

Jo Healey is the author of Trauma Reporting, A Journalist's Guide to Covering Sensitive Stories. A former BBC journalist, Jo delivers Trauma Reporting training to journalists all over the world in how best to work with victims and survivors. She collaborated with British Red Cross and trauma expert Professor Stephen Regel to produce the following guidance.

Media tips for working with refugees;

Think about the impact of losing everything: family, home, country, livelihood, belongings, money, friends, wellbeing

Some key considerations:

Fear: they may feel unsafe, fear for family left behind, fear for the future

Extreme anxiety: the scaffolding of their lives has been destroyed, all is uncertain

Guilt: they have survived, others may not

Trust: a sense of betrayal by people, systems and officials

De-humanised: some describe this as the worst of feelings

Before the interview:

Connection: acknowledge what they are going through. Sit and chat to them with warmth and humanity. Trauma affects people in different ways, make no assumptions about how you think they should respond.

Honesty: be clear who you are, where you are from, why you would like to talk to them. If it helps, share images of your publication or output. Avoid implying your piece will help them.

Consent: be clear what they are agreeing to, talk through any potential risks. Manage expectations carefully around where your material may be seen or heard, how it may be used, particularly if it'll stay online. Always respect anonymity.

Compassion: treat them with dignity, respect, tact, courtesy and care. Be mindful of your body language, be open and unthreatening. Sit at the same level.

Control: think how you can give people, disempowered through trauma, some control over the way you are working with them. Involve, explain and listen to their opinions. Let them choose the location, who they want present. They may not wish children to listen in.

Cultural considerations: is there anything you can do to make the interaction more comfortable for them

The interview:

If you are communicating through an interpreter, direct your attention to your interviewee – though it may feel less intimidating to scan your gaze between the two.

Give them an idea of what you may like to ask, reassure them they only have to answer what they want to answer. Be clear when you are recording.

Trauma can distort thoughts and recall, take your time and allow for this - Ask clarifying questions 'can you tell me more..' 'what happened after..'

Trauma is exhausting, allow breaks. Ground yourself, you may be affected too

Keep your questions open and unchallenging. Listen rather than talk – A useful question may be 'can you help me understand what this journey has been like for you/and your family as it will be helpful for others reading/listening/ watching this to understand what you have experienced.'

If people break down, sit quietly, ask if they may like to take a moment and be guided by them around whether they wish to carry on

After the interview:

They may feel gratitude and overshare, so check they are ok for you to use what they have told you. Involve them in the piece. Be protective of their safety. Any concerns around risk, check with them and the relevant organisation.

Thank them. It may be useful to learn the word for thank you in Dari and Pashto
Avoid offering solutions. The best you can do is to do a good job of telling their story

Check facts carefully. Avoid sensationalising their account. Be clear on terminology around refugees and asylum seekers

Let them know what will happen next and where their story is likely to appear. Let them know who to contact if they have any worries about the interview including what they have said.

Look after yourself. These can be tough stories to cover. Speak to someone you trust soon after the interview. Talk it through