



Media Tips for Consensual Non-monogamy

Consider the media outlet

Do your research about the media outlet and the reporter. Find out how they've covered kink and the LGBTQ+ issues before. 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, especially morning radio, you can be much looser. Don't take on a TV interview until you are confident in your material and can stick to your sound bites.

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 kink. 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 your completed thought.

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

You rarely see the question in TV or print interviews, only the response. Pick out one word or phrase in the question and respond to that. If they ask about how do people stay safe and protect themselves, you can say, "The Lifestyle offers workshops to help people improve their relationships and learn 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 quote. Just be firm and keep repeating your point. They will respect you for it and will print 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 consensual nonmonogamy is about being honest with your partners." Or "A key part of consensual nonmonogamy is communication in order to understand your limits and desires." Or "One thing you always have to remember is that we encourage people to build trust by talking about your feelings and desires."

Universalize the questions

If the reporter says something like, "You people who have sex with everyone..." Or "This sounds like sex addiction..." then respond with, "We, like 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 what you think. It gives you a chance to think of the point you really want to make. If they are confrontational, you can slow them down by asking them what they mean.

Use standard terms

Use ordinary terms as much as possible, or very rarely use terms and define them as you use them. ie "I've been together with my nesting partner, that is my partner who I live with, for 24 years."

Use the name of organizations

Say you're a member of NCSF. 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: "Meet-Up lists 6 polyamory or nonmonogamy groups in this city."

Don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable

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

A picture is NOT worth a thousand words. Don't let reporters take pictures of your polycule sitting on the bed. We need activists who will speak up and explain consent and the serious issues we face such as stigma, discrimination and how our clubs are shut down. If the reporter is looking for sensationalized images, 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. We are fighting for our rights, so we must present an image that the average person can relate to.

Be animated, confident and happy

In TV interviews in particular, often it's how you say it rather than what you say. People will remember the image of your happy, confident expression much longer than your words. 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.