

**MASTERING
THE INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW:**
Questioning the way that
you take on your targets

With Julian Sher

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MASTERING THE TELEVISION INTERVIEW:

- 1. EVERY INTERVIEW IS A FIGHT FOR CONTROL
- 2. THREE DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERVIEWS
- 3. THE FIVE RULES OF GOOD INTERVIEWS
(AND HOW TO BREAK THEM)
- 4. HOW TO BREAK THE RULES
- 5. WHAT TO DO TO WHEN YOU GET INTO TROUBLE
- 6. INTERVIEWING VICTIMS
- 7. STORY-TELLING WHEN YOU ARE INTERVIEWING
- 8. STRATEGY AND TACTICS



2

WHAT MAKES A GOOD INTERVIEWER?



3

Three characteristics of the good interviewer:


- 1. YOU HAVE TO BE **FIGHTER**
- 2. YOU HAVE TO BE **CURIOUS, CARING**
- 3. YOU HAVE TO BE A **STORY-TELLER**





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YOU CAN BE **CURIOUS**
SOME OF THE TIME ...
AND A **STORY-TELLER**
OTHER TIMES...



BUT YOU HAVE TO BE
A FIGHTER ALL THE TIME --
THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW

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**1./ EVERY INTERVIEW IS
A CONSTANT FIGHT FOR CONTROL**



6

The challenge of every interview:
Who is in control of the ball?



AND HOW DO YOU SCORE IN SPORTS?

7


In sports, you are lucky if you control the ball
50% of the game...

In interviews you need to be in control **100%**
of the time



8

Even when you interview **victims or survivors of war, abuse, oppression**



- You **voluntarily** give them the power and control -- but you still are the one who makes that decision

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2. How do you prepare for the tough interview?



10

We focus on research, facts...




11

but too often we ignore strategy



12

A TEST: ASK ME ABOUT THIS COURSE



YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT NOT JUST THE **QUESTIONS**, BUT **THE TYPE OF INTERVIEW YOU ARE DOING...**

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2. The Three Types of Interviews

ACCOUNTABILITY
How guilty did you feel that you were drunk at the wheel in the crash that killed her?




EMOTION
What did her loss mean to you?

INFORMATION
When did you first learn your daughter was killed in the car accident?


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So you always have to know:

- > what **kind of fight** you are in...
- > and **where** you are in the fight

- **INFORMATION:**
Exploring, gathering info 
- **EMOTIONS:**
Probing for emotions 
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:**
Moving in for the killer punch 


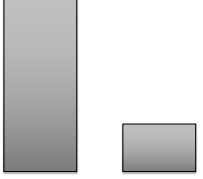
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You get into trouble if you, the guest and the audience don't know where you are going...

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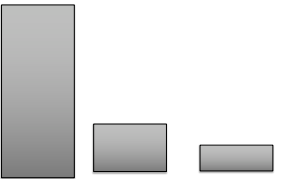
Some interviews are **mainly information** [for example, experts]

90% INFORMATION. 10% EMOTION

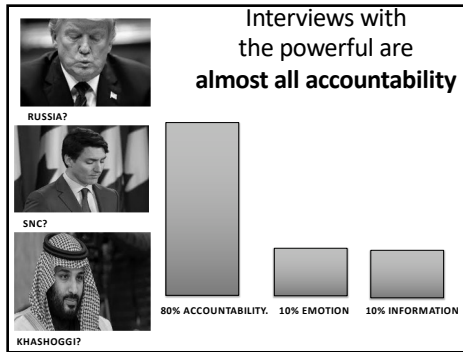
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Some interviews are **mainly emotion, with some information** [usually your main character, the victim, the protagonist]

70% EMOTION. 20% INFORMATION 10% ACCOUNTABILITY

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Watch as Gayle King of CBS follows the three steps with accused sexual molester R. Kelly:

INFORMATION: WHY ARE YOU SITTING DOWN WITH US TODAY?
EMOTION: WHAT ARE THE LIES THAT **DISTURB** YOU THE MOST?
ACCOUNTABILITY: HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING THAT YOU REGRET, **HAVE YOU DONE ANYTHING WRONG?**
 -ARE YOU SAYING EVERYBODY WAS NOT TELLING THE TRUTH?
 -WHY WOULD ALL THESE WOMEN TELL THESE STORIES ABOUT YOU?

