



**JAMES W. FOLEY**  
**LEGACY FOUNDATION**

***The James W. Foley***  
***Journalism Safety Modules***

**Developed in collaboration with the**  
**Marquette University Diederich College of**  
**Communication**



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# James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules

## Lessons for Undergraduate Journalism and Communications Programs: An Overview

The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, in collaboration with Marquette University's Diederich College of Communication, developed the James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules with undergraduate students of journalism and communication studies in mind. These safety modules serve as the undergraduate companion piece to the James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide.\* Our goal is to introduce journalism and communications students to safety as a key component of the craft of journalism. We believe the safety of young journalists is of paramount importance and that aspiring journalists must know how to prepare for – and respond to – danger if they choose to pursue a career in this field.

The James W. Foley Journalism Safety Modules are intended to help educators create a culture that promotes safety for all journalism and communications students. Each module is designed to be implemented into existing courses. Depending on the needs of the instructor and the content covered in the course, the modules can be incorporated into part of a class period, a full class period, or multiple class periods. Some instructors include one module into their course; others have incorporated materials from multiple modules. When implementing the safety module materials, instructors may use all the readings and/or scenarios or select among them. In addition, modules do not have to be followed in a linear pattern; rather, instructors should incorporate modules into existing courses based on how the materials fit with the content of their course.

Through the implementation of these safety modules, our goal is to inspire students and instructors to think about safety throughout the undergraduate experience. The thirteen safety modules cover a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, completing risk assessments, the responsibilities of newsroom managers, the safety of female and minority journalists, covering civil unrest, emotional self-care, care of sources, interviewing hostile sources, reporting on foreign conflicts, protecting digital data, covering weather-related stories, and reporting during the current pandemic. Along the way, students will learn to view safety as an essential component of strong, healthy, and ethical journalism.

\*The James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide, designed by Ellen Shearer of the Medill School of Journalism and available at <https://jamesfoleyfoundation.org/academy-welcome>, is intended to serve graduate students in journalism. The Journalist Safety Guide was created through a collaboration of Medill's National Security Journalism Initiative and the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, and in partnership with *Reporters Without Borders* and *A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS)*.

*The James W. Foley Legacy Foundation would like to thank the Scripps Howard Foundation and the Society of Professional Journalists Foundation for their generous support of this project.*

## Module 1: Introduction to Journalism Safety

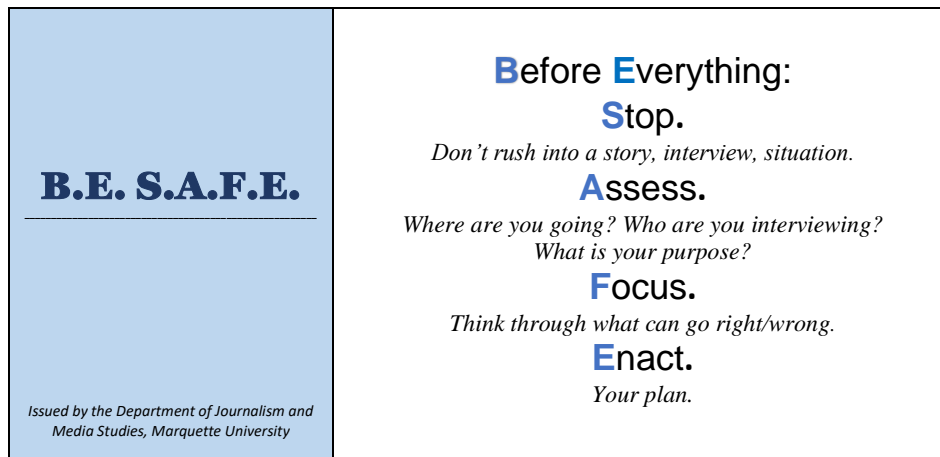
### Objective

Early in their undergraduate experience, most journalism and communications students learn about the important role a free press plays within democracies and how the U.S. Constitution specifically protects the freedom of the press. Quite simply, the importance of a free press cannot be overstated. In *Democracy in America* (1835 & 1840), Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, “The more I observe the main effects of a free press, the more convinced am I that, in the modern world, freedom of the press is the principal...element of freedom.” Attacks on the media are nothing new, but journalists face an increasingly hostile environment. The Society of Professional Journalists’ Code of Ethics posits the following: Journalists should “seek truth and report it” and they “should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.” More than ever, being a courageous journalist requires the tools to be a safe journalist.

