

# Media guidelines: Sharing personal stories



**DO** publish personal testimonies of women who want to share their stories so others can know what to expect, know they are not alone and feel reassured. The absence of the perspectives of women who have had an abortion can lead to narrow representations of abortion and deny the complexities of women's experiences

**DON'T** over dramatize the experience of abortion. Allow the person who has experienced abortion control over their narrative and where possible, work with her to determine appropriate language and imagery.

**DO** frame abortion as a legitimate and positive choice and credit women's rational reproductive decision-making to avoid inhumane depictions of abortions<sup>1</sup>

**DON'T** imply that only a 'certain type' of woman has abortions or use language that sets them apart from the rest of society. Tell accurate stories of the reality of women's lives and of those who seek abortions: for example, married women with children often have abortions, as well as young, single women. Some adolescents may be pregnant due to sexual abuse; others from consensual relationships but may not have used contraception or condoms effectively.

**DO** use testimony in a responsible and sensitive way. Anonymity may be best in many settings if naming women by telling their stories exposes them to danger.

**DON'T** interpret personal testimony as an epiphany for abortion being 'right' or 'wrong'. The case for abortion rights should never rest on the shoulders of one individual story. Abortion is a collective issue, not just a personal one<sup>2</sup>.

**DO** tell the truth about the tragedy of death and injury from unsafe abortions in countries where abortion is restricted by the law. Share positive stories about the health professionals who provide safe abortion services to save women's lives.

**DON'T** reproduce the idea that there are 'good' and 'bad' abortions.<sup>3</sup> "If you agree with a woman's right to choose, then you cannot start moving the bar around based on whose reasons you do and do not respect."<sup>4</sup>

**DO** report cases of women and safe abortion providers who have been arrested, tried and imprisoned for abortion and publish details of efforts to free them. Use your writing to highlight that abortion is a women's health issue and that criminalisation hurts women and their families.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx\\_factor/2017/04/18/abortion\\_is\\_20\\_times\\_more\\_dangerous\\_on\\_tv\\_than\\_it\\_is\\_in\\_real\\_life.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2017/04/18/abortion_is_20_times_more_dangerous_on_tv_than_it_is_in_real_life.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2016/jun/04/abortion-personal-experiences-legality-hadley-freeman>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.safeabortionwomensright.org/blog/disability-sex-selection-and-the-right-to-choose/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://metro.co.uk/2017/03/21/there-is-no-good-reason-to-have-an-abortion-6522171/#ixzz4f0BaUHfb>