



Media Tips

Giving an Interview on Diverse Sexualities

Consider the media outlet

Is it radio, television or print media? Is it a local news station or the alternative weekly paper? Some media outlets are naturally more conservative, while others are looking to sensationalize diverse sexualities, so you have to craft your message to counter the inherent bias with each media outlet. With print media, you have to be very careful because they'll only pull one or two quotes from what you say, so only say what you really want to have included. For radio and podcasts, you can have more of a conversation.

You don't have to answer the interviewer's exact question

You rarely see the question in TV or print interviews, only the response. So feel free to pick out one word or phrase in the question and respond to that. If they ask about how people stay safe and protect themselves in the BDSM community, you can say, "The BDSM community is all about education, and that's why so many people volunteer their time for groups like ours, to help teach people how to be responsible about their sexuality."

Keep repeating your sound bites

It doesn't make for a stimulating conversation, but that's the way professionals get their point across. The reporter will ask their question several times, trying to get you to expand on what you're saying, to get a more sensational or off-the-cuff quote. Just be firm and keep repeating your point. They will respect you for it and will print the information in the sound bites you give them.

Flag your most important sound bites

This is done by saying, "The most important thing to remember is that the kink community educates adults about safe, sane and consensual sexual practices." Or "A key part of consensual nonmonogamy is communication in order to understand each others' limits and desires." Or "One thing you always have to remember is that this is about honesty and building trust through talking about your feelings and desires."

Don't repeat nasty or inflammatory phrases

For example, if they ask, "What do you think when people say you're eroticizing violence?" give one of your sound-bites: "Kinky sex is consensual because at any time the participants can stop what's happening." Don't repeat, "We don't eroticize violence because..." or "Swinging is not cheating..." That makes their point for them.

Universalize the questions

If the reporter says something like, "Do you really like to beat each other up..." or "You people who have sex with everyone..." then respond with, "We, like you and everyone else in America, believe we have the fundamental human right to love who and how we want to with other adults."

If you need a moment, ask them to clarify

If you don't want to answer a question, then ask them what they mean. It may not be the details you were about to give. If they are confrontational, you can slow them down by asking them what they mean.

Use standard terms rather than "scene" or Lifestyle language

If you start saying "scene" and "munch" and "lifestyle" and "Alpha and Beta" "leather" and "vanilla" and "top/bottom" then reporters and your audience won't understand you. Use ordinary terms as much as possible, or very rarely use terms and define them as you use them. ie "The top, that is the person giving the stimulation, must respect the limits of the person they're playing with."

Use the name of organizations

Say you're a member of NCSF or the Polyamory Leadership Network. If you're representing a group or event, then mention the name several times. Explain that many groups are educational and social organizations that have been in existence for many years: "Over 500 educational and social, nonprofit groups exist in America for kinksters." Or "Meet-up lists 6 polyamory or nonmonogamy groups in this city."

Don't utter a word you aren't prepared to see in print

Reporters will try to make you comfortable with them, to chat with them informally. Those are usually the quotes they use. You aren't there to make friends or "sell" the reporter on alternative sexuality, you are there representing the community, group and yourself in the best light possible. Stay friendly, but reserved, and think before you speak. If you make a misstep, then stop and start all over again. Then the reporter will have to use the completed thought.

Don't do or say anything you feel uncomfortable with

By the time you get into an interview, then the story will be printed or produced no matter what you do. You are completely free to say NO to anything you don't like. It is highly unlikely the reporter will just walk away and end the interview, even if they try to say you MUST do something or answer something. Some reporters talk about freedom of the press and accuse you of hiding information. I reply: "We believe that consent is the basis of any good relationship. You are becoming abusive by not respecting my limits."

Don't do anything sexual on camera

In the case of alt sex, a picture is NOT worth a thousand words. Don't let reporters take pictures of your polyamory family sitting on the bed. Don't do a BDSM scene in front of a camera. We need activists who will speak up for the alt sex communities and explain the serious issues such as discrimination and violence against our people. If the reporter is looking for images like these, it's likely you don't want to be involved.

Wear appropriate attire

This means business or casual wear, such as an activist or group t-shirt. Don't wear revealing fetish wear or lingerie. A picture is NOT worth a thousand words. If we want to be taken seriously, we must present an image that the average person can relate to.

Be animated, confident and happy

In TV interviews in particular, often the best thing is not what you say but how you say it. People will remember the image of your happy, confident expression much longer than the words you say. Even in a print interview, if you sound confident and knowledgeable and don't let the reporter push you into saying more than you wanted, you will be treated much more respectfully in the finished article.