



CANADIAN
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CANADIENNE
DE PSYCHOLOGIE



INTERVIEWS, HASHTAGS, AND OP-EDS



NOVEMBER 2021



A Psychologist's Guide
to Working With the Media



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**“THE SPEED OF
COMMUNICATIONS IS
WONDROUS TO BEHOLD.
IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT
SPEED CAN MULTIPLY
THE DISTRIBUTION OF
INFORMATION THAT WE
KNOW TO BE
UNTRUE.”**

- Edward R. Murrow, 1964





Look at this quote for a moment, and think to yourself – is it accurate? Do you believe Edward R. Murrow said exactly this? Or even, is it attributed to the correct person? We see so many quotes from famous figures that either never happened, or are misattributed, that it has become something of a frustrating exercise to find even a quote to insert into an essay, an op-ed, or a presentation.

In this case, the quote is accurate – Murrow said this during his last public speech in 1964, when he received the Family of Man Award from The Protestant Council of New York. To determine the accuracy, we searched 21 websites (all quote aggregators) to try to find the source of the quote. Once we found it, we searched for the transcript of that speech, in order to be certain, that the quote had been lifted accurately. Such is the current online media landscape through which the average person must navigate in order to be sure of the veracity of what they are reading. Most people do not navigate this well. Thankfully, there are many responsible news networks, driven by journalistic integrity, that can cut through this, and function as a shorthand for credibility.

Edward R. Murrow died in 1965 and did not live to see the explosion in media that has resulted in our current landscape. The advent of 24-hour news channels in the early 80s, the creation of ideologically driven major news networks in the late 90s, and the social media explosion of the past decade. Today, traditional media is becoming increasingly centralized as local newspapers and independently run radio and TV stations are becoming less and less common. Meanwhile, social media has expanded the reach of the average person and added hundreds of millions of voices and platforms to our media landscape.

It can be overwhelming. So much so that it can be tempting to check out altogether. After all – there are a hundred million voices, and so many of them are in their own media bubbles. What difference can I make, and why would I want to add to the noise? We encourage you to participate, as the voices of experts can be enormously impactful when it comes to conversations around the issues most important to Canadian citizens, and people all over the world. The science, practice and education of psychology, which is primarily about human behaviour, is relevant to almost any piece of public policy or topic of public concern.

Psychologists, more than most other experts, can add depth and gravitas to an incredibly wide array of topics. Most major news outlets will seek out scientists who can speak to one subject in particular, and also to those who may provide insight into that subject's impact on people. For example, immunologists and virologists were the first people journalists sought out during the COVID-19 pandemic – followed very closely by psychologists.

Media companies tend to be behemoths. Individual media outlets, and reporters, are not. Respectable media outlets are in search of factual information, truth, and insight, and a request for an interview is not going to involve questions designed to trip you up. The media, by and large, is not untrustworthy nor is it an adversary. It is a tool that you can use to disseminate science, advice, and hope, based on your own considerable expertise. This guide is designed to help you do just that.

**“TO BE PERSUASIVE WE
MUST BE BELIEVABLE;
TO BE BELIEVABLE WE
MUST BE CREDIBLE;
TO BE CREDIBLE WE
MUST BE TRUTHFUL.
IT IS AS SIMPLE
AS THAT.”**



- Edward R. Murrow, Speaking as the Director of USIA, in testimony before a Congressional Committee (May 1963)

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INTRODUCTION

Factors Interfering with Effective Communication

The general public, by and large, is not science literate. Only 5% of the general population can fully understand a science story, such as that contained in the pages of a national news magazine. In fact, even university science majors, at very reputable institutions, have been shown to have difficulty clearly defining DNA or distinguishing between Astrology and Astronomy.

The public's retention of specific scientific information is relatively short. Only 2 weeks after the average science story has aired or has been in print, much of it has been forgotten.

Science can be intimidating for the average person. It may be viewed as fascinating, and useful, but it may also be viewed as “beyond” them and, as such, irrelevant to their lives.

The general public has been shown to have a surprisingly strong belief in unscientific concepts, such as psychic phenomena. “Scientific fact” is often not the first choice among the information sound bytes retained or believed.

The average person is inundated today with information from a variety of sources – some reliable and some decidedly unreliable. It has been shown, time and again, that most of us have a lot of trouble distinguishing between real, factual news and misinformation or propaganda. Contrarian, false, and unscientific opinions presented in the guise of expertise can travel much further, and much faster, than factual information on social media.

Many science stories are presented in such a manner that the average person does not relate to them. The science story is seen as providing abstract information that does not have, nor will ever have, much impact on their life.

