

# Why Con Media Sti

*Insights for  
Growing  
Your  
Practice*



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# Conventional All Matters



*Several weeks ago, as I was walking out of my therapy office, my receptionist motioned for me not to leave. She was on a phone call and whispered to me, “It’s the Dr. Phil Show asking for you.” Thinking she was joking, I rolled my eyes and turned to walk toward the door. She replied, “I’m not kidding!” I told her I’d take the call.*

After a few days of phone and email exchanges with Dr. Phil staff, I ended up not being selected to appear as an expert on that particular episode, but the show booker said they would keep me in mind for future shows. Whether you’re a fan or Dr. Phil or not, it’s still amazing to me that a private therapist in Salt Lake City, Utah is on the radar of a national TV show. Upon becoming a licensed therapist, my initial plans for starting and growing my practice did not include appearing on local or national television in the USA (Discovery Health, TLC, Fox News Channel),

or being regularly quoted in national publications like The Wall Street Journal, Cosmopolitan, Parenting, or Women’s Health as an “expert”. However, I made a few key decisions in that first month of practice that helped me get to the point where I felt that conventional media would make a significant difference in growing a thriving practice that is reputable, effective, and trustworthy.

**What’s in a Name?** One of the first key decisions was about me and my practice—that is to say I made a choice to not use my name as my official practice name. I had a vision of eventually growing my practice beyond a solo practice so I wanted to find a name that sounded large and established. I felt that the best way to serve my community was to create a family-friendly service that would be inviting to a broader range of clientele. Rather than using my personal name, I went with one that would be regionally recognized: Wasatch Family Therapy (Salt Lake City and the extended metropolitan area stretch approximately 100 miles along the Wasatch mountain range; nearly 80% of Utah’s population lives in this region).

**Early Technology Adopter.** As with many of those who saw an early opportunity with the Internet, I created and maintained a static web page for my practice. I am including the Internet in my discussion of “conventional” media here because of the way it was first used by many businesses and professions (and perhaps still is). It initially served about the same purpose as a print advertisement, but reached out to those who used the Internet in addition to other conventional media.

**What is your value?** There is enormous potential value in every therapist, and it is vital to work on your perceived value individually in face-to-face interactions. But have you ever thought about the “value of perceived value”? Many professionals believe, and my personal experience supports this belief, that therapists should focus more on their perceived value. There is perceived value in the fact that I do not work with insurance companies; clients believe that I must be good enough to “go it alone.” This perception by potential clients must be backed up by the real value you provide face-to-face; this is the way to get genuine referrals

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from trusted sources. I believe that our thinking about face-to-face trustworthiness can be expanded. By this I mean you have to put the time and effort into a “grassroots” approach to extending your personal reach and the name recognition of your practice into your immediate and surrounding communities. This is where conventional media really matters.

These key decisions allowed me to work more effectively with a broader range of conventional media to build a thriving fee-for-service practice of 14 therapists in an uncertain economy because I can build trust directly to potential clients by the hundreds or thousands rather than by word-of-mouth alone.

***The Media is Calling for You.*** As my practice began to become

more established, I felt as though if media was calling for me. I realize that the notion of using conventional media might not dawn on everyone. I would say if the media’s not calling you then you should call them. I was presented with a unique opportunity to develop the concept for a local TV show and, in a media baptism-by-fire experience; I ended up hosting and producing a weekly hour-long live television show for several months. In addition to hosting the show I selected the show topics, wrote up the script, and managed guests.

This experience opened my eyes to the power of conventional media to build a broader and deeper relationship of trust, character reference, and recognition in my community. And while there may have been an element of luck involved here, much of what I did initially came about because

of ingenuity and hard work; this is perhaps more true of the networking I did (and still do) and what snowballed into greater media opportunities later.

### ***How Media Interviews Can Benefit Your Practice***

Conventional Media (TV, Radio, Print, Newspaper, Website) interviews help build awareness of your practice and services; provide opportunity for community service & education; create public trust and adds credibility to your practice; help transition you from a provider to an expert in your field; provide potential multiple income streams; and can help provide fresh consistent content for website, blog, and social media channels.

