Image-Based Sexual Abuse Media Guide

For those seeking to hear survivors' stories and for the survivors who wish to share them

Prepared by MyOwn Image in partnership with C.A. Goldberg, PLLC

GOALS

Provide press with a comprehensive **best practices guide** for engaging with survivors, along with essential information to help in their coverage.

Empower survivors with the resources and information they need to make informed decisions about how, when, and with whom they share **their** stories.

Support survivors in building their platform by leveraging MyOwn Image's extensive **network** and **resources** to amplify their voices and experiences.

For the media or others seeking to hear survivors' stories

The Responsibility of Media

Media outlets play a **crucial role** in shaping public understanding and support for victims and survivors of image-based sexual abuse. These guidelines are designed to help journalists report on this sensitive issue with **care**, **accuracy**, and **respect**.

A MESSAGE

Engaging with survivors and providing them a platform to share their story is a powerful privilege that presents great responsibility. When working with survivors, their **safety**, **wellbeing**, **and informed consent** should be prioritized.

Survivors possess immense power in sharing their stories, and journalists, researchers, and others with a platform can play a role in raising awareness about tech-facilitated violence. However, it is crucial to **respect** each survivor's choice regarding their involvement in this conversation.

AVOID ‘REVENGE PORN’ TERMINOLOGY

It is critical to **avoid** using the term “**revenge porn**.”

Abuse material is **NOT** pornography.

Using the term “revenge porn” minimizes the harm and distracts from the **systemic sexual violence** and **exploitation** at the core of **IBSA**.

The term 'revenge porn' **fails to recognize** that motivations often extend beyond personal grievance. Instead, they may include financial gain, social status, voyeuristic gratification, humiliation, power, extortion, coercion, etc.

AVOID ‘REVENGE PORN’ TERMINOLOGY

IT’S NOT REVENGE

The term 'revenge porn' **unfairly** shifts the blame onto the victim.

The term implies that the victim is responsible for the dissemination of the images and for provoking the abuse.

No one **ever** does something to **warrant** sexual violence.

We must **stop** incorrectly conflating sexual violence with retaliation.

IT’S NOT PORN

Abuse material is **NOT** pornography.

Pornography is **NOT** abuse.

Nonconsensually created and/or distributed images and videos are tools of **trauma**, **coercion**, and **sexual violence** and is **NOT** entertainment.

Pornography is entertainment.

DO'S FOR ENGAGING WITH SURVIVORS

DO lead with **transparency**. When presenting a press opportunity to a survivor, give all of the details about the project you can, including the angle.

DO use accurate **language** to describe the crime clearly and respectfully (for example, look into why we use the term "image-based sexual abuse" instead of "revenge porn").

DO highlight the survivor's experience and perspective, **respecting** their autonomy and privacy throughout the reporting process.

DO ask how survivors want to be identified. Be sensitive to the fact that you're working with a **survivor of trauma**, and ensure the survivor is equipped with the resources and support to decide to share their story.

DO obtain explicit **consent** before using or sharing **any** images or personal details about the survivor, and respect their boundaries and wishes. Images can either further **harm or endanger** victims, or they can play a crucial role in promoting respect and positive cultural change.

DO'S FOR ENGAGING WITH SURVIVORS

DO ask about the survivor's perspective and reflections from a **nonjudgmental** perspective. It is **never** the victim's fault that someone chose to harm them—victims are attacked because of another person's choice to attack them.

DO emphasize accountability. Make it clear that the responsibility lies with the the person who disseminated these images, **not** the victim, and focus on the abusive nature of their actions.

DO promote awareness. Use your platform to **educate** the public on the seriousness of mage-based sexual abuse (IBSA), its impact on survivors, and the need for effective legal and societal responses.

DO be specific about how the **survivor's story** and quotes will be used, including the specific format in which they will appear.

DO ask the survivor about naming the perpetrator, as there are legal implications, and the survivor may not want their name linked with the perpetrator's.

DON'TS FOR ENGAGING WITH SURVIVORS

DON'T ask **victim-blaming questions** like, "Why did you take the picture?" or "Did you learn your lesson from this?"

DON'T overlook who is actually r**esponsible.** Ensure the focus remains on their actions rather than the victim's behavior or choices.

DON'T **mislead** the survivor about the angle of the story. For example, if the story is meant to tell a certain lesson or highlight a certain element of IBSA, don't tell the survivor you just want to give them a platform to share their story.

DON'T engage with a survivor for "trauma porn." Don't sensationalize a survivor's story with **attention seeking** headlines.