Psychology is one of the many scientific disciplines attempting to convey information to an audience that can be hard to reach, has trouble distinguishing between expertise and disinformation, and is not very science-literate. What follows are some strategies for cutting through some of the noise in order to make a maximal impact from a media appearance.

MAKE THE STORY...

1. New
2. Interesting
3. Relevant
4. Understandable
5. Memorable

Factors Facilitating Effective Communication

Make the story **new**. The information should add something to the existing knowledge base. Whether it is a new perspective on a familiar topic, or the release of revolutionary findings, the public's interest is heightened when new material is presented, or old material is presented in a new way.

Make the story **interesting**. Phrase brief statements and answers in such a way as to make the audience want more. You need to “hook” the audience from the very opening line; make it brief and direct. For example, Dr. Smith: “We now look at depression in a very different way.” Interviewer: “Is that right, how have things changed, Dr.?” For longer answers, concise and powerful language goes a long way – if your appearance gets shared with a wider audience, usually online, maybe just one of the ten longer answers you gave during the interview will resonate. Make sure each answer has a chance to do this.

Make the story **relevant**. The public must be able to relate to the topic. Today's traditional media focuses heavily on “storytelling”. People are more likely to remember a story than to retain scientific information from a study or literature. When preparing for an interview, see if you can find a way to include a story – this could be a personal one (“my child is 13, and apprehensive about returning to school because...”) or a hypothetical one (“imagine you're a soldier returning from a deployment in Afghanistan, and your partner is at home recovering from a serious car crash. Both parties have PTSD...”) This not only ‘humanizes’ a concept for a general audience but tends to force you to think in simpler language and less technical terms.



INTRODUCTION

Make the story **understandable**. Most of us are so used to talking among our colleagues that we either talk in virtual “telegraphic speech”, or we engage in scientific jargon. For example, “well, the MANOVA was conducted with the view that the three cognitive underpinnings of this phenomenon were not orthogonal, and therefore, the degree of inter-correlations among these variables were taken into account...”. The average person will not find this statement meaningful. Present your message in a brief, clear, and jargon-free manner. For example, “we found that there was no connection between age, test scores and history of mental illness. Older adults could score high or low and both young and old people were equally likely to experience depression.” A media interview is not the same as presenting a conference paper before 125 colleagues in your speciality area, who have a different degree of expertise. Being super-precise with your answer, in an effort to be as accurate as possible, risks being unmeaningful to a lay audience. For example, if your research deals with children between the ages of 11-17, it is not necessary to specify this cohort multiple times. Just saying “youth” is okay, and understandable to the public.

Make the story **memorable**. The timeline of a science story in traditional media is short, with limited recall of science facts after just 2 weeks. That two-week timeline may be shorter now, as social media can overwhelm the story with other noise. Do not try to fit in the last 15 years and the next 5 years of your work in one interview! Stick to one or two key points and stay with them. There is no need to cite all the different viewpoints. Provide concise and memorable statements. If you can clearly convey one idea and it is retained by your audience beyond 2 weeks, you have achieved a rare feat!

Achieving a Balance

You ultimately want to achieve a balance. You want to “hook” the audience, making it stand up and take notice. You need to provide interesting, but credible and accurate information, information that is sufficient in volume and depth that the audience learned something new, but also simple and brief enough that they can understand and remember it. Each successful interview brings with it another request from the media to speak more about what you are doing, and about what you know. Remember you do have something interesting to say and there are people who want to hear it. Psychology is among a selected class of disciplines that already has the public ear and eye! The disciplines of Health, Medicine, Psychology and Sociology are rated by the public today as the most interesting topic areas, about which it wants to learn more.

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THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

BACKGROUND

There are three major types of media: Radio and Podcasts, Print (Online) and Television and Streaming Services (like YouTube). The basic strategies to facilitate a successful interview in all three media are reviewed below: Pre-Interview, Interview, and Post-Interview. Strategies that are specific to radio and television will also be addressed. In the final section, strategies related to preparation of self-initiated submissions to the online/print media (Commentary, Letters to the Editor) will be presented.

The 11 'BE's'

1. Prepared
2. Identified
3. Yourself
4. Clear
5. Brief
6. Honest
7. Personable
8. Sincere
9. Positive
10. Confident
11. Focused

PRE-INTERVIEW – GENERAL

Be Prepared. Give yourself time to consider the major points you want to make and stick to them. Ask what the timeline is for the story or interview. Offer to check some facts, and to call back in a few minutes. If you cannot do the interview, say why (insufficient time, not your area of expertise) and, if possible, offer the name of a colleague who is knowledgeable about the topic. Ask the reporter about the exact subject of the interview and the intended angle. Ask whether you alone will be interviewed. If others are interviewed, ask who they will be, what is the nature of their background (e.g., psychologist, social worker, physician), and prepare accordingly.

