needs you for the story
- ✓ There is no such thing as 'off the record' and no such thing as 'off camera' remarks
- ✓ Avoid 'No Comment'
- ✓ It is okay not to know the answer, but refer them to someone who does, and then tell them what you want them to know



General Tips: During the Interview

- ✓ Don't try to explain everything, use your sound bites and stay on message
- ✓ Don't be thrown off by the question; "discipline" the message
- ✓ Turn the questions back on the messages
- ✓ Don't answer the question, respond by speaking your talking points
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly and avoid pause words ('um' 'like' 'uh') -- every blink, twitch and 'um' or 'uh' is magnified



General Tips: During the Interview

- ✓ When preparing to answer: Stop, Breathe, Relax, Think, Speak!
- ✓ When answering: Listen, Respond, Expand (ONLY if necessary), STOP!
- ✓ It is not your job to answer the reporter's questions; it is your job to deliver your message
- ✓ Don't try to explain everything; stay on your key points
- ✓ Use 'background' if you need to discuss complex details that aren't in quotable sound bite form, invoke it 'let me go into some background here for details on that' and devoke 'I can come out of background now and give you a bite on this'



General Tips: During the Interview

- ✓ Don't repeat the reporter's questions or phrases
- ✓ Remember that you set the pace and tone of the interview
- ✓ You can often determine the time, place and length of an interview
- ✓ Don't do your opponents' job for them
- ✓ Remember the audience is the target, not the reporter!
- ✓ Don't worry, the movement will not collapse if you mess up a sound bite
- ✓ Keep love in your heart, and let it come through in your interview. Let your integrity show!



General Tips: During the Interview

The “Flag” Technique

For signaling importance of key messages, employ the “flag” technique. Use a phrase that alerts the listener that this is the part that really matters

- ✓ The most important thing is...
- ✓ The story no one is telling is...
- ✓ The only way is...
- ✓ Anyone who cares about fighting stroke should know that....



General Tips: After the Interview

- ✓ Thank the reporter
- ✓ Re-evaluate your talking points and frames based on results!
- ✓ Leverage the interview! What can you do with the print/audio/video to further your goals?



General Tips: Situations to Avoid

- ✓ Excessive, distracting hand gestures
- ✓ Tapping a foot or pen, swaying or jiggling your body
- ✓ Pause words (um, uh, like)
- ✓ Reiterating the opposition



General Tips: Behavioral Centering

- ✓ Determine what triggers you, and what occurs (i.e., teeth grit, fists clench, sweat, knot in stomach or throat)
- ✓ Create a mental cue to get you back on track (visualize someone you love, say a word, hold a stance)
- ✓ Practice getting triggered, noticing it, stopping and creating the cue, multiple times
- ✓ Consider bringing an image or object with you on the interview that is connected to your cue to get back on track



Print Interviews: Standing Up During an Event

- ✓ Ask the reporter about the type and length of story they are doing, who else they are talking to. Use this chance to shape the story
- ✓ Provide supporting background materials for the story (ie: press kit)
- ✓ Make sure your location is optimal for a focused interview
- ✓ If there is no photographer with the reporter, discuss options for getting them images to go with the story
- ✓ Stop for sirens, planes and other loud noise. Start over at the beginning of your talking points when the noise subsides
- ✓ Offer reporter suggestions for others who can complete the story



Print Interviews: Coffee or Lunch with the Reporter

- ✓ Know how long you have, and take some time to get to know them, ask how they work, what they like to do, what would make them cover your issues etc.

- ✓ Remember there is no such thing as 'off the record'



General Broadcast Tips: Sounding Conversational

- ✓ It is not a conversation, but use a conversational tone
- ✓ Speak genuinely, credibly
- ✓ Consider getting a second opinion from someone outside your circle about the clarity of your message. Does it make sense to them? What other details are important?
- ✓ Speak to the audience. Understand who reads, watches, listens and why



General Interview Tips: sounding conversational

- ✓ Add personal inflection

- ✓ Make sure not to speak too quickly

- ✓ Speak at a normal volume, stress key points by raising your intensity level and pitch, NOT your voice

- ✓ Vary the tone, intonation and word emphasis

- ✓ Vary the dynamics: pitch, speed, volume and emphasis
Listen to yourself and get to know what you sound like.

- ✓ If you would like to sound a little different, practice imitating those voices that please you

- ✓ Expand your vocal range. The wider your range, the more colorful and interesting your delivery



General Broadcast Tips: Maximize Your Voice

- ✓ Shake your body to loosen up and bring your energy present
- ✓ Make noises to wake up your vocal chords, jaws, tongue and lips
- ✓ Breathe deeply. Expand your stomach on the inhale and tighten on the exhale
- ✓ Maintain good posture
- ✓ Practice, practice, practice and enjoy the process



General Broadcast Tips

- ✓ For live interviews, focus on bridging
- ✓ For taped interviews, focus on flagging
- ✓ Assume you are always on the air, no off the cuff remarks
- ✓ If you are being taped, stop if you make a mistake and tell them you would like to start over
- ✓ Have a timepiece close by so you can monitor the time



Radio Interviews: General Tips

- ✓ Clarity, intensity and emotion make compelling radio
- ✓ Don't answer the interviewer's question—respond with your message
- ✓ Speak in sound bites
- ✓ Feel free to have notes in front of you to remind you of your talking points, key facts and figures. Don't shuffle the papers