Watch full interview: <http://thetv.com/kywgcg>

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Gayle King follows the three steps with R. Kelly: Information, Emotion, Accountability...

PLEADED NOT GUILTY
 SOURCES SAY FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES IN NEW YORK AND ILLINOIS INVESTIGATING

R. KELLY BREAKS HIS SILENCE
 R&B SINGER DENIES SEX ABUSE ALLEGATIONS IN FIRST INTERVIEW SINCE ARREST

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3. The Basic Rules for Good Interviews

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You get the answers you deserve

- Don't blame the interviewee
- Ask a stupid question, you get a stupid answer

So how can we ask smarter questions?

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**1. ASK OPEN-ENDED
NOT CLOSED QUESTIONS:**

- **ALWAYS ASK THE 5 Ws:**


WHO?
WHAT?
WHERE?
WHY?
WHEN?

What?
Why?
How?


- **AVOID YES/NO ANSWERS**

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THE KID WHO NEARLY DIED FROM E COLI



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The boy answers the yes/no question, when what we really wanted to ask was:

Q: Elijah, do you remember these days?

Q: ELIJAH, TELL US HOW SICK YOU WERE AFTER YOU ATE THAT STEAK

Q: Elijah, do you want to eat steak again?

Q: ELIJAH, HOW FRIGHTENED ARE YOU TO EAT STEAK TODAY?

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**2. DON'T GIVE PEOPLE
EASY ESCAPE ROUTES:**

↑
EVACUATION
ROUTE

- ASK **ONE** QUESTION ONLY
- DON'T GIVE THEM **EASY CHOICES**
- WATCH FOR THE **UNNEEDED ADJECTIVE, PHRASE OR THE UNNEEDED FACT**

?

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The Athlete wins against The Journalist



Watch bad sports interviews: <http://tinyurl.com/y9wh75ah>

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Which question do you think he wants to answer?



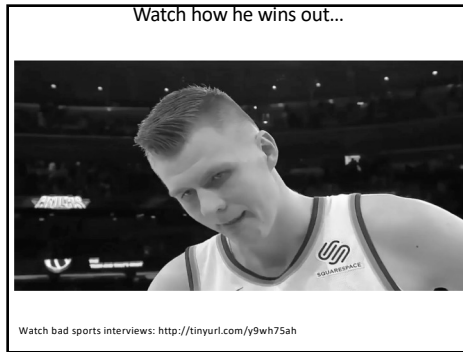
QUESTION: IS THERE EVER A POINT WHEN YOU WERE LOSING AT WHICH YOU DON'T THINK YOU CAN COME BACK TO WIN?

[This is a bad yes/no question]

AND WHAT'S YOUR MINDSET?

[Good question: in other words- were you scared or worried?]

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- **QUESTION:** IS THERE EVER A POINT AT WHICH YOU DON'T THINK YOU CAN COME BACK? **AND WHAT'S YOUR MINDSET?**
- **PLAYER:** NO.
- **QUESTION:** SO TELL ME ABOUT THAT –
- **PLAYER:** THANK YOU

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Giving Putin a choice:
When Trump met Putin in 2018 the burning question was:
Did Russia interfere in the US elections?

WATCH FULL HELSINKI PRESS CONFERENCE: <http://tinyurl.com/booc4p>
WATCH HIGHLIGHTS: <http://tinyurl.com/2et8up>

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QUESTION: Did you want President Trump to win the election?
And did you direct any of your officials to help him do that?

Which question do you think Putin will answer???