### ***Increasing Awareness Of Your Practice and Services***

“If you build it, they will come” doesn’t necessarily apply to opening a private practice. Most private practitioners initially struggle to get clients in the door of their practice because few people are aware of their business. Media interviews increase the exposure of your practice and allow you to get in front of more potential clients. Continued exposure makes it

more likely that potential clients will remember your name and will eventually call you if they need help.

### ***Opportunity For Community Service and Education***

Media interviews provide volunteer opportunities to educate your community, increasing awareness about issues that matter to you and to them. In addition to making a living doing something I love, I want to make a difference for as many people as possible and media interviews allow me to make a positive impact for people well beyond the therapy office.

### ***Engender Public Trust and Increase Credibility***

Television stations, radio stations, newspapers, and websites spend a lot of time connecting with their readers and viewers and building their “brand”. When you are featured in the media you get to *borrow* their credibility and trust as they put you in front of their audience. Regular media appearances have allowed a large number of people to hear my therapeutic philosophy, and get a feel for my approach, and see me as a resource.

### ***Helps Transition You From Provider to Expert***

Regular media appearances help position you as more than a potential counseling or coaching provider. Interviews allow the general public to view you as an “expert” in your field or specialty area. The role of expert adds value to you and your services and makes it more likely that clients will pay out of pocket for your services.

### ***Provides Potential Multiple Income Streams***

Surprisingly, in my experience, some media appearances have transitioned into additional income streams. I’ve been invited to be a regular contributor on television or to write for magazines and blogs. What could be better for your practice than getting paid to educate the public and to create awareness of your practice?

### ***Helps Provide Fresh Consistent Content For Website, Blog, and Social Media***

Media interviews help provide new content for your practice website and resources to your social media followers. Sharing video of on-camera interviews, links to print or web interviews extend your reach beyond your

location, provide more traffic to your website, boost SEO, and solidify your professional online presence.

### ***How To Get Media Interview Opportunities***

What do you think of when you think of professional networking? Private practice therapists who I’ve worked with in [business consultations](#) usually consider networking to be meeting with other like-minded professionals for lunch or handing out business cards to physicians offices. While those are important ways to make connections that build your therapy practice, there are other ways to get the word to thousands and thousands of people in one shot, instead of just a few folks at a time. *Rarely do therapists think of networking with producers, reporters and journalists.*

Over the last few years I’ve focused on developing relationships with producers, journalists, and reporters in various media platforms. There are a few who now contact me for quotes when they need expert quotes or interviews for upcoming stories. Here are some things I’ve learned about what works when building relationships with reporters, journalists and producers.

## #1

### Seek out opportunities

Keep an eye out for opportunities to interview with local and national reporters. Sign up for services that notify you of reporters looking for interviews, like [Reporter Connection](#), [ProfNet Connection](#), [Expert Engine](#). Contact local radio, television, and newspaper companies and offer your expertise on newsworthy topics.

## #2

### Know what is 'newsworthy'

When pitching stories or interview topics to local journalists and reporters it's crucial to know what they're looking for. Sorry, but the fact that you're going into private practice specializing in family therapy is *not* newsworthy; however, news and other TV programs might be interested in getting your thoughts on a new study showing how cultivating self-compassion helps individuals manage divorce. I suggest getting into some "media-minded" habits:

- *Watch national news headlines.* Pitch a local spin on those stories to local TV producers.
- *Suggest seasonal topics.* Pitch interviews around managing holiday stress, or Halloween safety tips for children in October.



# What could be better for your practice than getting paid to educate the public and to create awareness of your practice?

- *New research is “news.”* Keep an eye out for interesting research that’s relevant to your practice and offer to interview.

While what counts as news-worthy must be modified to your particular practice and community, [MediaCollege.com](http://MediaCollege.com) generally defines a story as newsworthy if it has the following characteristics:

- *Timing* – News is all about stories that are current and new
- *Significance* – Something that affects large numbers of people
- *Proximity* – An event happening close to home
- *Prominence* – Involves someone famous or well-known
- *Human Interest* – Appeals to emotion, novel, off-beat, interesting

## #3 Know how to write a press release

When pitching to media you need to speak *their* language, which means learning how to write a press release.

