

# **Laps for Life 2025 Participant Media Kit: Safe storytelling & engaging with media**



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## About this resource

Thank you for taking part in Laps for Life this year!

This guide offers practical tips and interactive resources on how you can promote [Laps for Life](#) in the media whilst also prioritising your wellbeing.

Please note that this resource talks about mental health and suicide. If you need support you can visit [ReachOut](#) or here is a list of support [services](#).

## What is safe storytelling?

Many people are taking part in Laps for Life due to a personal lived experience of mental health struggles, suicidal thoughts or the loss of a loved one to suicide.

These topics might come up if you decide to take part in a media interview about Laps for Life.

It's important to consider how we communicate about these topics to promote the safety of ourselves and others.

Safe storytelling is the practice of sharing our lived experience of mental health struggles and life's challenges in a purposeful and meaningful way.

The aim is to maintain our safety and the safety of the audience. It helps protect everyone from harm and also helps to reduce the stigma that can surround mental health.

## Getting started - check in on how you're feeling

Are you feeling happy and well enough to undertake something like sharing your story in the media? If the answer is no or you're not sure that's ok - this might be something you want to revisit at a later date.

## Framing your story

- What details would you like to include or exclude when describing your experience (your boundaries)? How much are you comfortable sharing? *e.g an experience that is ongoing, recent, traumatic, or extremely personal might not be something you want to discuss.* You can choose to just talk about swimming if that makes you feel more comfortable.
- What is the purpose of sharing your story and the message you want to get across? For example, is it to encourage others to seek help and if so how can you ensure this message comes through in your interview?
- We strongly encourage you to speak about your own experiences only. If it's not just your story and/or it impacts others, consider how this might make them feel.

*Tip: writing your story down can help you to figure out which parts you want to include and what you might like to exclude for sharing with media.*

## Safe language

The words that we use and the level of detail we provide when we talk about mental health and suicide matter. They can have a big impact on how we and others feel when sharing a distressing story, they can help break down stigma and they can encourage help seeking.

Refer to the [Mindframe Language guidelines](#) for a comprehensive language guide.

Tip: Ask the journalist if they are familiar with the Mindframe guidelines before your interview. If they are not ask them to contact: [media@reachout.com](mailto:media@reachout.com)

## Preparing to tell your story and seeing it in the media

When it comes to sharing your story in the media, your mental health should always come first.

Here are some suggestions of how you might look after your mental health:

- Create a self care plan for before and after your interview
- Identify some trusted people you can talk to after your interview or after the story is published. This might be a family member, friends or a mental health support service.
- Consider what you need to feel safe and most supported when sharing your story with media e.g having a support person with you, bringing a fidget toy, practising breathing exercises, taking a break if needed

## Other things to consider

- Do you want your photograph/image and full name to appear in the newspaper or online, or your face to be shown on television? Do you want your name and voice to be broadcast on radio? The journalist might also ask you what suburb you live in. If you're not comfortable with sharing these details that's ok but it may mean that media isn't right for you at the moment.
- Are you over 18? If not, do you have permission from your parent or carer to share your experience in the media?
- Are you confident when it comes to maintaining boundaries around what lived experience you want to share? For example, if a journalist asks you a question you don't want to answer, you might say "thanks for asking me that question, I would prefer to move on to the next one please."
- Do you attend an educational institution or workplace that places restrictions on your ability to speak with the media?
- It is likely that your story will be able to be found via Google for many years to come. How does that make you feel now and how do you think you would feel about that in the future? Are you ok with your story showing up when you Google yourself or when others Google you?
- Do you have open profiles on social media? If so, how might you feel if your story is shared widely, commented on or even targeted by trolls?

## Support links

- [ReachOut LifeLine Kids Helpline](#)

## Check-list

- I understand what safe storytelling is.
- I have crafted my own story and checked it aligns with safe storytelling guidelines and Mindframe's language guidelines.
- I can identify my media boundaries and I am confident in setting them.
- I've worked on a self care plan to support me when sharing my story in the media.
- I'm aware of some of the things that can go wrong when sharing in the media and I feel like I can cope with them at this point.
- I've thought about the practical things like any restrictions I might have on sharing my story, my Google presence etc.

## Approaching media and pitching your story

### How to get started...

- There are lots of media outlets out there - your local ones can be the best place to start.
- Identify the journalist you would like to contact. You could start with the Editor (Newspaper/Online publication) or the Producer (TV/Radio). Google is your friend!
- If you have seen a similar story recently, keep an eye out for who the journalist was and get in touch with them.
- Getting in touch in February is great so that people reading or seeing your story have a chance to get organised and take part too. March also works well too!