Remember that interviews are designed to be spontaneous, and reporters usually will not have their questions prepared in advance. After gathering your thoughts, or checking with others in your organization, list the two or three most important points you want to make. Then call the interviewer back. Respect the deadline to which the reporter or interviewer must adhere.

If you expect to face difficult questions, you might want to conduct a “mock interview” in advance. Have a friend or colleague throw some questions at you and gauge your response. They can help you determine if your answers are understandable, direct, and appropriate. If you are not used to working with media, an exercise like this can help you feel more comfortable in front of the camera or behind a microphone when the time comes. A “mock” interview or Q&A can also help you develop some key messages that you want to deliver and assist you in “staying on message” when questions from an interviewer might seem to be coming out of left field. Depending on timelines and availability of resource, you can also contact the CPA with any specific questions or concerns you might have as you prepare.

THE INTERVIEW — GENERAL

Be Identified: Psychologists are often identified in news stories as John Smith, “Research scientist” at Tech Institute or Dr. Jane Jones “of the psychiatry department” of Provincial University. Clinicians are often referred to as “therapist”. In each of these situations, the role of the psychologist has been obscured. It is up to you to specify to the interviewer your title, affiliation, and special field of expertise. To receive proper identification you can, in all correspondence with a reporter, reiterate your preferred title (“Dr.”, “Social Psychologist”, “Clinical Psychologist”, “Psychology Professor”). During the interview itself you can:

- Preface one of your answers with “As a psychologist, I have found that...”.
- Give your provincial/territorial, regional or national organization visibility. For example, if the President or CEO of the CPA has asked you to speak to the issue on the association’s behalf, “I am a member of the Canadian Psychological Association Committee on _____, that is examining this issue. We are concerned that...”.

Some media may have guidelines in the use of honorifics. For example, some reserve the title “Dr.” for physicians. It is good to establish from the get-go how you wanted to be referred to in the interview. It can be helpful to quote the Canadian Press Stylebook <https://www.thecanadianpress.com/writing-guide/stylebook/> which advances use of the title “Dr.” to those health care professionals who have earned access to that title. When using the earned title “Dr.” to refer to a healthcare professional, media

THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

may provide further clarification by saying “Psychologist, Dr. Smith” or dentist, Dr. Jones”. The use of the title “Dr.” for an expert who is not a healthcare professional, but who has an earned doctorate, is inconsistent. If a university professor, Professor may be the honorific use. In either case (licensed healthcare professional or holder of an earned doctorate), use of the title may also depend on its relevance to the subject of the story. For example, you may not be referred to as psychologist Dr. Jones if you are being interviewed about your child’s little league victory.

Be Yourself: Relax and be natural. Do not think of yourself as speaking to a large audience. Focus on having a conversation with just one person, the interviewer.

Be Clear: Speak to the lay person. Use common everyday words. Avoid technical or scientific jargon.

Be Brief: Keep your remarks brief, clear, and to the point. Clear, concise answers ensure that the quotes attributed to you are accurate and in context. They are also more likely to reach an internet audience with a short attention span. Outline as you speak. For example, “What is most important about my study is...” or “We have benefited from these findings in three big ways. First,”

Be Honest: If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. Never compromise your credibility. For example, “That is an interesting question. However, we do not have the answer at present.” Or, “I would rather not speculate on that, as it is a pretty specific situation with which I’m not directly familiar.” NEVER say “no comment” or flatly refuse to answer a question, as it will cost you credibility with the audience and make the interview appear adversarial even if it is not.

Be Personable: Use personal stories or anecdotes to highlight your comments. Appropriate use of humour also can help you relax and give you a self-assured and positive image.

Be Sincere: Do not be afraid to show your natural concern on an issue. However, do not confuse sincerity with an overly emotional position on the issue. You may appear biased.

Be Positive: Never repeat a negative. Interviewer: “Dr., why has your research failed to solve this problem?” Dr. Smith: “My research has not failed.” In this exchange, Dr. Smith sounds defensive, and the audience will have heard on two occasions that his research has been

associated with failure. Rephrase the question. For example, Dr. Smith: “My research has expanded our understanding of ...” or “this is a complex problem which can be solved only by a collaboration between a number of experts. My research has been one step along that road, in that it...”