Just as aspiring journalists should consider the important role a free press plays in a democracy, they should also think about the importance of safety in the field of journalism – their physical and emotional safety, the safety of their colleagues, the safety of their sources, the safety of their digital data, the safety of their equipment, etc. As journalists, students will learn that ‘safety’ is more than just responding to uncomfortable and/or dangerous situations. Safety begins by developing everyday habits that allow journalists to effectively and confidently practice their craft. This includes practicing skills that may not seem to fall under the heading of ‘safety,’ such as getting to know an area by walking around the city and visiting new neighborhoods to gain a greater understanding of the places in which they work. These basics can help keep journalists safe even in spaces that may not appear ‘unsafe.’

### B.E. S.A.F.E. (Before Everything Stop Assess Focus Enact)

This introductory module is designed to develop safe habits for aspiring journalists, editors, newsroom managers and media members. During orientation or early in the semester, each student should be introduced to the **easy-to-remember** acronym **BE SAFE** (Before Everything Stop Assess Focus Enact). We suggest creating a business card with **BE SAFE** on one side and a summary of the Society of Professional Journalists preamble with important contact #s on the other side. See below:





The ethical journalist is **accurate** and **fair**; treats sources, subjects, colleagues and the public **respectfully**; meets the highest and primary obligation to **serve the public**; takes **responsibility** for one's work; and is willing to **explain one's decisions** to the public.

*From: Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics*

**On-Campus Police:** 414.288.1911 **Off-Campus Police:** 911

**SPLC:** 202.785.5450 **RCFP:** 800.336.4243

**Marquette Counseling Center:** 414.288.7172

This business should be carried by journalism students as a reminder to always think about safety as part of their education.

### **Suggested Readings**

“Six months later, the Capital-Gazette shooting still resonates, among family, community, news industry” by Jean Marbella, *The Baltimore Sun* (Dec. 20, 2018)

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/year-in-review/bs-md-yir-capital-gazette-1231-story.html>

Written six months after the shooting at the *Capital-Gazette*, this article discusses the heated rhetoric surrounding journalism while also emphasizing the importance of local journalism: “Without local journalism, you don’t have a community,” [Lucy] Dalglish said. “This is how people develop a civilization, how they develop a civil society.” This is a reminder that journalism and, in particularly local journalism, is essential to our democracy, our way of life.

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. What are your motivations for pursuing a degree in journalism and/or communications?**

- This will provide students with the opportunity to voice their interest in the field and discuss what they view as important about this profession.

**2. Why do you think the role of the media is under so much scrutiny?**

- Discuss how impressions about media have changed over time and what impact that has had on the profession.

**3. Why do you think it is important to learn safety training when preparing to work in the media?**

- This is a good opportunity to gauge how students view the importance of safety training for journalists. They may feel that all journalists/media members need to have safety training, or they may feel that it depends on the stories being covered. In truth, all stories can have the potential to become dangerous, from local school board meetings to sporting events to accidents, fires, etc. Journalists must be prepared.