- *A press release needs to be in a specific press release format.* Here’s an excellent example: [EReleases.com](http://EReleases.com).
- *Read other releases.* Here’s a release I helped one of my therapists at Wasatch Family Therapy, LLC write recently based on her dissertation research: [Mean Girls Get Married: Teens Don’t Always Grow Out of Mean Girl Behavior and End Up Using Emotional Manipulation On Spouse](#).
- *Don’t send attachments.* When you email a press release (or a pitch/proposal) to local news and TV producers, *cut and paste it in*

*the body of the email*, do not send as an attachment (it is one more thing that makes their job more difficult).

## #4 Respond to requests ASAP

I’ve come to realize that journalistic deadlines are incredibly tight, and the sooner I respond, the better. I’ve interviewed one afternoon for an E! Online article and it posted that same evening. When I get an email request for an interview I will respond right then on my smart phone with comments off the top of my head. I’ve been known to pull over on the side of the road while driving carpool to respond to an interview request. If a reporter or producer contacts you, respond immediately or the opportunity will pass you by. Decide ahead that you’ll say “yes” (and think about how you can make it a positive and confident “yes”).

## #5 Avoid psychobabble

Talking with the popular media is different than talking with colleagues. Fellow shrinks can talk in short hand with acronyms like DBT, CBT and EFT; we know what transference and countertransference are, but most people don’t know and don’t care. In pitches and in correspondence always use

layman's terms that can be easily understood even if someone's never taken Psychology 101.

## #6

### Let your passion show

I think part of why I've been successful in getting quoted in national publications is because I show my passion for the work and for the topic of the story or article. Even in email correspondence, don't be afraid to show your personality and to be approachable. I also openly share my gratitude for the interview opportunity and how much I enjoy media interviews.

## #7

### Make your contact info easy to find

In all correspondence make sure that your name and credentials (the way you'd like them to appear if you're quoted), your email address, and your cell phone number are highlighted and easy to find. Reporters don't have time to hunt you down.

## #8

### Know how to make their job easier

Reporters, producers, and journalists are extremely busy and always on multiple deadlines. They don't have time to calm your anxiety or to walk you through the interview process.

- *Send only relevant information.* Highlight the most important information you'd like to talk about and a brief line or two about you and your practice or your "basic professional practice message" (see my [elevator speech](#) post). Through that brief stint as a producer and host of a local TV show mentioned earlier, I learned what makes an easy and a difficult interviewee. One of the hardest parts of screening potential guests was skimming through too much information hunting for the relevant points. You can always add more information as needed.
- *Limit your correspondence.* Respect the reporter's, journalist's or producer's time. Though getting an interview might be a big deal

for us as the therapist, it's just one of many details they are trying to juggle.

- *Know their demographics.* Understand the demographic for a given newscast TV show, newspaper, or magazine so you can pitch relevant and helpful topics (have some "audience awareness"; if you don't know the primary audience, ask).

## #9

### Ask them to contact you again

At the end of each interview or correspondence, whether you interview or not, be sure to ask them to keep you in mind as a resource in the future and to keep your contact information should they need your expertise in the future. If you're an easy expert to work with and you are eager to interview,

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## #10 Be a resource

I've learned that offering myself as a resource is a great way to build bridges with the media. I often tell reporters, producers, and journalists to contact me whenever they need someone to interview on a mental health or family relationship topic, and that if I can't do it, or don't feel qualified, I will find them someone who would do an excellent job.

## *Preparing For On Camera Interviews*

If you got an email today from a local or national television station asking to interview you as an expert on camera about one of your specialty areas for a story, how would you respond? Surprisingly, many therapists let the opportunity to speak on camera and reach a large audience pass them by because of their own anxieties and insecurities about being on camera. Landing interviews on local news and talk shows allows thousands of people to "get to know you," hear about your areas of expertise, and become aware of your private practice.

In my experience, the most effective marketing and public relations opportunities for my private practice are the ones I don't have to pay for, where someone else is featuring me as an expert, where I can reach thousands and thousands of people in one shot with accurate information, and where I can let them know that I am in private practice. Several years ago I decided I wanted to not just accept invitations to interview on TV but to actively seek them out and gain media experience. Over the past few years I've become a regular contributor on Utah's #1 women's lifestyle show KSL TV's Studio 5, as well as

being interviewed frequently for various news stories. Here are a few things I've learned in the process to help you land local TV interviews in your area in order to educate your community and to draw potential clients to your private practice.