Be Confident: Relax and remember that you know more about your subject than the interviewer. Use this self-assurance to help you stay on target with your goals.

Be Focused: Make the interview issue-driven and not question-driven. Try to make it a conversation with open-ended responses, rather than a direct question-and-answer session. The question-and-answer format is likely to yield questions that will not be worded in such a way that you can convey your message efficiently and to your satisfaction.



INTERVIEW – TELEVISION AND RADIO

Once you have been called by a producer for a possible appearance, there are steps you can take to help ensure a successful booking and interview.

The Screening: This is your first contact with the show, so it is important that you be as prepared as possible. The pre-interview is usually conducted by a researcher, an associate producer, or producer. The point of the pre-interview is to determine whether you really are the person they wish to interview, and to explore possible angles on the topic, depending on your answers to their questions.

Ask about the specific direction that the interview will take and about who will be interviewed with you. Offer to call the interviewer back after you have had a chance to gather your facts and to select the main points that you want to get across. Since producers work on tight deadlines, you should call back with your information the same day, preferably within a few hours.

The Booking: On the basis of your pre-interview, the producer decided that you were the best possible person for the interview. Tell the producer how you would like to be addressed “Dr.,” “Clinical Psychologist,” “Industrial/Organizational Psychologist,” “Professor,” or other speciality. State your desire to be addressed by your preferred title.

The Interview: Be yourself and show your natural personality. Interject an appropriate level of emotion or passion into your voice to tell people you believe what you say. Try not to interrupt the interviewer. End your statements definitively so that the interviewer will know when to speak. If you are on a panel with other experts (each one competing for “airtime”), do not wait until a question is directed to you before you respond. You were invited on the program because of your experience. You should participate and raise important points or clarify ones just made by another panelist, when appropriate.



THE INTERVIEW — TELEVISION IN STUDIO

Ask that your highest academic degree be included when your name appears on the screen. It is a good idea to double check with the producer once you have arrived at the studio to find out how you will be identified on the screen. Mistakes are often made.

- Use natural hand gestures and facial expressions to highlight your points.
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer.
- Do not look directly into the camera.
- Stay alert physically, even when you are not talking. The camera may still be on you.
- Do not watch the monitor. There is usually a time delay between the picture and your voice. This asynchrony will become very distracting. You may lose your train of thought.
- Ignore cameras and people moving in the studio.
- Lean forward slightly in your chair. Do not swivel about.
- Rest hands naturally in your lap.
- Assume that your microphone is always “live”, even during cutaways to commercials.
- Once the interview is over, remain seated as you were and wait for instructions from the producer or interviewer.

Clothing. You should avoid white, deep reds, bold prints, stripes and dots, or colours that are too light or too dark. These will take the attention away from you and what you are saying. Conservative, well-tailored clothes are always a definite plus.

Accessories. Large jewellery is distracting and should not be worn. Likewise, cuff links or tie clasps can often flare and create distortions on the screen. Other items to avoid include hats, which cause harsh shadows, and self-darkening glasses, which darken under TV lights and give the appearance that you are “hiding” from public view.

Makeup. A make-up artist may or may not be provided for you. Wear normal daytime makeup, using conservative eye and lip colours with a good base. Avoid blue, lavender and green eyeshadows or lipstick containing blue, which can sometimes cause makeup to disappear on the air. If you want to hide a five o'clock shadow, reduce forehead shine or a receding hairline, you might want to consider a light application of corn silk or translucent powder.


INTERVIEW – VIRTUAL (ZOOM, SKYPE, ETC.)

Background. Your background should be simple – but not empty. A tidy bookshelf, a plant or two, and some trinkets are good to have. Your background ideally should be 60% blank wall space or empty room. Do not use a virtual background, as the distortion it creates can be very distracting for a viewer.

Where to Look. In this case, you want to look directly into the camera. In a Zoom or Skype situation, that usually means that the interviewer is on screen as well, and when you look at the interviewer you are actually looking into the camera. You may have to elevate your laptop or desktop to ensure you are looking straight ahead into the camera. If you have notes to which you want to refer, and you need to be looking at those notes while you speak, it is better to have them on that same screen. If you are referring to printed notes, you are likely to be looking down too often. It is okay to pull up your notes even if you can no longer see the interviewer – you can still hear them, and you will be speaking directly to them (and to the audience). Just make sure that your notes are not obscuring the camera's view of you.

Connection. Make sure you have a good internet connection to avoid a choppy interview. The producers of the show will almost certainly go over this with you before your appearance. The closer you are to your wi-fi router, the better the connection will be. To be absolutely sure of a strong signal, a hardwired internet connection to your device is preferred.