“Doing No Harm: The Call for Crime Reporting that Does Justice to the Beat” by Natalie Yahr, *Center for Journalism Ethics* (Aug 22, 2019)

<https://ethics.journalism.wisc.edu/2019/08/22/doing-no-harm-the-call-for-crime-reporting-that-does-justice-to-the-beat/>

The best journalism is ethical journalism. Young journalists should begin to understand that being safe does not mean only considering the risks they may face. Journalists must consider the harm they may cause themselves, the local community, and/or the journalism profession if they do not maintain ethical

standards and report responsibly. Safety, as it relates to healthy journalism, reaches far beyond the newsroom. Yahr writes, “Pressure to meet deadlines or be first on a story can push reporters to publish before they’ve got all the facts, and incomplete or inaccurate stories can harm multiple players. Outlets may have to issue corrections or retractions or fight lawsuits. Reporters may face reprimand. Innocent people may be unjustly maligned, and readers may lose confidence in journalists’ reporting.” This article should provide the foundation for a robust discussion on the role of journalism that expands the way students may think about their responsibilities.

### Discussion Questions

- 1. Often when thinking about safety, the focus may be on physical or emotional risks, threats, or dangers. But safety goes beyond that. How does being an ethical journalist help ensure the safety of the journalist, the community, and the journalism profession?**

One of the first things a young journalist learns is “Do no harm.” Young journalists should consider how being an ethical journalist is the foundation for being a safe journalist.

Instructors are encouraged to explore how being ethical is the foundation for safely performing the craft of journalism. In today’s 24/7 news cycle, there is pressure to get the scoop first. In this article, Gary Fields, formerly of the *Washington Post* and *USA Today*, recognizes this pressure and offers this advice: “Get it right first, then get it first.”

“We Need to Talk About the Dangers of Journalism” by Melanie Pineda, *Washington Square News* (NYU’s Independent Student Newspaper) (Oct 16, 2018)

<https://nyunews.com/2018/10/15/10-16-ops-pineda/>

This piece by Melanie Pineda, Deputy Opinion Editor at NYU’s *Washington Square News*, mentions the importance of journalism programs incorporating safety into the curriculum. Pineda notes that safety has become more of an issue for U.S.-based reporters, but the focus is primarily on the safety concerns of journalists working abroad. This begs the question, what responsibility do journalism and communications programs have when it comes to preparing students to *safely* practice journalism?

### Discussion Questions

- 1. Why should journalism programs incorporate safety lessons into their curriculum? What types of danger do journalists – here and abroad – face? After responding to the first question, students, working individually or in small groups, should generate a list of dangers that journalists face. This can lead to a discussion about safety and why journalists must be prepared to protect themselves, their colleagues, their sources, their equipment, etc.**

Journalism has grown more dangerous in recent years. While there is inherently more danger for journalists covering conflicts, that does not mean that there are not risks – physically, emotionally, digitally – to journalists working any beat in any country.

Journalists have been physically targeted and harassed in person and online. In some cases, U.S. media members have been arrested for doing their jobs (e.g., Ferguson, MO). The media has been vilified and labeled “fake news” by President Trump, and individual media members have been singled out.

## Module 2: Developing Safe Journalistic Habits

### Objective

When preparing to cover a story, journalists must understand their decisions will have direct bearing on their safety and the safety of others. While there can be risk in covering any story, careful planning and a thoughtful risk assessment can help mitigate the dangers. It is important to have thought through how to manage risk and how to respond in any situation.

Dual goals then arise: Reporting accurately and completely if a situation turns chaotic and dangerous while minimizing risk to avoid injury or worse. The best way to mitigate risk is through preparation. Of course, journalists should assume controversial issues such as abortion, police shootings, or divisive political campaigns or rallies have the potential to become violent. Think about the rhetoric being used and the types of groups involved. However, risk assessments should be completed before covering any story. Do not assume that because similar events have not been dangerous, the assignment will be safe. Much depends on a journalist's ability to react in situations that can turn in the blink of an eye. Advanced preparation – even practicing responses to danger – can help reporters react correctly without thinking. Journalists should also be realistic about their physical and emotional thresholds. If a journalist deems the risk too great, the decision should not be treated as a source of shame or stigma.

Again, journalists must avoid assuming there is no risk in covering seemingly less controversial or risky stories. Recent history – the Boston marathon bombings, the Las Vegas concert shooting, the attack at the *Capital-Gazette* newsroom, etc. – shows that journalists and newsroom employees must always be prepared. Not scared. Prepared.