Radio Interviews: General Tips

- ✓ Translate statistics and numbers: 1/3 is better than 33.3%
- ✓ Create a comparison with something meaningful (time, geography) “enough tobacco to fill Giants’ Stadium to the rim”; “a stack of dollar bills from here to the moon”; “during the course of this interview forty two people will die from stroke
- ✓ For more info, refer listeners to your website, say it twice: **www.world-strokecampaign.org**



Radio Interviews: Taped or Over the Phone

- ✓ Conduct phone interviews from a quiet office, turn off your cell phone and other noisy objects around you
- ✓ Confirm in advance whether the questions will be heard by listeners (such as a talk show or news magazine format) or whether they will edit in only your answers between commentary (such as a public radio news piece)
- ✓ Don't do radio interviews from a cordless or cell phone (if it is a call in from the field cell is ok, but tell the reporters where you are and be descriptive!)



Radio Interviews: Taped or Over the Phone

- ✓ If you make a mistake, stop and let them know you would like to begin again

- ✓ If the reporter doesn't ask you at the end if there is anything else you'd like to add. Ask if you can make a final comment and then give it one more go with your sound bite



Radio Interviews: Live, Over the Phone with Call Ins

- ✓ Organize supporters to call in during the interview and ask questions that prompt your points
- ✓ Don't let a hostile caller anger or fluster you
- ✓ Kindly acknowledge the caller's questions (possibly even by name)



Radio Interviews: Live or Taped Debate Format

- ✓ Return to behavioral centering and be careful with volume and tone. Don't be afraid to interrupt the host/other guest, be assertive to make your points and get equal time, but be civil, it is a balance
- ✓ Make YOUR points, not your opposition's and stay on your message, don't get led off track by the direction of the debate
- ✓ If the opposition or the host is hostile, be reasonable and calm. It is the best way to disarm them and look like you have the moral high ground



Radio Interviews: In-studio

- ✓ Ask for help adjusting the microphone, ask how to speak into it properly
- ✓ Use the headphones
- ✓ Watch your posture, sit still
- ✓ Find the 'cough' button and use it if you need to drink, clear your throat, move papers



Radio Interviews: Stand up during an event

- ✓ Ask the reporter about the type, length of show, story they are doing, who else they are talking. Use this chance to shape/frame the story
- ✓ Provide supporting background materials (ie: press kit)
- ✓ Make sure your location is optimal (quiet or with appropriate background noise—think like a producer)
- ✓ Stop for sirens, planes, etc and start over at the BEGINNING of your talking points when the noise subsides
- ✓ Offer reporter suggestions for others that can create the complete story (again, think like a producer)



Television Interview Composure

- ✓ If standing, stand straight but not rigid, avoid shifting from one foot to the other
- ✓ Clasp hands in front or behind you, or on the podium (not in pockets)
- ✓ If sitting, sit up straight a few inches away from the back of the chair. Ladies watch your skirt and men sit on your jacket so it remains straight
- ✓ Avoid fidgeting and excessive hand motions, don't tap your foot or your pen and don't touch the mike
Natural hand gestures that don't distract are ok
- ✓ Don't be distracted by the reporter, the equipment or crew



Television Interview Taped Stand-up: Inside or Outdoors

- ✓ Discuss with the crew how long you have for the interview
- ✓ Look at the interviewer, not into the camera
- ✓ Look at the same place throughout the interview, avoid looking shifty by not moving your eyes around
- ✓ If you are NOT live, it is ok to stop if you make a mistake and start over again



Television Interview: Taped Stand-up: Inside or Outdoors

- ✓ If there is no interviewer, just a camera, have a person you like with you to stand in the spot where you need to look and have eye contact with someone who calms you (they can also offer to hold the microphone for the interview)
- ✓ Avoid squinting, set up the shot so the sun isn't in your eyes
- ✓ Think like a producer, are there visuals you want behind you? A baby to hold? A prop that makes sense? You can even ask how the shot will be cropped
- ✓ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll'



Television Interviews Live Stand up Format

- ✓ Ask in advance how long your 'live shot' will last and practice a sound bite for that length
- ✓ Look at the interviewer, not into the camera
- ✓ Ask the on-camera (or remote) reporter what they will be asking you in advance
- ✓ Don't do this format unless you are really ready, and have practiced in high pressure situations in advance



Television Interviews: Talk Show or Magazine Format

- ✓ Know who else will be on the show, be clear that you want to be advised of any last minute changes
- ✓ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll' (additional footage for the story) and discuss the visual elements of the show in advance
- ✓ Assume you are ALWAYS ON, always being broadcast, even before your segment begins or when host is talking with other guests



Television Interviews: Live or On-tape by satellite

- ✓ Know who else will be on the show, be clear that you want to be advised of any last minute changes
- ✓ Ask in advance about supplying 'b-roll' (additional footage for the story) and discuss the visual elements of the show in advance
- ✓ Look directly into the camera or just alongside it at the wall (ask the camera operator!)
- ✓ Often you are alone with the camera person in a room staring at nothing, so bring a photo of a loved one or something inspirational



Television Interviews: Documentary or Long-Format News

- ✓ There is no such thing as off the record in these scenarios, and no such thing as 'off-camera' even when the camera is off!
- ✓ Think like the producer, where should/shouldn't the camera go? What frames the story as you would want? Consider creating some limits and set the terms of when the crew can and can't be with you
- ✓ Don't do this format unless you are really ready, and have practiced in high-pressure situations in advance