- 
1. Keep Your Background Simple
 2. Look Directly into the Camera
 3. Make Sure Your Internet Connection is Good
 4. Remove Any Distractions



**“ASK
THAT YOUR
HIGHEST ACADEMIC
DEGREE BE INCLUDED
WHEN YOUR NAME
APPEARS ON THE
SCREEN. DOUBLE CHECK
WITH THE PRODUCER AS
MISTAKES ARE OFTEN
MADE”**

Video-Conferencing Software/Application. Make sure you know which video-conferencing software or application will be used for the interview and ensure you have the most up-to-date version installed on your computer and/or that you have all the credentials needed to sign into the software.

Distractions. Ensure that anything that might distract you during the interview is out of the way (e.g., do not keep the TV on, even on mute. Move pets to another room.) Minimize background noise (close the door to the room, do not run a fan, etc.) Make sure your phone is on silent and on another table – if it is on vibrate and goes off while you are speaking, viewers will hear it.

INTERVIEW – RADIO OR PODCAST

The audience is relying on only one sense; what you say and how you say it becomes even more important.

Phone Interviews

- Turn off your radio to prevent feedback. Ensure that the background noise in your location is at a minimum (wait a few minutes to start laundry, or the dishwasher. Close the door to your office.)
- Keep the telephone receiver 1 inch from your mouth for all answers to avoid changes in volume.
- Sit in an upright position. This allows better control of your voice and prevents you from becoming “too comfortable”.
- Avoid using “uh” sounds. It is better to take a slightly longer pause before answering the question.

In-Studio Interviews

- If you have the choice, you may want to choose to stand to speak into the microphone rather than sitting. This allows for better voice control.
- The producer or host of the show will adjust your microphone (placement, distance, and volume controls) so do not fiddle with the buttons.

For Regular Appearances

- You can improve your performance over time. If it becomes a regular thing for you to appear on radio or podcasts, you can review your performance and adjust it going forward.
- Almost all of us have verbal crutches. These are words we say, almost unconsciously, as we prepare an answer in our mind. If, in reviewing your tape, you find yourself starting many sentences with “basically...” or “yeah, no”, or something like this, be conscious of it going forward.
- If you notice that certain letters create a cracking sound when you say them (usually “p” is the letter with which people have the most trouble. That is why radio hosts are always very conscious of ‘popping p’s’), try adjusting your position relative to the microphone. Rather than speaking directly into the mic, try being a little bit off-centre, which reduces the “popping” effect.

INTERVIEW — PRINT

Most print interviews will be conducted over the phone or via email. If the story has a longer time to print, review the points in “The Basics”, regarding interview preparation.

The Questions: Most journalists will not provide questions in advance for a phone interview, since this practice detracts from spontaneity and can turn what was supposed to be an interview into a speech on your part. Lacking the questions beforehand should not deter you from agreeing to an interview. For example, you can ask in advance about the specific line of questioning and the ultimate direction or angle the interview will take. It is permissible to ask for extra time to compose an answer to a difficult question, provided you call the reporter back promptly. You may also recommend a colleague whom you feel can better respond on the issue. If you have an afterthought, do not hesitate to contact the reporter. Good journalists are interested in all the facts. However, do not follow-up with a call unless your information is truly important. For an email interview, the questions will be sent to you, and you can take your time crafting accurate and poignant responses – just keep in mind the reporter’s deadline.

Editing Power: As a “source” you are rarely given the opportunity to read a story before it appears in print. It is even more rare to be given the opportunity for editing. Offering to read a story, or to have portions or quotes read back to you as a check for accuracy is helpful but should be reserved for exceptional cases, such as where the reporter is dealing with highly complex information. Remember, a demand to do so accomplishes little. In lieu of “editing” power, there are precautions you can take. Before the interview, determine if there are any controversial or easily misinterpreted aspects of the topic. Roughly frame



THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

your answers in these areas beforehand. During the interview, emphasize to the reporter how important such points are. Assert the fact that your information may be inaccurate if stated another way.

Shaping the Interview: Selecting your main points in advance and sticking to them is a key to any successful interview. But the competent journalist, particularly the experienced science and health writer, also has a series of answers to extract during your meeting. Aggressively trying to steer the reporter away from their main line of questioning can dampen the overall outcome of your interview. Whenever you can supply new facts, insightful information, and a fresh perspective, you are as much in control of the meeting as is necessary.



