



Survivor Questions for Reporters:

Reporters can be sensitive, empathetic and even “trauma-informed,” but they often don’t understand how to afford survivors more control over the interview process. How does a survivor navigate the power imbalance and protect their interests? After all, they are the people who have the least power and the most at risk.

GENERAL

1. What is the theme/angle of your proposed piece? How do you see me fitting into that?
2. Would you be willing to collaborate editorially with me so that I have some agency and autonomy over my story and how it’s told?
3. If that request makes you uncomfortable [as it does many reporters], would you be open to having a conversation to explore why?
 4. Is your editor likely to agree to me having any input on the final form of the story?
 5. Will there be oversight of your headline writer to ensure correct tone and accuracy?
6. Would you show me the photos you intend to use of me if I’m not the one who supplied them?
 7. Could you send me the release beforehand so I have a chance to read and digest it?

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. Will you give me the names and roles of the people who will be present at the interview?
 2. Are you able to make arrangements so that I can bring someone with me for support?
 3. Will the interview be filmed? If so, can you provide hair and makeup?
4. [If speaking to a researcher] Will you give me a chance to meet the reporter before my interview?
 5. Will you send me over the list of questions so I have time to think about my responses?
6. Will you send me the definitions of “on the record,” “off the record,” “on background,” and “on deep background” before the interview so that I know the difference?
7. Can we agree on vocabulary that will be used throughout the reporting? (For example, whether I wish to be called a “survivor” or “victim.”)
8. Can we discuss ahead of time which words are activating to me so that we can avoid them? (For example calling me an “accuser,” saying the name of my abuser, etc.)
9. Will you link back to any previous accounts I have given of the traumatic events so that I don’t have to retell, and thus relive, them?
10. May I share the answers to these questions with my support person so they can remind us if we get off track?





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CONTINUED...

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE INTERVIEW:

1. Can I withdraw permission to publish if I don't feel happy about the interview? Can I ask you to edit out certain parts?
2. Are you willing to give me regular updates so that I know what's happening with the story?
3. Will you inform me before you give the other party (person/organization) a chance to comment so I know what they know and when they know it?
4. Will you let me read any statement you get from the other party before you release the story, so that I have a chance to respond? If not, can you give me a summary so that I'm prepared?
5. Will you let me know the date the piece drops (including promos for the piece, if applicable)? How much notice can you give?
6. Do I have any input into when the story drops, for example, ensuring that I have time to get to somewhere I feel safe?
7. Will you send me a link to the story?
8. Will the piece appear in affiliate outlets? If so, which?
9. Would you be willing to involve me in any responses to the piece (media interviews, award ceremonies, books, etc.)?

PERSONAL:

1. Why do you choose to do this kind of reporting?
2. What does "collaboration" with a survivor on a story look like to you?
3. What impact does it have on you to hear survivors' stories?
4. Has my interview changed the way you think or feel about anything?
5. Is there anything you have learned that will help in interviewing other survivors?