DON'T **exploit** a victim's vulnerability, safety, or legal proceedings for a story.

DON'T provide links to or name a website that features image-based abuse. Doing so amplifies the **reach**, **impact**, **and profitability** of the abuse and may result in legal consequences in jurisdictions where image-based sexual abuse is prohibited.

DON'TS FOR ENGAGING WITH SURVIVORS

DON'T use nude, partially nude, or overtly sexualized images, even if censored. These images can **re-traumatize** the individual being interviewed and may also affect other survivors.

DON'T **search** for or **view** intimate images of the person you are interviewing, or any other victim or survivor, unless you have their explicit consent.

DON'T share intimate images with colleagues or other departments unless you have obtained clear, explicit, and informed consent from the person depicted. Failing to do so **contributes** to the nonconsensual distribution of the victim's intimate images.

KEEP IN MIND FOR PUBLIC FIGURES

DON'T justify public access to intimate images. Being a **public figure** does not make their private images a matter of public interest. Sharing or providing information on where to find these images **invades privacy** and causes further **harm.**

DON'T sensationalize the **victim's identity**. Whether public or private, the victim's **status/identity** should never be used to justify sharing or covering **abusive content**. The crime remains equally harmful, regardless of who the victim is.

DON'T prioritize public curiosity over privacy. The public's curiosity does **not** outweigh the **victim's right to privacy**. Reporting should focus on the **crime** and its impact, **not** on satisfying sensational interest.

DON'T conflate abuse material with pornography. Image-based sexual abuse is a **crime**, not pornography. Labeling it as pornography diminishes the severity of the crime and **misleads** the public, as well as contributes to the stigmatization of pornography.

Avoid shifting blame to the victims and survivors

Avoid questions and statements that could be seen as shifting blame or responsibility onto victims and survivors. Some **examples** of such questions/statements include:

- 'Do you regret taking or sending a nude image?'
- 'So, you won't send another nude image again, will you?'
- 'Why did you save your nude image on your computer?'
- 'If you don't speak up, this will keep happening.'
- 'You owe it to other victims to speak out.'
- 'What lessons did you learn from this?"

Choosing the right images is crucial to ensure respect and dignity for both the individual you are interviewing and other victims and survivors.

Here are some important guidelines to follow:

Avoid using nude, partially nude, or overtly sexualized images, even if they are censored. Such imagery can re-traumatize the person being interviewed and other survivors.

Out of respect, do **not** search for or view intimate images of the individual you are interviewing, or any other victim or survivor, without obtaining explicit consent.

Refrain from sharing any intimate images with colleagues or other departments unless you have obtained clear and explicit consent from the person depicted.

For survivors who wish to share their stories

FOR SURVIVORS

If you're a survivor of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) or any form of abuse, you might feel the urge to share **your story** as a way to reclaim control. Whether you choose to share your story anonymously or go public to reclaim your name, the decision is entirely yours. It's also perfectly valid to want to move on and never speak of it again. **All** are valid and up to each survivor to decide for themselves.

If you're a survivor of image-based sexual abuse (**IBSA**) or any form of abuse, you may feel the need to share your story as a way to regain control. Whether you choose to share anonymously, go public to reclaim your name, or stay private—**your choice** is valid and completely yours. Every survivor has the right to decide what's best for them, and you alone have the right to make that decision for yourself.

We recommend consulting with your mental health team and attorneys to help you decide when, if, and how to tell **your** story. For mental health or legal referrals, please email us at **info@myownimage.org**.

FORMATS FOR TELLING YOUR STORY

- Print/Online written interview (**survivor is quoted**)- book or article feature/profile/expert opinion, etc.
- Op-ed
  - Typically **YOU as the writer** would pitch this to publication(s)
- **TV** or **digital video** interview
- **Documentary** interview
- **Podcast** interview
- Speaking engagement- **talk, panel**, etc.
- Writing **your own book**
  - In the US, this typically involves either working with an agent to sell the proposal to publishers, or to self-publish

THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- Reclaiming control means having the power to share **your** story **when** and **how** you choose.
- If any of the info in this guide or that you want is not provided during the press/media request, **ask!** Ask **all** the questions you need to to confidently make a decision about whether or not to participate. You can ask the interviewer to send a list of **questions** before recording
- Keep in mind that interviews and quotes can be edited and used at the discretion of the journalist or producer, meaning someone else **controls** the final version. That's why it's crucial to gather as much information as possible before agreeing to participate.
- You can also ask if you'll have the opportunity to **preview** the content before publication, though this request may not always be honored.
- Remember, you have a **network** of survivors to vet reporters/producers/etc or get feedback on opportunities, and are here to support you.
- If you have an attorney or an ongoing legal case, **always speak with them before speaking to media.** Failing to do so could negatively impact your case. For advice on defamation or legal risks, only an attorney can provide accurate guidance. Always consult with them before speaking to the media