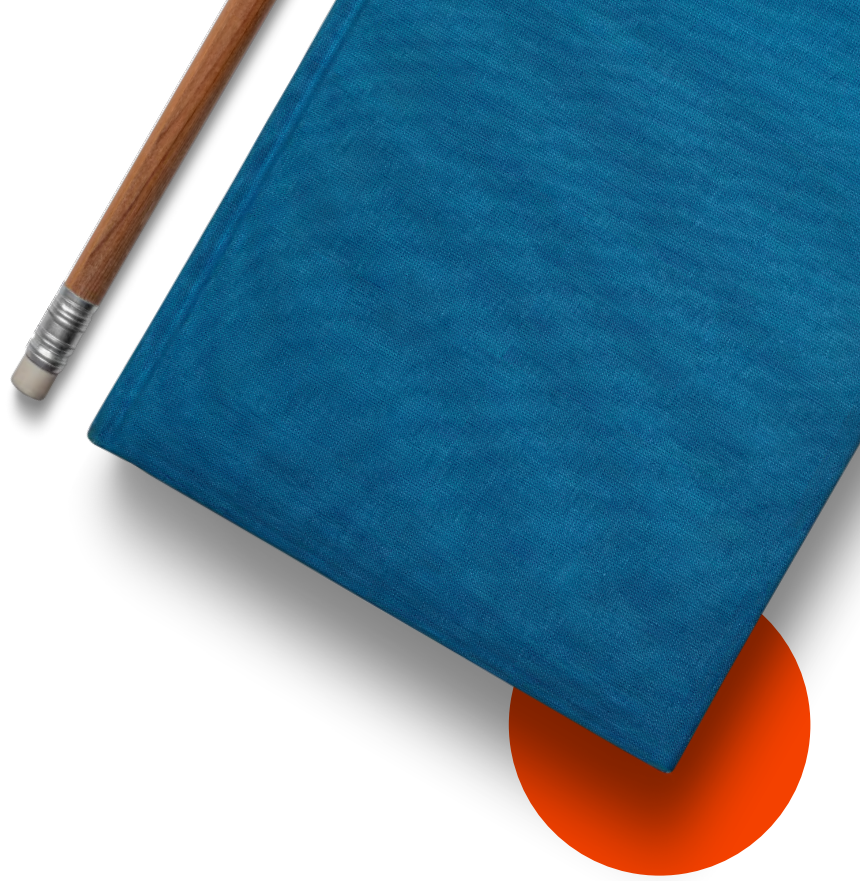
POST-INTERVIEW

It is totally appropriate to ask when the radio or television interview will be broadcasted (if not live), or to ask when it may appear in print. The date you are given may be just an estimate. Unless your interview is tied to a breaking news event or a scheduled investigative report, it is often used as a “filler”. Your interview can be bumped to allow the presentation of a more pressing breaking news story, as judged by the news editor. It is reasonable to ask for a copy of the print story. Very often, radio and television will provide a copy of your interview even if it aired live and has not appeared online. You can request this for your own files – if you want to share it with others, state this in your request for full transparency. Almost all media outlets will allow you to share your appearance as you see fit, no questions asked.

As a follow-up to your interview, you may want to communicate with the reporter or producer. If you liked the article or segment, send a note with your appreciation and willingness to be contacted on similar stories. If you did not like it, do not overreact. Keep in mind that a story for the general public cannot be as comprehensive or detailed as a journal article or a podcast appearance. Most stories will not adversely affect either your integrity or that of the organization you are representing. You will have other interviews. Simply send a note to the reporter expressing your concern. Letters of concern are most effective and best received if they are polite.

While most people may feel more nervous doing a live interview, the upside is that in a live interview, what you say is what is broadcast. In print or pre-recorded interviews, it is possible that only parts of what you said will be included. A sentence or two out of context may lose your intended meaning.

Only in cases where there has been a **significant** misrepresentation of your views should you call the reporter and politely note the error and ask for an immediate correction. Telephone the editor if you do not get a satisfactory answer, and follow-up with a letter. But reserve this response only for serious misrepresentations. If after several interviews you have concerns about the reporting style and accuracy of a particular reporter, you should notify the editor and indicate that you will be available for interviews but not with that particular reporter and note the reasons for this decision. The media needs feedback as well. Remember – **the media is your vehicle to the public. Treat it with respect.**



“IT IS TOTALLY APPROPRIATE TO ASK WHEN THE RADIO OR TELEVISION INTERVIEW WILL BE BROADCASTED (IF NOT LIVE), OR TO ASK WHEN IT MAY APPEAR IN PRINT”