### Readings & Scenario

**Risk Assessments for Journalists** (See page 57 for Risk Assessment for Journalists)

Risk assessments help journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers prepare for potential risks involved in covering any assignment. A risk assessment identifies possible risks that may be encountered and helps to mitigate them. In short, journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers need to do their due diligence when assessing the risk/reward of covering any story. Young journalists should talk to colleagues or instructors who have worked or reported on similar beats. This can include peers, instructors, and other experienced journalists.

Every risk assessment is context dependent based on the assignment. It is essential to remember that conflict zones are not the only places where there is risk and danger involved. Journalists should take a risk assessment-informed approach because all reporting carries the possibility of risk. Journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers should complete risk assessments that cover steps taken from the beginning to the proposed end of the assignment.

In a risk assessment, think through potential “What if...?” scenarios to help identify and classify potential risks. This should include both possible and improbable threats that may arise when covering an assignment. Ultimately, the most important question every journalist must confront is whether the risks involved are worth the benefits of covering a story and completing the assignment.

“For student journalists, the beats are the same but the protections are different” by Stephanie Sugars, *Freedom of the Press Foundation* (Dec 2, 2019)

<https://pressfreedomtracker.us/blog/student-journalists-beats-are-same-protections-are-different/>

This article addresses press freedom challenges student journalists face, most of which are similar to those their professional counterparts experience. This article considers how the shuttering of many newsrooms has expanded the reach of student journalists as they begin to fill that void and provide local journalism for many communities. Stephanie Sugars notes that student journalists “assume many of the same risks, including legal challenges, subpoenas, arrests, assaults and secondary screenings when crossing the border.”

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. How has the changing landscape of journalism impacted the role of student journalists?

- This is an excellent opportunity to explore the role of student journalism not only as it relates to the school community, but the surrounding community as well. Many times, student journalists fill the void of local journalism. This increases the responsibility that young journalists must assume and, as such, should be considered when preparing to cover local stories.

#### 2. What are some of the risks that student journalists may face?

- Student journalists must recognize that they take on the same risks as full-time journalists. These risks may be physical (assaults), emotional (online harassment and cyberbullying), or legal (subpoenas and arrests). Being aware of this, students should know their rights. Awareness will help young journalists pursue their craft more safely.

“Safety and Self-care Strategies for Every Beat” by Annie Hylton, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (Nov 9, 2015)

<https://dartcenter.org/resources/panel-offers-strategies-on-safety-security-and-self-care>

This resource from the *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* offers advice from three experienced media members and is a reminder that ALL journalists must take safety measures and precautions seriously.

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. What makes Yamiche Alcindor, Donna DeCesare, and Danny Spriggs media experts?

- Alcindor, White House correspondent for the *PBS NewsHour*, has covered protests in Ferguson, MO, and Baltimore; DeCesare, a documentary photographer, has focused on civil conflict, natural disaster, and gang members and their families throughout Latin America and the United States and teaches journalism at University of Texas-Austin; Spriggs, vice president of global security at the *Associated Press*, spent decades in the Secret Service.

#### 2. Safety does not happen by accident. In order to BE SAFE\*, journalists need to continuously make intentional choices. What are some of the safety strategies that Alcindor, DeCesare, and Spriggs discuss? How do these strategies help journalists to “BE SAFE”?