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Giving Putin a choice

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Giving Putin a choice:
He answers the easiest question:
the first one: ➡ **Did you want President Trump to win the election?**

Not the one we care about:
~~✗~~ **And did you direct any of your officials to help him do that?**

Putin: "Yes I did, yes I did. Because he talked about bringing the U.S.-Russia relationship back to normal."

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Why didn't Obama arm the Syrian rebels?
 We'll never know with this question that gives him an escape... **by adding just seven unnecessary words at the end**




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Obama gets an easy escape:

- CHARLIE ROSE: You do not accept the idea that if you do what the rebels want you do, the Free Syrian Army wants you to do and what Arab governments want you do that it would turn the tide and lead to Assad leaving ... **which has been, I think, your objective.**

BARACK OBAMA: Well, **my objective**, understand, is Assad leaving because he delegitimized himself.



WATCH VIDEO: <https://charlierose.com/videos/1725/> (TIMECODE 15:02)

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When a question mark comes out of your mouth...




- STOP TALKING!!!!

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3. BASIC IS BEAUTIFUL - KEEP IT CLEAN AND SIMPLE

AVOID LOADED OR CONTROVERSIAL WORDS...




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Mr. Mayor – have you not become the **most hated and corrupt politician** in town?


Isn't that what all **climate change deniers** say?

Are you doing enough to stop **radical Islam** in your mosque?



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OBAMA IS QUESTIONNED ABOUT HOSTAGES IN IRAN:

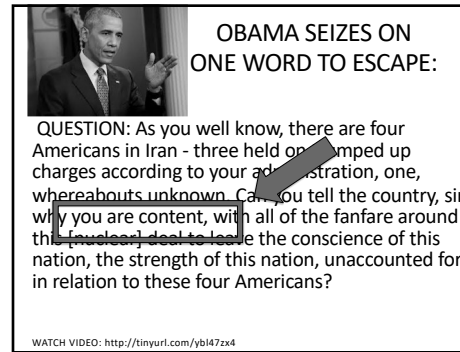


QUESTION: As you well know, there are four Americans in Iran - three held on trumped up charges according to your administration, one, whereabouts unknown. Can you tell the country, sir, why you are content, with all of the fanfare around this [nuclear] deal to leave the conscience of this nation, the strength of this nation, unaccounted for, in relation to these four Americans?

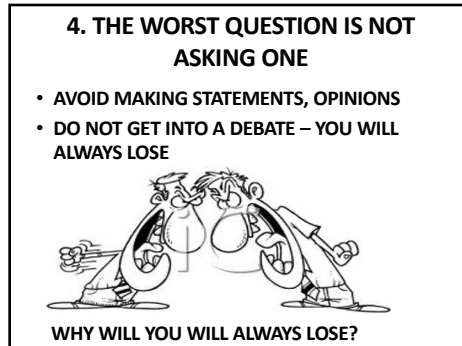
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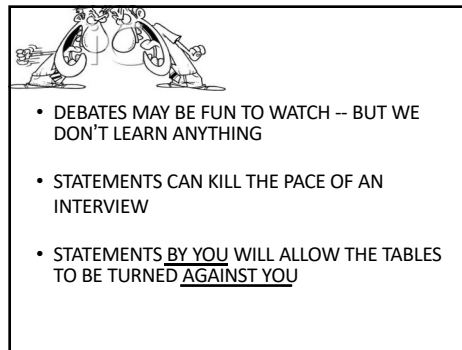
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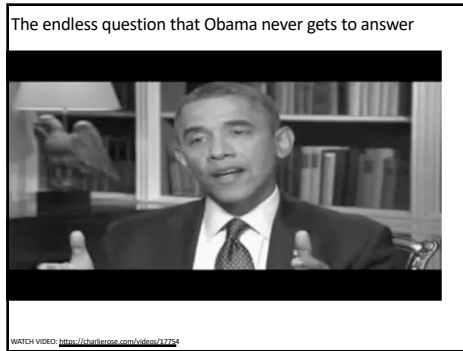
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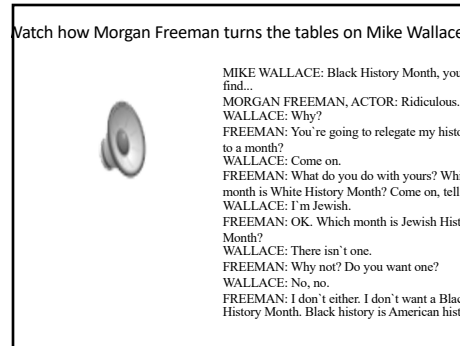
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5. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN



- GRAB THEIR WORDS, MAKE THEM YOURS AND THROW THEM BACK
- SHIFT THE WEIGHT BACK TO THE SUBJECT
- AND DON'T SOUND LIKE YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION...

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LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN



- LISTEN TO WHAT THEY ARE **REALLY** SAYING

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Riots in Canada – A Police Chief Held to Account



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What is this embattled police chief really saying... or not saying?



WATCH FULL SHOW: <http://tinyurl.com/yb3j26>

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CHALLENGING A POLICE CHIEF

POLICE CHIEF: I think it was very unfortunate that was necessary to do...

CBC: **WAS IT NECESSARY TO DO?**

POLICE CHIEF: ...We had to try to balance a very difficult set of responsibilities.

CBC: **DID YOU GET THE BALANCE RIGHT? EIGHT MONTHS LATER, DID YOU GET THE BALANCE RIGHT?**

POLICE CHIEF: Well I think eight months later we are still determining whether or not it was absolutely right. I think we did our best

CBC: **IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH**

POLICE CHIEF: Well that frankly will be for others to judge

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[SO WHAT IS HE REALLY SAYING? "WE DID NOT DO IT RIGHT..."]

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RECAP: Five Basic Rules of Interviews

- 1. ASK OPEN-ENDED NOT CLOSED QUESTIONS
- 2. DON'T GIVE PEOPLE ANY EASY ESCAPE ROUTES
- 3. BASIC IS BEAUTIFUL - KEEP IT CLEAN AND SIMPLE
- 4. THE WORST QUESTION IS NOT ASKING ONE
- 5. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN



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#4. ONCE YOU KNOW THE RULES, KNOW WHEN AND HOW TO BREAK THEM



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REMEMBER RULE #1: DON'T ASK YES/NO QUESTIONS... EXCEPT TO FORCE A YES/NO ANSWER



WATCH VIDEO: <http://tinyurl.com/yag6tqg>

63

REMEMBER RULE #4: DON'T MAKE STATEMENTS... EXCEPT WHEN THE CAREFULLY-CRAFTED STATEMENT WORKS:



WATCH VIDEO: <http://tinyurl.com/g5at7l>

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REMEMBER RULE #4: DON'T MAKE STATEMENTS... EXCEPT TO BOLDLY CALL OUT A LIE...


The Syrian refugee crisis 2015:
CBC'S Rosemary Barton vs. then Canadian Immigration Minister Chris Alexander



WATCH VIDEO: <http://tinyurl.com/y4j3qv8>

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REMEMBER RULE #4: DON'T MAKE STATEMENTS... EXCEPT TO BOLDLY CALL OUT A LIE...