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN OFFERED A PRESS/MEDIA OPPORTUNITY

- What is the **format** of the **interview**? (In-person, phone, Zoom, etc.)
- What is the **format** of the **publication**? (Outlet, video, audio, print, online)
- What is the expected publication **date**?
    - *Note: Publication dates can be delayed or the story may be canceled*
- **Who** are the organizations and people involved in the project?
- Can you provide a brief **summary** of the project?
- What is the **angle** or goal of this project?
- Who's the target **audience** for this project?
- Is there any **specific legislation** that's being highlighted or targeted with this project?
- What role do you see my story playing in this project?
- Will there be **payment** involved?
    - NOTE: In the US, it is uncommon and often considered unethical for journalists to pay sources, but you might be compensated for speaking events, documentary appearances, etc
- Can I be **referred to** publicly by [full name/pseudonym**)**. Will you agree to this?
- Can I **review** the project or my quotes before publication?
    - NOTE: this is not necessarily customary

WHAT'S THE ANGLE?

Understand that **every** interview has a **specific angle** or **focus**. Each project has a central theme or objective- it's crucial to know what this angle is before participating in an interview.

- **Examples of angles** include: raising awareness about a particular issue (e.g., the impact of IBSA), exploring a current event or trending topic (e.g AI "deep fakes"), highlighting upcoming legislation or policy changes, etc.

...which is why important to know **what's being asked of you**

- Does the interviewer want to focus on the details of your trauma ("**trauma porn**"), potentially sensationalizing it? Are they interested in discussing your journey of healing? Or are they aiming to explore your current work in activism and advocacy? Is the purpose of the piece to highlight upcoming legislation?

...as well as who's involved in the project.

- Knowing which organizations or individuals are **leading** the project can provide insight into any potential agendas.
- Watch for **coded language** that might indicate exclusionary practices or biases, particularly against LGBTQ individuals, BIPOC communities, sex workers, and other marginalized groups. This can help you assess the project's commitment to inclusivity and fairness.

RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- **Lack** of transparency: **vague** information about the project or **evasive** answers to your questions
- **Pressure** to participate: any attempts to **rush or coerce** you into making a decision quickly.
- **Victim-Blaming** language: be cautious if sample questions include language that implies blame or shame on the victim, such as those questioning your actions or choices.
- **Unclear project goals**: uncertainty about the purpose, angle, or objectives of the project.

HOW TO HANDLE THESE RED FLAGS

PRE-INTERVIEW:

- Ask All Of Your Clarifying Questions**:** Ensure you **fully understand** the project by asking any questions you need.
- Request More Time: Inform the interviewer or press contact that you need **additional time** to make your decision. Ask if you can confirm your participation by a specific date.

DURING THE INTERVIEW:

- Address Sensitive Questions **Calmly**: If faced with a question that seems problematic or victim-blaming, respond calmly and **assertively**. For example: “I understand your question, but it could shift the blame onto the victim. The issue is that my consent was violated when I shared an image with someone I trusted to keep it private.”
- Set and Maintain **Boundaries**: If the interviewer disregards your boundaries, you have the right to end the interview. Example language: “I appreciate the opportunity to share my story, but this interview is not proceeding as I expected. I would like to end it now.”

For Survivors Building a Platform

It's a privilege, a responsibility, and an uphill battle.

Building community with other survivors brings immense **fulfillment**, and the physical and emotional labor we put into the movement deserves both recognition and compensation.

As we build our platforms, we have the power to **amplify** the voices of those who are often overlooked or, conversely, to contribute to their silencing. While this work is deeply personal, driving change for all survivors sometimes requires us to step back and de-center ourselves.

The passion of survivors is a driving force behind **meaningful change**, with each of us contributing our unique talents, expertise, and efforts to the movement.

Protect your privacy by ensuring your personal contact information (e.g., address, phone number) isn't easily accessible online—consider using **public data opt-outs**.

While sharing your story publicly is empowering, it can also attract trolls and detractors. Take breaks when necessary, steer clear of negative comments, and rely on a strong support system when things get tough.