

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND
PSYCHOTHERAPY (BACP)**

BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street, Warwickshire CV21 2SG

**ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR THOSE IN THE
MEDIA**

Background. Therapists and Psychologists have frequently been approached to provide psychological support for those participating in what has become known as ‘Reality TV’.

BACP’s ethical guidelines provide a framework that promotes good entertainment while guarding the integrity of those who take part. These guidelines can be used independently or as part of an in-depth consultancy service offered by the BACP.

The BACP Media Service provides advice, information and guidance to production companies and their staff for all stages of the production process including ways of supporting individuals once programmes have ceased. This service also provides guidance and support to BACP members and can act as a mediating body if necessary.

Many BACP Members wear a variety of hats being Psychologists, Life and Business Coaches as well as Counsellors and Psychotherapists. Many production companies have found the BACP Media Service of particular use in being able to provide a diversity of specialist input.

Managing Participant Expectations

- Participants to be told the exact truth as to the type of programme and the role they would be expected to take. It is suggested that a cooling-off period of one week may help those pondering the decision before signing up.
- Participants’ can expect production companies to do all that is reasonable to ensure their emotional and personal well being before, *during* and *after* the programme making.

- Participants can expect that programme makers will do all that is reasonably possible to ensure that those taking part are deemed psychologically resilient so as to withstand the rigours of the programme
- Participants to be fully briefed about the possible consequences of going public so that any consent is fully 'informed'. This may include information about handling celebrity status and returning to normal once the programme and all media interest may have ceased.
- The use of an independent party such as an accredited therapist to be used where appropriate.
- Participants to be fully briefed as to the type of general psychological support available and ways of accessing that support.

Programme Makers' Responsibilities

- To be guided by a relevant professional as to the possible psychological impact a programme may have on participants.
- To be clear about the role and expectations of any professional used and to ensure that this information is transmitted clearly to the person concerned.
- To provide all relevant information to participants and experts alike in written form wherever possible.
- To minimise the likelihood of inappropriate psychological support, programme makers are encouraged to use experts belonging to a recognised professional body that has a code of conduct and appropriate support structures to BACP standards.
- To provide 'follow-up' sessions six months and one year following completion of the programme
- To provide reasonable on-going support in the form of counselling to any participant who is deemed as having been harmed or seriously distressed by being a programme participant.
- To ensure that if the brief for the programme should change following the original psychological assessment that this could make the original psychological assessment inappropriate. It is recommended that the impact of the proposed change be evaluated and that a further psychological assessment take place if required.
- Assessment interviews should always be undertaken on a face to face basis and telephone interviews are not appropriate as the main source of an assessment.

For further information please contact:

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