### Things to remember:

- If someone in the media asks you for information about Laps for Life, ReachOut, youth mental health or suicide prevention please contact: [media@reachout.com](mailto:media@reachout.com)
- We encourage you to talk about your Laps for Life goals, who you are swimming with and why, but we ask that you be clear that you're not an official representative of ReachOut.

### Tips for approaching different media outlets

- When emailing journalists keep it simple and short, including key info like what your story idea is, why it's important and link to the Laps for Life website.
- Think about what might be unique or special about your Laps for Life journey - it might be your reason for swimming, how far you are swimming or even where you are swimming.
- You can also pitch your story idea over the phone to the journalist if that suits you better. Make some notes before you call them so that you know exactly what you want to say.
- Remember that when it comes to media pitching it's important to have a thick skin as many stories are rejected. Keep in mind that this isn't personal and your story just may not be aligned with other things the journalist is working on at the moment.
- Don't forget that following up is important. You might email or call again a few days later if you haven't heard back from the journalist to see if they have seen your pitch and if they are interested in the story.

For newspapers: you might want to include a photo that they could print in the newspaper or mention in your email that you are open to having your photo taken.

For TV: you can mention in your email to the journalist that you are happy to be filmed / appear on camera.

### Example email to a media outlet:

Dear x,

My name is x and I live in x location.

I am getting in touch because this year I am/we are participating in an event called [Laps for Life](#) in support of a very important cause - youth mental health and suicide prevention.

The funds raised for Laps for Life are in support of youth mental health service [ReachOut](#) which supports young people and their parents across Australia.

My/our goal is to swim x laps. I am swimming with a group of x number of people in a team called x.

The interesting thing about my swimming journey is... The reason I am participating in Laps for Life is...

You can learn more about Laps for Life [here](#).

If you would like to interview me and/or my swimming team please let me know.

<<Optional to include>>: We are/I am also happy to have our/my photograph taken for this piece.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

x

### Some examples of great media coverage:

- [Harry's big swim for Laps For Life](#)
- [Megan Crowhurst and Luke Hillenburg are participating in the Laps for Life challenge to raise awareness for youth mental health.](#)
- [Psychologist to swim 56km over 100 days to raise money for youth mental health](#)
- [Poppy makes a splash with fundraising efforts](#)

### Check-list

- I know what media outlet I'd like to get in touch with.
- I know which journalist could be good to approach.
- I have a draft email ready to go or I'm prepared for my phone call.
- I know when I'd like to follow up with them.

## Preparing for your interview

### Tips for acing your interview:

- Wear something you feel comfortable and confident in. Keep in mind that you may be asked to be interviewed or photographed at the pool. That can mean in your swimwear but doesn't have to.
- Arrive early & bring a support person
- Note that a lot of interviews might happen over the phone or via Zoom
- Have a plan for what you can do if you're feeling stressed during the interview - for example; taking some deep, calming breaths
- See the FAQs section for more tips

### Check-list

- I have completed interview preparation/practice
- I have identified my self-care strategies and strategies for distress for before, during, and after engaging with media
- I am aware of mental health support services I can reach out to
- I have my own support network

## Sharing your journey on social media

Social media can be an incredible platform for fundraising initiatives, raising awareness about mental health, and sharing your story. If you engage with the media, you may also want to share your interview on your social media platforms. You can tag our Instagram page: [@lapsforlife.aus](#) and [@reachout\\_aus](#)

Here's our guide for using these platforms to fundraise & share your lived experience story safely:

### Tips for using social media

- Remember how public social media can be, consider your boundaries
- Refer to the safe storytelling section & be authentic
- Be mindful that sharing your experience might invite others to do so on your post and disclosures may be triggering. Maintain your boundaries, practice self-care, and have knowledge of mental health services/resources to share with others.
- Make use of multiple platforms. Facebook is the perfect platform for fundraising. People who use social media raise on average twice as much as other fundraisers!
- For further reach, use hashtags such as: #LapsforLife #Lapsforlife2025 #MentalHealth #SwimtoSaveLives & ask others to share your post
- Check your account & post privacy settings if you are uncomfortable sharing it beyond your friends (though remember that others can screenshot posts)
- Post progress updates to engage your audience
- Engage respectfully with people who respond to your story and/or donate
- Remember you can delete comments and block users if you need
- Use visuals such as the social media tiles linked below
- Draft your post separately in a document first

### Social media tiles:

[L4L Fundraising Resources](#)