SUBMITTING A COMMENTARY OR LETTER

Commentary. You may have occasion to initiate a story. You may think that the public would benefit from a psychological perspective on a particular topic. For example, you may wish to write a commentary on a new diagnostic tool or treatment that has received popular media attention, or you may wish to revisit an “old topic”, the resolution of which has not been achieved. The most common venue for such a commentary would (traditionally) be newsprint. News magazines typically do not invite lengthy commentary, except for letters to the editor. Often newspapers have columns such as Voice of the People, Opinion, or more generally, Letters to the Editor. The space allotted for a commentary will vary according to the editorial policy of the newspaper, the importance of the topic, and frankly, the perceived importance of the author. However, commentaries are generally in the range of 750–900 words maximum. Longer commentaries than this will typically necessitate editing by senior editorial staff, about which you will have little to no input. Keep it brief, focused, and balanced. You want to be seen as an honest broker, one who is trying to assist the public in appreciating all the facts of an issue. You may give the commentary a brief, attention-grabbing title, but do not be surprised to see the editorial staff provide a title they think more appropriately fits the article and the audience to which it is intended.

Send an email of your commentary. This reduces time and cost for the newspaper and increases the likelihood that the commentary will be published as you wrote it, through reduced transcription errors. The editorial office will contact you if your article is thought to be of interest to the public. Submitting your commentary does not guarantee publication. The time of publication will depend on the timeline of the commentary. It will be published sooner if the topic is very current, hotly debated, and pending sufficient space available. Sometimes several weeks may pass, as the paper has already committed the space to other commentaries on different topics.

Letter. Letters to the editor are often published more quickly than a commentary, as the space requirements are not as demanding. The typical length of the letter is 100–300 words. However, the length is influenced by the same factors noted previously. Usually letters to the editor are in response to a more recently published topic, but not necessarily. Since no title is allotted, it is important to briefly note in the email subject line to what topic the letter is referring (e.g., “I would like to reply to the editorial of (date of article)”).

Self-Published Content. When you have a website, a blog, or a social media platform, you have the ability to reach people directly with an editorial or opinion piece on any given subject. Treat an advocacy post on one of these platforms the same way you would a commentary submitted to a newspaper. Once your commentary has been published on an online platform, it can still be submitted to a traditional publication, by directing the editorial team to a link of the post you wrote.

For more on publishing opinion pieces online, refer to the Social Media Posting Guide (**Page 19**)

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

During interactions with the media, your behaviour should be consistent with the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (CPA 4th Edition, 2017), the Practice Guidelines for Providers of Psychological Services (CPA, 2017), any applicable standards of practice determined by your provincial or territorial professional regulatory body, any requirements stipulated by your institution’s research ethics board and, if you have federal research funding, the Tri-Council Policies on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and on Data Management.

Comment only about the general topic of the interview; do not speak about or offer opinions on specific persons, groups or cases. For example, you have been

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THE MEDIA INTERVIEW

contacted to discuss clinical depression. The impetus for the interview relates to a recent report of a person who, charged with a criminal offence, is contending that the clinical depression was the reason for their behaviour. It is acceptable for you to talk in general terms about the influence clinical depression may have on behaviour. It would not be appropriate for you to discuss clinical depression as it relates specifically to the behaviour of that (or any) particular individual.

During an interview, you may be encouraged by the reporter to make specific comments about the subject of the news story. Under the guise of assisting the public, the reporter may try to make a clear link between your interview and the recent story about the person charged. Be alert! Remember, you have neither

interviewed nor treated this individual, and therefore you can only talk in general terms about what is known about the influence of clinical depression on behaviour. If you are being pressured by a reporter, you may need to remind the reporter of your ethical requirements, and your inability to comment on specific cases (you can tactfully use such phrases as “Although I cannot comment directly on this case, what we do know is ...”)

CALL THE CPA

For situations not covered in this pamphlet, consult with a member of CPA’s Communication team by calling the CPA Head Office at **1-613-237-2144** or toll-free **1-888-472-0657**. E-mail: media@cpa.ca



