



Media Spokesperson Tips

As a spokesperson for your association and your profession, you have a critical role to play. You need to inform, educate, and represent the position of ADHA or your constituent.

- Create a positive image.
- Correct inaccuracies.
- Avoid Jargon--Use simple, everyday language that any nondental-hygienist can understand. Words like prophylaxis, periodontal disease, and supragingival will not be understood. Instead say: teeth cleaning, gum disease, above the gumline, etc. Try not to use the word preceptorship. Consumers won't know what it means. Instead, call it what it is: on-the-job-training.
- Be interesting and lively
- Deliver a call to Action: Tell viewers/readers what you want them to do: call their legislators, talk to their dental hygienists, ask about the educational background of the oral health care workers, etc.

Support/Enhance Messages

Priority messages are intentionally basic. Support them offering facts, anecdotes, personal stories, statistics, quotes, and comparisons.

Stay in Control

Decide which of your priority messages are most critical and then do everything you can to work them into the interview. Don't evade the reporter's questions, but try the following tips for moving the interview from a question the reporter asks to an answer you want to give.

- **Bridging**--Transitioning from questions asked to a key message.
Example: "Yes, and in addition to that..."
- **Hooking**--Forcing a follow-up question that sets the stage for a key message.
Example: "There are several ways to answer your question..."
- **Flagging**--Using verbal cues to underscore importance of forthcoming comment.
Example: "The most important point to remember is..."

Logistics and General Tips

To help you stay in control during the interview, remember the following tips:

- Show up on time; respect the reporter's deadline.
- Answer the questions one at a time--even if they are asked together.
- Remain calm.
- Stay polite.
- Use facts to make your points.
- Don't repeat hostile questions, even to deny them. Answer using other words.
- Defuse hostile questions with phrases like: "Let's put that into perspective..."
- Place the most important points at the beginning of each response.
- Be concise. Think headlines!
- Respond to simple questions with simple answers.
- Don't answer hypothetical questions; bridge back to reality.
- Avoid negatives. Be positive.
- Play your part: be professional and business-like. You represent your profession.
- Be pleasant.
- Direct consumers to ADHA's web site for more information and oral health tips: **www.adha.org**
- Be conversational, but repeat key messages.
- Stay focused, after you answer the reporter's question--stop. Don't keep talking between questions.
- Concentrate on what is being said. Don't frame your response before you've heard the entire question.
- Do **NOT** say "no comment." If you don't want to answer a question, either answer the question as best you can and move on, or explain politely why you cannot answer.
- Watch out for "tricks." Look for hypothetical statements, "either/or" questions or pregnant pauses.
- Don't let interviewers put words in your mouth.
- Don't speak for others. Don't answer questions that require you to speak for an absent third party.

Follow-Up

If you can't answer a specific question during an interview because you don't know the answer, admit it and offer to follow up with the information.

As a final reminder: Whenever you are doing a media interview, remember that nothing is off the record—before, during, or after the interview. If you don't want to see something in print, or on the air, don't say it.

Have questions, or need more information? Call Mariam Pera at (312) 440-8943, or the toll-free number at 1-312-440-8900 and press 4 for public relations.