### Post Template Example:

*I'm diving in the pool this March to save lives by participating in [@LapsforLife.Aus](#). All money raised will go towards [@reachout\\_aus](#), who support young people in Australia with their mental health.*

[you might add something here about your personal experience with ReachOut or you might add something about why this cause matters to you personally & share your lived experience story]

*Please support me to help make a difference by sponsoring me here: \_\_\_\_ and sharing my post. Every dollar counts.*

*#LapsforLife #Lapsforlife2025 #MentalHealth #SwimtoSaveLives*

### Check-list

- I know how to safely share on social media
- I know that sharing on social media might invite others to comment on mental health challenges
- I know if I share on social media publically, my image may be reposted by others

## Frequently asked questions

### What if the media doesn't respond?

- Most journalists get 1000s of emails and many calls per day from people with great story ideas. Sadly not every story idea can become a final story. So many don't make it to publication! Remember it's most often not a personal decision or reflective of your amazing efforts in the pool.
- If the journalist doesn't respond to your email or call, feel free to follow them up once or twice to see if they have had a chance to read your email.
- If you still don't hear from them it is safe to assume that the story wasn't right for them this time around.
- If your story has been declined and it's impacting your mood, consider what self care or support you might need right now.

### How should I prepare for my interview?

- Preparation is key when it comes to media interviews.
- Think about how you can prepare for your media interview - for example with notes, practising with a friend or reading other articles about Laps for Life to see how other people have answered questions about the fundraiser. You can see links for some articles in the 'Approaching Media' section.
- You might even film yourself answering questions you think the journalist might ask and watch yourself back to see what you might like to adapt
- You could also consider making a wellbeing plan before your interview - including things like how you might calm your nerves before an interview, how you might reward yourself for doing a great interview and how you might cope if the story doesn't turn out as you had planned or how you might celebrate if it's a fabulous story!

### What if a journalist misrepresents my story?

- In some cases, you may feel that you have not been represented in the story as you would have liked. For example, you might have been misquoted or your name may have been spelled incorrectly.
- Before contacting the journalist about this, think about the resolution you are looking for.
- In the case of an online article changes may be easy, however if your story ran in the newspaper, on TV or the radio a correction may not be possible.
- In some cases you might choose to not get in touch with the journalist, understanding that sometimes mistakes happen and it was probably not on purpose or to upset you.
- If you are feeling upset you might consider what self-care or support you need right now.

### What if I'm asked a question I don't know the answer to?

- You don't need to know all of the answers to every question you are asked by the journalist.
- You can kindly point out that you're not a mental health expert but also refer to any of your own experiences, which might be relevant to answering the question.
- Consider saying something like "Thanks for asking that but I'd prefer to move on to the next question" or you can just say something simple like "Great question but I

don't know the answer". Most journalists will be very understanding and respectful when you make your boundaries clear.

## **What if I regret sharing something?**

- If you are concerned about sharing too much, you might ask if you can provide your quotes via email. That way you can write out your answers and be clear on exactly what quotes you are providing.
- Remember that once you have shared info with the journalist it is out of your control what they choose to publish.
- If you share something you regret and the story has not yet gone live, consider getting in touch with the journalist and letting them know which parts of the story you no longer want to share. Be sure to do this as quickly as you are able to.
- You can also ask the journalist if you can read, watch or listen to your story before it goes live. Please keep in mind that this is rarely allowed. And if they do let you see the story you may not be able to suggest any changes or your suggestions may not be taken onboard- the journalist has final control over this.
- Consider in advance what self care or support you may need if you are not happy with the final story.

## **Can I request the questions in advance?**

- Before your media interview, it's a good idea to ask the journalist if they are happy to provide a list of questions in advance.
- In some cases they will provide you with these and in others they might just give you an overview of what you can expect to talk about in the interview.
- Keep in mind that on the day there may be other / different questions from the ones they provided in advance. It can be good to write down the points you want to speak about generally rather than learn the answer to every question - that will also make your answers feel more genuine.

## **Where can I find statistics to mention in my interview?**

- Remember that the purpose of your interview is to share your experience of Laps for Life, swimming and mental health if you choose to.
- You are not speaking as a mental health expert and therefore you don't have to remember any statistics or give any advice to others.
- However, you can find statistics on the [Laps for Life](#) and the [About ReachOut](#) websites. You can share these with the journalist as resources if they are looking for statistics too.

## **Who can I speak to for more advice?**

If you would like to become a Laps for Life case story or get more advice about working with media when it comes to Laps for Life please contact: [media@reachout.com](mailto:media@reachout.com).