- Many of the strategies offered – be prepared, know yourself, be mindful, bring the right equipment, complete a risk assessment, know where you are going, etc. – are the foundation for developing safe habits when it comes to a journalist’s safety. Instructors can connect these seemingly simple strategies into practice in order to BE SAFE\*.
- Use the Risk Assessment for Journalists (see page 57), modified from the Rory Peck Trust, to encourage young journalists to think about their safety, the safety of their colleagues, and the safety of others.
- \* **Before Everything Stop Assess Focus Enact (from Module 1)**

“Photographer Tom Fox on encounter with Dallas gunman: ‘He’s going to look at me around that corner’ and shoot” by Sharon Grigsby, *Dallas News* (June 17, 2019)

<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/dallas/2019/06/17/dmn-photographers-encounter-gunman-going-look-around-corner-going-shoot>

Photographer Tom Fox was on assignment to photograph a defendant in a fraud case. While waiting, a gunman started shooting near where Fox was stationed. Fox snapped a picture of the shooter staring directly at him at a close distance. Heading into the day, Fox simply planned to cover this fraud case and then head over to cover a mayoral and City Council inauguration. However, this was not the first time Fox encountered something unexpected. In the article, Fox recalls a time when he was attacked by pit bulls “in the middle of nowhere” in Louisiana while covering the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. This serves as a basic reminder to always expect the unexpected.

### Discussion Question

**1. Was there any way that Fox could have been prepared for an active shooter when covering the fraud case at the courthouse? Why is it important for journalists to at least consider these types of incidents occurring? Discuss.**

- While there is no way to be absolutely prepared for an incident like this, journalists should have an idea of how to respond in the event of something like this. In Fox’s case, he hid behind the column of the building and “made himself as small as possible.” Despite seeing puffs of smoke from ricocheting bullets, Fox waited where he was until he observed police running down the street in the direction of the shooter. At that point, Fox determined it was safe enough to move from his location.

Journalists need to expect the unexpected because having a plan – and that’s where risk assessments, introduced in module 2 and 3, come into play – can be the difference between life and death. Journalists need to think through various scenarios before heading out on assignment in case the unexpected occurs.

“7 safety tips for on-the-scene journalists” from *Muck Rack Blog* (July 8, 2014)

<https://muckrack.com/blog/2014/07/08/7-safety-tips-for-on-the-scene-journalists>

This resource, included here and in Module 4, provides seven specific steps for journalists to take when covering developing stories and giving firsthand accounts of things happening, especially if this requires being in harm’s way in order to capture the story.

### Discussion Question

**1. What are the seven steps mentioned in this article? Why is it important to take these steps when covering developing stories? List and discuss.**

- What to carry
- First-Aid kit
- Be aware of your surroundings
- Bring important information
- What to wear
- Take care of yourself
- Do not work alone

## Module 3: Running a Newsroom – Creating a Culture of Safety

### Objective

This module will assist aspiring newsroom managers in considering the safety of journalists and other staff members when handing out assignments. Newsroom managers should not fault or penalize a journalist for questioning or turning down an assignment if the potential risk is deemed too great. Newsroom managers should clearly inform their staff about the support that is provided, including emotional counseling for those who experience trauma on the job. If these issues are not addressed when a journalist begins a story, stressful complications may result later. Additionally, newsroom managers should always check in on their staff after a story has been covered, especially stories that involve traumatic situations.

### Readings/Resources

**Risk Assessments for Newsroom Managers** Modified from the *Rory Peck Trust* with input from Mark Zoromski, Marquette University Director of Student Media (See page 58 for Risk Assessment for Newsroom Managers)

Risk assessments help journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers prepare for potential risks when covering any assignment. The goal is to identify possible risks that may be encountered and help to mitigate them. In short, journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers need to do their due diligence when assessing the risk/reward of covering any story. It is often useful for young journalists to talk to colleagues or instructors who have worked or reported on similar beats. This includes peers, instructors, and other journalists.

Every risk assessment is context dependent and changes based on the assignment. It is imperative to recognize that conflict zones are not the only place where there is risk and danger involved. Journalists should take a risk assessment-informed approach to reporting because all reporting carries the possibility of danger.

Journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers should complete risk assessments that cover steps taken from the beginning through the end of the proposed assignment. When completing a risk assessment, journalists, crew members, and newsroom managers can and should draw upon their own experiences while also consulting more experienced colleagues and sources to more fully understand the nature of threats that could arise.

