

RADIO - INTERVIEW TIPS FROM YOUTH RADIO'S NEWSROOM

Getting started:

- 1.** Before you start the interview, **make a checklist** of the information you absolutely must get from your subject and bring that list with you.
- 2.** **Brainstorm** the kinds of **things that make you feel inspired to disclose aspects of your own life**, and try to create those conditions in your interview.
- 3.** Always remember to **get permission** to use your interviewees' voices and names in your story and to ask for name and age (where appropriate).
- 4.** Let your interviewees know that you'd like to be able to use their answers without hearing your questions, so **ask them to answer in full sentences**. For example, if you ask, "At what age did you first meet your biological mother?" if they answer, "12," ask them if they'll repeat their answer in such a way that includes the question: i.e., "I met my bio mom for the first time when I was 12 years old."

Getting into it:

- 1.** **Start with "easy" questions**- ones your subject should feel really comfortable answering, so you can build a rapport. It can be effective to start with general questions, then move to specifics.
- 2.** This one's obvious, but easy to forget: **avoid "yes/no" questions!** Frame your probes in ways that elicit stories and vivid details. Don't hesitate, at any point, to say, "Can you give me a specific example or memory of what you're talking about?" or "That's really interesting...Can you say a little bit more?" or even, "I'm not sure I understand, can you kind of bring me back to that moment..." .
- 3.** **Try not to "lead the witness"** - in other words, asking questions that reveal your own biases, or making your interviewee feel pressured to answer in a certain way.
- 4.** Even if you have a detailed list of questions, make sure you **really listen** to your interviewees as they speak, and respond to what you hear, and not only what you came prepared to ask.
- 5.** Think about what you want to reveal about yourself - **how you can make the interview feel like a real conversation**, and not a grilling (but be careful about speaking "over" your subject - that can make it harder to use the tape).
- 6.** Always a great follow-up question: "**And then what happened?**" Remember that the best tape comes from characters telling specific stories that bring you into the details of their lives, not articulating generalized positions or simplified points of view.

Finishing up:

- 1.** **Review your checklist** of crucial information and make sure you covered everything before you say good-bye.
- 2.** At the end of the interview, **ask subjects if they have anything to add** (that question often yields the most interesting material!), and make sure to **get their contact information** and ask permission to get in touch again if anything further comes up.

DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERVIEWING

DO:

- 1) Your homework! Be Prepared.
- 2) Ask Direct Questions
- 3) Ask Simple Questions... the ones that start with: Who, Why, How, What, Where
- 4) Ask for details, examples, anecdotes
- 5) LISTEN!!! Carefully, and Quietly
- 6) Use Silence effectively
- 7) Keep your opinions to yourself
- 8) Ask questions that make people think instead of react
- 9) admit you don't understand... say "Tell me more about that" or "I Don't Understand"
- 10) Ask the questions listeners would ask

If this is not a live on-the-air interview, ask :

"Is there anything you'd like to add that I didn't ask?" Or something like that
"Who else should I talk to?"

DON'T

- 1) Don't make statements. Ask Questions.
- 2) Don't ask long, rambling, overloaded questions.
- 3) Don't ask Double Barreled (having more than one possible meaning; ambiguous words) questions.
- 4) Don't interrupt.
- 5) Don't ask self-answering questions.
- 6) Don't use jargon, and if the interviewee does, ask them to explain it.
- 7) Don't be afraid of silence.
- 8) Don't settle for unjustified accusations.
- 9) Don't ask questions that start with: "was" "did" "would" or "had".
- 10) Don't listen out loud: "Ok..." "uh huh". Nod and make eye contact to show you're listening.