WATCH VIDEO: <http://tinyurl.com/y4j3qv8>

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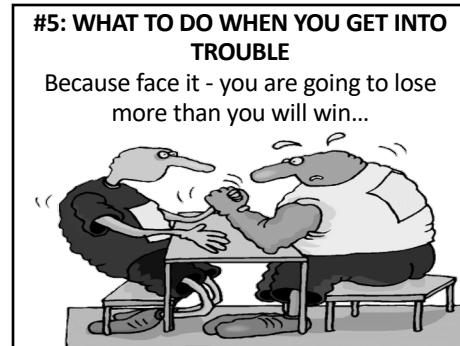
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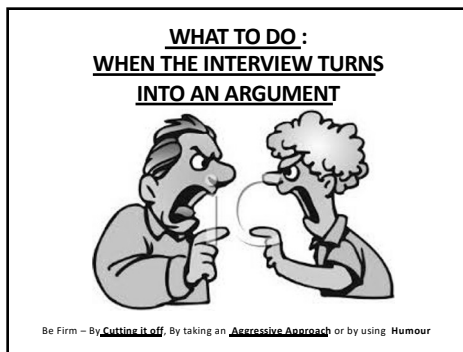
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Defending your right to push:

- MORGAN:** Because right now, I'm curious -- right now, I'm curious about whether you support gay marriage.
- O'DONNELL:** You're borderline being a little bit rude. You know, I obviously ...

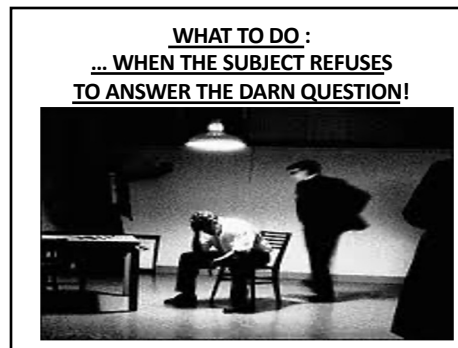
MORGAN: Why are you being so weird about this?
O'DONNELL: That's what I want to talk about. I'm not being weird. You're being a little rude.

MORGAN: I'm baffled as to why you think I'm being rude. I think I'm being rather charming and respectful. I'm just asking questions based on your own public statements and now what you've written in your own book. It's hardly rude to ask you that surely.

O'DONNELL: Well, don't you think as a host, if I say this is what I want to talk about, that's what we should address?

MORGAN: Not really, no. You're a politician.

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Don't get distracted – don't lose focus:
Tapper vs. Trump on the "Mexican" judge

- **TAPPER: What does this have to do with his heritage?**
TRUMP: ...this judge is of Mexican heritage. I'm building a wall, OK? I'm building a wall. I am going to do very well with the Hispanics, the Mexicans
- **TAPPER: So, no Mexican judge could ever be involved in a case that involves you?**
TRUMP: Well, he's a member of a society, where -- you know, very pro-Mexico, and that's fine. It's all fine, but --
- **TAPPER: Except that you're calling into question his heritage.**
TRUMP: I think he should recuse himself.
- **TAPPER: ... if you're saying he can't do his job because of his race, is that not the definition of racism?...**
TRUMP: This judge is giving us unfair rulings. Now, I say why? Well, I'm building a wall, OK? And it's a wall between Mexico. Not another country.
- **TAPPER: But he's not from Mexico. He's from Indiana.**
TRUMP: He's of Mexican heritage and he's very proud of it.

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Keep asking the SAME question:
Katie Couric pushes Palin on what papers she reads?




CBS
EVENING NEWS
EXCLUSIVE
cbsnews.com

- WHAT NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES DID YOU REGULARLY READ TO STAY INFORMED?
- WHICH ONES SPECIFICALLY - I'M CURIOUS?
- CAN YOU NAME ANY OF THEM?

WATCH INTERVIEW: <http://tmyurl.com/r/r3v463>

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- WHAT NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES DID YOU REGULARLY READ TO STAY INFORMED?
- WHICH ONES SPECIFICALLY - I'M CURIOUS?
- CAN YOU NAME ANY OF THEM?