In a risk assessment, it is helpful to think through potential “What if...?” scenarios to help identify and classify potential risks. This can include both possible and improbable threats that may arise when covering an assignment. Ultimately, the most important question a journalist must confront is whether the (potential) risks involved are worth the benefits of covering a situation and completing an assignment.

When completing a risk assessment, newsroom managers should be able to answer important questions when assigning stories to staff. Questions in the risk assessment should become second nature so that managers develop the habit of considering this type of risk assessment for any story that staff members may cover. As the suggested readings below demonstrate, seemingly simple beats or stories have the potential to turn dangerous and create emotional, traumatic experiences for the journalists covering them.

### Discussion Questions

1. **Why is it important for the newsroom manager to conduct a risk assessment before assigning staff members to cover a story? What is the danger of not doing so?**

- Most importantly, it is important for the newsroom manager to conduct a risk assessment to ensure that he or she is looking out for safety of the staff. While the primary danger in not conducting a risk assessment is that staff members may be put at risk, there are other reasons as well. The newsroom manager sets the tone for a healthy, safe work environment by showing that he or she has the staff's best interest in mind. This helps create a culture of safety inside the newsroom. If the newsroom manager is not taking safety risks seriously, this can trickle down through the staff creating divisions and negatively impacting the work environment.

“10 resolutions for newsroom managers in 2018” by Jill Geisler, *Columbia Journalism Review* (Jan 2, 2018)

[https://www.cjr.org/business\\_of\\_news/newsroom-managers-editors-advice.php](https://www.cjr.org/business_of_news/newsroom-managers-editors-advice.php)

Geisler consulted with top news leaders for suggestions on how to develop a strong newsroom. Students should consider how Geisler's list of ten suggestions will benefit the entire team. Be prepared to discuss how these suggestions can work within the newsroom.

### Discussion Question

1. **What suggestions does Jill Geisler offer to help build a strong team within the newsroom? How can these suggestions be implemented in the newsroom? Please list and discuss.**

- Be clear about priorities.
- Establish your election game plan coverage – now!
- Accelerate the “power shift.”
- Commit to upgrading your feedback.
- Make yourself available.
- Look for buried treasure in your own shop.
- Recruit – even if you are not hiring today.
- Remember: The term “fake news” is now political. You are not.
- Take care of yourself.
- Never lost sight of a manager's true responsibility.

“Plan for the expected and unexpected: What you need to think about when completing a risk assessment” by Caroline Scott, *WAN IFRA: World Association of News Publishers* (June 4, 2019)

<https://blog.wan-ifra.org/2019/06/04/plan-for-the-expected-and-unexpected-what-you-need-to-think-about-when-completing-a-risk->

This article explains the importance of newsrooms promoting healthy habits that will help protect journalists. Completing risk assessments is an essential part of creating a strong, capable newsroom. Covering stories like the Boston Marathon or the concert in Las Vegas can turn dangerous in the blink of an eye. Newsroom managers can help set the tone by making sure that risk assessments and safety measures are being taken seriously by all staff members.

### Discussion Questions

1. **Besides physical threats, what are some other threats facing journalists? Why are risk assessments considered a necessity?**
  - Besides being physically threatened, there is also the risk of emotional trauma and threats to digital data and equipment.

**2. What are the tips that Sally Fitton, High Risk Adviser in the BBC High Risk Team, provides for managers and staff to come to grips with risk assessments? Why is this an important part of the preparation? List and discuss.**

- Design an easy-to-follow template
- Identify risk, and put mitigations in place
- Know your team's experience and competency as well as local relationships
- Assess the environment
- Have a plan – and stick to it
- Process, editorial sign off

“Are Newsrooms Doing Enough to Take Care of Their Journalists’ Mental Health and Safety?” by Nu Yang, *Editor and Publisher* (Sep 17, 2018)

<https://www.editorandpublisher.com/feature/are-newsrooms-doing-enough-to-take-care-of-their-journalists-mental-health-and-safety/>

This article examines the emotional toll that journalists can experience. These stories can often start off as simple events that evolve into traumatic situations. For instance, John Tlumacki had covered the Boston Marathon for over two decades when bombings near the finish line occurred in 2013. Other reporters and editors, such as Julie Anderson, have covered or worked on stories like the Marjory Stoneman school shooting, the Las Vegas concert shooting, the Pulse night club shooting, and the wildfires in Northern California. Each of these stories took an emotional toll on the journalists that covered them. This article explores the ways managers/editors can support their staff in seeking the help they may require. This resource helps consider and frame what newsrooms are doing to help/watch out for their reporters, camerapersons, photojournalists, etc.

