Getting your message out to the media

The media is one of the most influential forms of communication out there - everyone watches the news, or reads the paper, or clicks around the web to catch up on the latest current affairs. And it’s for that reason the media can be incredibly intimidating to deal with.

Here are a couple of tips to help you get your message out to the media effectively.

MAKING A MEDIA-SAFE MESSAGE

Before you contact the media, it’s a good idea to make sure your message is media-safe. All this means is that everyone involved is comfortable and happy with your message, from the organisation you’re speaking for, to the people you’re talking about.

Know your boundaries. Before you consider going on air or in print, decide what you’re comfortable with saying (and what your friends and family will think).

Get consent. If you’re quoting friends, or wanting to use someone else’s personal story, it’s always good to get them to check your story and make sure that they’re happy with what you’re saying.

Know your messages. Write a list of what you want to get across in the media. For example, if you are holding an event this should include the date of the event, and how people get tickets. It is also a good idea to include why you are holding the event - why is supporting mental health important to you. Being prepared in advance will help you answer any questions that come your way.

OKAY, I’M READY TO GO. WHO SHOULD I TALK TO?

The media is a huge industry, and is comprised of local and national (and even international) mediums, including print, radio, television and online media. So before you go any further, it’s best to decide where you want your message to be displayed.

Is this a local story? Local papers and radio are generally really supportive of things that are happening in the local community. Your best bet might be the local newspaper or radio station. Look online or in their publications for their contact details.

Consider your audience. Where do they get their news? If you want to target an older population, an internet-based radio program probably isn’t the way to go, but if you’re wanting to speak to younger people, online radio might be the best way to get your message out there.
Alright, so I have my idea and the means. How do I contact the media?

One of the best ways to contact the media is via a press release, a one page document which illustrates your key ideas succinctly while engaging the editor or journalist. Here are a couple of things to keep in mind as you’re writing your press release.

Be professional. Address the media release to the specific editor or journalist that handles this area (if you can, find out their name). Make sure you submit the document on time and attach your contact details, and of course, proofread your work.

Stand out. Give them a story that hasn’t been done before, or a new angle on an old story.

Don’t give up. If you believe you have something to say, go for it. Issue your media release and if you don’t hear back within 24-48 hours, try giving them a follow-up call or email.

Use a personal story. Whether it’s your own story or someone else’s, a personal perspective allows audience to connect with your message, and it may help you get your message out there.

Make it easy for them to run the story. Include the important details - why you are doing it, the date of the event, where it will be held, how people can come along/get tickets/support you.

Interview done

Remember to thank the journalist. Without them, you wouldn’t get your message out there and you never know when you might need to promote something again sometime.