WATCH INTERVIEW: <http://tmyurl.com/r/r3v463>

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Really, really keep asking the same question...
BBC's Jeremy Paxman takes on a reluctant politician



NEWSNIGHT

WATCH FULL INTERVIEW: <http://tmyurl.com/y/6njg628>

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Really, really keep asking the same question...
BBC's Jeremy Paxman takes on a reluctant politician



NEWSNIGHT

PAXMAN: DID YOU THREATEN TO OVERRULE HIM

WATCH FULL INTERVIEW: <http://tmyurl.com/y/6njg628>

Imagine you get an interview with Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud (MBS):

YOU INSIST YOU NEVER GAVE A DIRECT ORDER TO KILL KASHOGGL. BUT DID YOU EVER SUGGEST YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET RID OF HIM?



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Really, really keep asking the same question...



WATCH FULL INTERVIEW: <http://tmyurl.com/y/6njg628>

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6. Interviewing victims or survivors of war, abuse, oppression



THE SAME FIVE RULES APPLY -- JUST IN A DIFFERENT WAY

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The big difference: With victims, at times **you relinquish control** - -which you never do in other interviews – and **give them the power to stop or not answer**



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INTERVIEWING VICTIMS: GIVE THEM THE POWER...

- “It’s up to you, if anything makes you uncomfortable or do you don’t want to talk about something, that’s up to you...”



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INTERVIEWING VICTIMS:

How to balance between not being emotionally involved and not caring about their suffering?



Acknowledge your uncomfortableness, your emotions

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BE HONEST AND HUMBLE

- “These are painful and difficult questions, but I have to ask them”



89


People are not natural story-tellers, **you have to guide them**



Make them the **stars of their own movies**

90

The powerful lie and hide.
The powerless may hide the truth for different reasons



You can be **probing** without being **intrusive**

91

A mother was jailed and accused of killing her infant daughter



Canada
"I fought back": A mother's fight to clear her name in toddler death


We helped to prove that Brenda Waudby was innocent. But she admitted she was a cocaine addict and had been a bad mother ...

Watch the full documentary <https://vimeo.com/326073127>

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STILL, YOU CAN PUSH SOMEONE EVEN IF THEY ARE A VICTIM...

Question: CAN YOU SEE WHY THE POLICE WOULD SUSPECT YOU OF KILLING YOUR DAUGHTER BECAUSE YOU WERE A COCAINE ADDICT, YOU WERE A BAD MOTHER?



93

YOU CAN PUSH SOMEONE EVEN IF THEY ARE A VICTIM...

Question: YOU ADMIT YOU NEGLECTED YOUR CHILDREN - WHEN DOES NEGLECT BECOME ABUSE?



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7. STORY TELLING IS PART OF YOUR INTERVIEWING



**Scoops* are reported, but *stories* are told

Download the "STORYTELLING" slideshow at www.juliansher.com/training

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STORY-TELLING IN YOUR INTERVIEWS

- TO **NOT CONFUSE THE VIEWERS** AND YOUR GUEST, YOU NEED TO HAVE A **BEGINNING MIDDLE AND END**
- **GIVE TURN SIGNALS** - LET YOUR INTERVIEW SUBJECT (AND THE AUDIENCE) **KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING**
- **TAKE YOUR CHARACTERS ON A JOURNEY**
- > **ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 5 Cs: CHARACTER, CONTEXT, CONFLICT, CLIMAX, AND CONCLUSION**

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To plot your character's journey,
you need **The Five Cs**

- » **Character**
The protagonist
- » **Context**
*What you need to know
Why you should care*
- » **Conflict**
The guts of the story
- » **Climax**
The outcome
- » **Conclusion**
What happens next

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**8. STRATEGY AND PLANNING –
PREPARING THE INTERVIEW**



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**STRATEGY AND PLANNING –
PREPARING THE INTERVIEW**

- **DECIDE WHEN TO DO THE INTERVIEW:**
- **DECIDE WHAT TYPE OF INTERVIEW IT WILL BE:**
 - > - INFORMATION
 - > - EMOTION
 - > - ACCOUNTABILITY
- **COCOONING** – EYE CONTACT, CREATING A SAFE SPACE
- **'SPYING'** – WHAT CAN YOU OBSERVE ON THE DESK, WALLS, HOME THAT YOU CAN USE TO DIG DEEPER INTO WHO THAT PERSON IS
- **STORY TELLING:** MAKE YOUR INTERVIEWS PART OF YOUR STORY TELLING STRUCTURE

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When to trip the wire?
When do you notify your target... and how?