**THE MEDIA IS
YOUR VEHICLE
TO THE PUBLIC.
TREAT IT WITH
RESPECT**

SOCIAL MEDIA ADVOCACY GUIDE

1. Advocating for an issue about which you care deeply can be effective on social media. Your passion for this issue is likely to come through in your tweets, or Facebook posts, or TikTok videos. Be aware that everything you post on social media platforms is public and permanent, even with the strictest privacy settings on those accounts.
2. A hashtag is a good way to start an advocacy campaign – hashtags are a way for people to follow along with a particular topic and clicking on one is like clicking a hyperlink to all the posts that feature that same hashtag.
3. Guidelines for hashtags are – maximum of two on Twitter, maximum one on Facebook, and unlimited on Instagram and LinkedIn.
4. Make sure your hashtags are simple and read them over to make sure they say what you want them to say. A prime example of this was in 2012 when Susan Boyle's social media team celebrated an album release with the hashtag #susanalbumparty – it was too complicated and invited a lot of mockery...for reasons we'll let you figure out.
5. When your hashtag contains more than one word, capitalize each word in it. This is in large part because reading apps for the sight impaired will recognize the words better and they will be able to participate. It is also because #SusanAlbumParty would have avoided a lot of chaos.

A hashtag is a good way to start an advocacy campaign. But make sure they are simple and say what you want them to say. And make sure to read them over so you don't run into #badpublicity

6. Facebook and LinkedIn lend themselves better to longer, more in-depth posts about a subject. A good post on one of these platforms functions a lot like an op-ed in a traditional media source. The main difference is that you publish it yourself, and when it gets shared it is with your words and your profile. An op-ed will be shared with the newspaper or outlet's profile – but will likely have a larger reach as a respected news outlet is likely to have more followers and subscribers.
7. Instagram allows for longer posts as well, but the words are less important than the picture that goes with them. If you are advocating for a particular subject, consider putting a very small amount of text on that subject in the photo you share. Canva.com is a free and easy way to create this kind of graphic for all social media posts.
8. Twitter, with its 280-character limit, is more difficult to use for this kind of purpose. That said, a great tweet-thread can be the most effective way of communicating on social media. To create a longer post that won't fit in one tweet, all you have to do is reply to your own tweets with the next part of what you want to say. (Twitter now provides a "+" button in the tweet composer field – if you use that button multiple times, your thread will be published all at once instead of one tweet at a time.)
9. When constructing a good tweet thread, the key is for each tweet to contain its own phrase or idea. If you have something long to write, it's worth finding the logical break points in the piece, then editing each one to fit into its own tweet.

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING GUIDE

1. Following clients, students or research participants on Instagram, or becoming friends with them on Facebook, is not a good idea. If a client adds you, their therapist, as a friend, they may not be considering what that really means. You might be seeing parts of their life and activities as a result – things that the client may not want to share with you during a session, and that they haven't considered before sending the request. As a practitioner, there may also be things you want to post that you would not want a client to see. Having a client as a friend on those platforms could possibly affect the way you use the platform, the way you approach that client, and/or the way the client views you.
2. The same may be true of a student. Having a professor see a student's social media profile, or a student aware of all the things a professor does on theirs, has the potential to affect the teacher-student relationship in a number of unforeseen ways.
3. Never share client, student or research participant information, even as a blind item, on your social media.
4. Remember that everything you post to your social media is public and is also searchable, even with enhanced security and privacy settings. Your posts are likely to be seen by any prospective employer. They will also be seen by supervisors (in the case of graduate student applicants).
5. Remember that even liking or retweeting someone else's post is public. If you are using social media to market your work, your followers will be able to see the posts with which you have engaged from that platform. Avoid interacting with posts that could come across as unprofessional, or that you would have trouble explaining. Your political leanings, for example, are likely not going to be the same as those of all your clients, colleagues, or students.
6. Social media is a great way to build a network, connecting with other psychology researchers, educators, and practitioners. Twitter is especially good for academic connections, LinkedIn for professional development, and Facebook for keeping up with the latest news in the domain. Remember

1. It's best not to follow clients or students on SM
2. Never share client, student or research participant info on your SM
3. Never share client or student info on SM
4. Linking and Retweeting is public and searchable
5. Twitter is good for academic connections, LinkedIn for professional development and Facebook for the latest news
6. Re-configure your page to not receive Direct Messages

when interacting with other professionals in the field that everything they interact with is public as well.

7. Consider configuring your pages so that they do not receive direct messages. If you are using a social media platform as a business tool, make your contact information (email, phone number) very clear on your page. Existing clients and potential clients may try to reach out via direct message on social media. These interactions are not private, even direct messages that no one else sees, and it is a good idea to discourage people from including sensitive information in social media messages. An easy way to do this is to prevent those messages from being sent in this way to begin with.
8. Privacy settings on different platforms:
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Twitter](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [TikTok](#)
 - [Google](#)
 - [YouTube](#)



INTERVIEWS, HASHTAGS, AND OP-ED'S

A Psychologist's Guide
to Working With the Media

CANADIAN
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