Thanks to newer social media, TV interviews can reach far beyond the viewership of the live broadcast to a larger audience. Complete segments or clips from your appearances can be linked to from your website, be featured on YouTube or distributed through other social media channels. One example is this short, live interview for a local Utah TV lifestyle program. "How To Handle A Narcissistic Mother" has had over 41,000 views on YouTube (and yes, I'm still working on not saying "um"). This video was the one that prompted the Dr. Phil Show booker to contact me about a possible appearance.

In my own experience, and in researching and speaking with other therapists about their television experiences, I've noted some important advice on preparing for TV interviews and how these interviews can impact your practice.

Here are 10 Tips to help you look and sound like an expert when TV interviews come your way.

*Thanks to newer social media, TV interviews can reach far beyond the viewership of the live broadcast to a larger audience.*

**1 Know the show** Find out *who* is interviewing you, *how long* the interview will be, and *who watches* the show so you can tailor your interview to fit the format and show yourself in your best light. As suggested above, research the show's demographics, audience, and format so you can tailor the interview to the show's viewers. Watch the show on TV or go online and find clips of the newscaster who will be interviewing you to get familiar with his or her interview style.

**2 Develop talking points** Mapping out 5-6 talking points is crucial to building my confidence, producers' trust, and in contributing to an atmosphere of comfortable direction which interviewers will appreciate. I have found that the TV world is very fast-

paced and prepared talking points help me to stay focused. Your talking points might also help some TV anchors stick to the messages you want to highlight, as some anchors tend to go off on tangents. That said, if the interviewer asks a good question that goes a different direction than planned, be flexible and prepared to follow them off topic momentarily before steering your way back to the main issues.

**3 Add visuals and examples** The old adage, "show it, don't just say it" is certainly true when you have a few precious minutes in the spotlight. Working visual elements into your TV segments provides your audience with an additional mode of "learning" that can empower your message. When using examples or visuals of any

kind, being as specific and clear as possible will make you and your message more compelling. Even stories or narratives about you and your practice are more effective than boring clinical descriptions because they *demonstrate* your point more vividly.

#### **4 Prepare and practice**

When preparing for a TV interview, don't just develop clear talking points; develop an ability to deliver them effectively and confidently. Some people find it useful to memorize talking points and then preparing to expand or extend your point with solid examples. Likewise, you should be prepared to deliver your talking points smoothly if your time is cut short. In the television world, there's always a bit of uncertainty, and a big part of that can be time. You never know if your five-minute segment will be cut short or extended by five minutes. Practicing and over-preparing for interviews will ensure that you make the most of your appearance.

#### **5 Remember that you're the expert**

If you're feeling a bit anxious about an upcoming TV interview (which is perfectly natural), remember that you are the expert and they are coming

to you for the specialized knowledge that you can provide. Find comfort in the fact that you are knowledgeable about the breadth and depth of your field in ways that they are not. That said, I would advise that you avoid sounding defensive, overly confident, or too argumentative.

#### **6 Speak in sound bites**

A sound bite is a short phrase or a few phrases of information and, increasingly, it is what people expect from most forms of media. Speaking in sound bites requires therapists to use skills that aren't often practiced. Good therapists often speak slowly, reflect back, pause often, and go deeper; most of us are really good listeners. However, good TV interview skills require the opposite: speak quickly, don't reflect back, keep the interview moving at a good tempo, and stay on target. For

taped TV interviews that will be edited afterward, remember to pause at the end of each thought or phrase to allow for clean editing.

#### **7 Wear comfortable and flattering clothing**

From my own TV experience, I find it's important to wear something comfortable that reflects my professional personality and my practice. If something you're wearing feels awkward or out of place it will detract your focus from the interview. Here are a few "what to wear" tips:

- Bright solid colors generally look better than prints or white.
- Wear colors that have elicited the most compliments in the past.
- Accessorize close to your face, drawing the eye upward.

*Marketing experts say that it generally takes 7 exposures to your business brand before a client will actually try your products or services.*

- Women should wear more makeup than usual; men should also wear some makeup, especially a foundation, because men often have oily skin and are more likely to sweat which can look shiny on screen.

