



Media Tips

Consider the media outlet

Do your research about the media outlet. Find out how they've covered kink and 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.

Research the reporter

Do your research on the reporter. Have they covered kink and LGBTQ+ issues before? Are they reliable and trusted? Do they do tell the real story or what that reporter wants the story to be? Bear in mind reporters are only human and they do make mistakes. If the reporter makes a mistake, calmly, clearly and politely point it out and ask for a correction.

Record the interview yourself

This will give you a record of what you said in context. It is helpful when you're new to giving interviews because you can self-assess and see where you could have said something differently.

Speak slowly

Speak slowly with breaks when talking to print media. Speak clearly when doing radio or TV. Use short sentences in all cases.

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. Don't ask to go "off the record" because some reporters may not honor that.

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 kink communities are all about educating adults, and that's why so many people volunteer their time for groups like ours, to help teach people how to be responsible about their sexual explorations."

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 consent has always been the foundation of BDSM." Or "A key part is communication in order to understand your limits and desires."

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.

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 the participants can stop what's happening at any time." Don't repeat, "We don't eroticize violence because..." That makes their point for them.

Universalize the questions

If the reporter says something like, "Do you really beat each other up?" don't get defensive and argue the point because that will be printed. Instead, pull back and respond with, "We, like you and everyone else in America, believe we have the fundamental human right to love who and how we want with other adults."

Use standard terms

If you use insider jargon like "dungeon" or "full swap" then your audience won't understand what you really mean. Use ordinary terms as much as possible. If you do use terms, then define them as you use them: "The top, that is the person giving the stimulation, must respect their partner's limits."

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 educational and social groups have been around for decades:

"There are hundreds of nonprofit groups and businesses in America for kinky and polyamorous people."

Don't do or say anything that's 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 you decline to do something or answer something. Some reporters talk about freedom of the press and accuse you of hiding information. Respond with: "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 do a BDSM scene for them. Don't show them your sex swing. We need people who will speak up and explain consent and the serious issues we face such as stigma, discrimination, and the closure of our events. 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.

If you need assistance in prepping for an interview, contact NCSF's Media Spokesperson, Susan Wright at 602-851-1590.