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**WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE
NO INTERVIEW ??????**



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**WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE
NO INTERVIEW ??????**

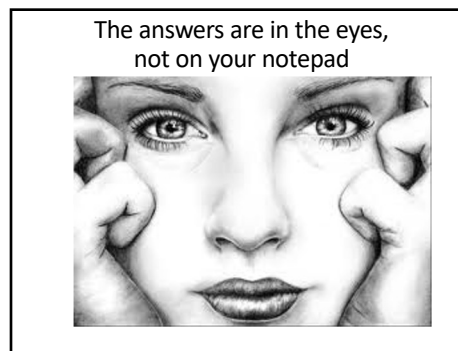
- ◆ Be open, forthright. Don't lie or sweet talk
- ◆ Surround the subject (getting to friends, colleagues, enemies)
- ◆ Make it clear the story is quite strong without him/her
- ◆ Build the ladder of allegations, giving the subject more and more reasons to worry about your investigation



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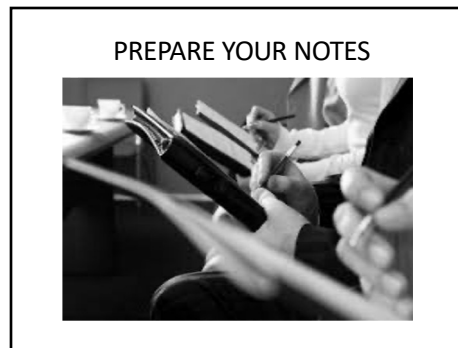
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Make detailed, well-organized questions

- ORGANIZE YOUR QUESTIONS BY THEME
- USUALLY, YOU GO FROM SOFT, TO MEDIUM, TO HARD QUESTIONS
- USE A DIFFERENT PAGE FOR EVERY THEME SO YOU CAN EASILY SWITCH IF THE INTERVIEWEE MAKES THE SWITCH

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OUTSIDE CRITICS

THE CRITICS SAY FIRE INVESTIGATORS LIKE YOU LEARNED THEIR STUFF FROM OTHER OLD TIMERS, PASSED FOLKLORE ALONG

HOW UPSET AT YOU AT THESE 'OUTSIDE' CRITICS? ARMCHAIR?

Fogg calls Beyler an "armchair quarterback" and riles at the accusation that Corsicana and state detectives used nothing more than folklore to come to their conclusions.

"A lot of this stuff (in Beyler's report) is misspoken or misinterpreted," Fogg said.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS, THE WILLINGHAM CASE HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY NINE OF THE NATION'S TOP FIRE SCIENTISTS, ALL CONCLUDED THAT THE ORIGINAL INVESTIGATORS RELIED ON OUTDATED THEORIES AND FOLKLORE TO JUSTIFY THE DETERMINATION OF ARSON.

THEY HAVE NOT BEEN KIND:

"characteristic of mystics or psychics..."

"... wholly without any realistic understanding of fires and how fire injuries are created"

HOW DO YOU REACT TO THAT?

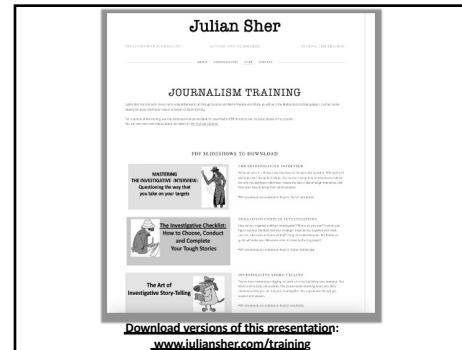
DISPARAGING? INSULTING?

"(Beyler) thought we were total idiots," Fogg said.

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