## 8 Look at the interviewer

Unless instructed otherwise, look at the interviewer. If the show is filming with several cameras, it can be confusing to track which camera to look at. For the record, the camera with the red light is the one currently filming. When the interview is over, unless instructed otherwise, also continue looking at the TV host.

## 9 Be yourself

I find it very useful to think of the interview and the filming set (albeit new or unfamiliar) as a comfortable and friendly place. Be glad that you are there. If you can, try to achieve a degree of professional intimacy with your host. Most importantly, relax and be yourself; let your personality show. When it is appropriate, use some humor (though, if in doubt, leave it out). People often make mistakes on camera because they are so worried about making one. Don't worry about making mistakes, everyone does; if you misstate something, just simply restate it more clearly.

## 10 Don't Expect Immediate Results

Media Psychiatrist [Carole Lieberman](#) M.D. says: "Therapists often think that this will grow their practice, but unless you offer some very specific niche therapy that the public may not be familiar with, and patients with this need happen to see your appearance, it is not the most efficient way to get patients. I do not do it to grow my practice. In fact, TV appearances interfere with practice because you often have to reschedule patients at the last minute to do a TV show." While your TV interview experience might not have an immediate impact, it can give you a lot of credibility, especially the kind of "grassroots" publicity I mentioned earlier. Your TV appearance is more about building your name recognition and about your credibility as an expert.

### *Maximizing Media Interviews To Build Your Practice*

While conventional media interviews and appearances rarely lead to an immediate increase in new clients, they do raise awareness of your private practice and your specialty areas, expose thousands of people to your practice, and set

you up as a credible expert in your field. Marketing experts say that it generally takes 7 exposures to your business brand before a client will actually try your products or services.

Thanks to social media, your media interviews can have a life well beyond their publication date or airdate. Here are some tips for getting the most mileage out of media interviews to build your credibility and increase referrals to your practice.

### **1) Be explicit about how you'd like to be introduced**

Reporters aren't worried about your branding; they're concerned about their story. It is your responsibility to protect your practice name and brand by being explicit about how the interviewer should refer to you on camera, on air, or in print. After having a few interviews where they say my practice name incorrectly, or didn't mention it at all, I've learned to clearly spell out how I want to be introduced. In email correspondence with media contact I request something like this:

Please refer to me on camera as "Therapist Julie Hanks LCSW, Director of Wasatch Family."



I also request a lower-third banner (the text box graphic that pops up at the bottom of the screen during interviews) with my name, credential, practice name, and website during the interview. Here's what I ask for: "Julie Hanks LCSW, Director of Wasatch Family Therapy, WasatchFamilyTherapy.com".

## 2) Always request a link to your website

Always request that the reporter or interviewer mention your website address during the interview and if you're on camera, show your website address on a lower-third banner. You want to make it as easy as possible for potential clients to find your practice website, and ultimately, set an appointment. Having large websites link to your website improves your visibility Google searches.

## 3) Capture the video or audio to post on your website

I suggest keeping an archive of all TV, radio, and print interviews so you can use them on your own practice website. If the interview is not available online, you can request a DVD copy of the segment from the TV station or an mp3 of the audio interview.

## 4) Post on social media

The editors of TILT magazine are planning an article in the pipeline where I will address the effective use of social media for therapists, but it is worth mentioning here that social media sites, like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter allow interviews to have a much greater reach than the live TV viewership or readership of a periodical.

## *Is Conventional Media less normal than New Media?*

While we know that some forms of mass media are limited in their reach and effectiveness in today's high-tech world, there's no denying that the general population still gets the majority of their information from TV, radio, and news sources (print or online). Make a change in your approach to conventional media for your good, the growth of your practice, and your ability to help more people in need.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Julie Hanks, LCSW** has over 20 years in the mental health field & 10 years in private practice as owner of Wasatch Family Therapy. She consults with therapists on how to build a fulfilling and profitable therapy business and attract clients through technology and social media. Follow Julie on Twitter & Facebook. She also writes for PsychCentral.com's Ask the Therapist and Private Practice Toolbox.

Have you been interviewed on local or national TV? I'd love to hear about your experience. How did it go? What do you wish you'd known beforehand? If you have any questions for me feel free to ask me on Twitter @Julie\_Hanks or contact me directly here.