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. In what ways are journalists similar to first responders (police, firefighters, and paramedics)? Why is it important to realize this?**

- Journalists are often the first on a scene, or the first to uncover previously unknown information. Journalists need to recognize that they may experience the same trauma experienced by police, firefighters and paramedics and like first responders, they are not immune. This proximity makes journalists and other newsroom employees emotionally vulnerable.

**2. Why didn't John Tlumacki attend counseling after covering the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013? Does he regret that decision? Would you have attended counseling? Why or why not?**

- Tlumacki notes that some photos were so graphic they have never seen the light of day and still regularly haunt him in his dreams. Even still, he decided not to take advantage of the counseling the *Globe* offered. He felt that since he was not injured himself, he did not have PTSD. In hindsight, Tlumacki said he should have taken advantage of counseling.
- This is a good time to discuss with students how they think they would respond if they were in Tlumacki's shoes. Would they seek out counseling? What would they advise other journalists to do?

**3. In discussing the aftermath of the 2016 Pulse nightclub mass shooting, editor Julie Anderson mentions the role adrenaline plays in covering a story. What happens when the adrenaline kicks in? What can happen after the adrenaline wears down, and the story is over?**

- Adrenaline can allow journalists to cover stories without being aware of the trauma they are encountering and experiencing. It is important for journalists to take stock of their



well-being when the story is over. This is also where a newsroom manager can step in and help his or her staff in processing what has transpired.

**4. Kent Porter won a Pulitzer for his photojournalism in covering fires in Northern California in 2017. In discussing this experience, Porter notes that he felt an “overwhelming sense of anger, grief, depression and anxiety.” Why? What steps did Porter take to deal with these emotions? How could a news manager support someone in Porter’s situation?**

- Porter’s awareness that this devastation was happening right in his “own backyard” made him feel tremendous anger and sadness even though he had not lost his home. To deal with this, Porter retreated for a few days, turned off the police scanner and spent time with his wife. Porter notes that this would have been a good time to gather with the newsroom staff to talk through their experiences. A newsroom manager can help by facilitating this type of intervention for his or her staff.

“Coping with Emotional Trauma in the Newsroom” by Kenna Griffin, *Prof KRG: A practical resource for student journalists* (Oct 30, 2014)

<http://www.profkr.com/preparing-journalists-report-victims>

In this post, Kenna Griffin, professor of mass communications at Oklahoma City University, discusses her experiences covering a rape case as a young 21-year old cub reporter. Griffin explains how this experience led to her involvement with the *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma*. Ultimately, this served as a catalyst for her to pursue a PhD in journalism with an emphasis on studying “the conflict journalists experience when their professional values and their feelings after covering a traumatic story don’t align.” This post includes specific steps newsroom managers can take to make sure they are meeting the needs of their staff members.

### Discussion Questions

- 1. According to Kenna Griffin, what did journalism school prepare her for? What did it fail to prepare her for? Discuss and compare with student experiences.**
  - Griffin suggests that “journalism school prepared me for things like how to interview sources, construct stories and deal with stealthy government, but it didn’t prepare me for the emotions that came along with trauma coverage—emotions reporters are trained not to have or show.” In class, allow students the opportunity to discuss what they are learning, and also what they think they should be learning.
- 2. Griffin writes, “We’re objective, detached professionals. We aren’t supposed to feel about the things we cover, but we do.” How can journalists balance this idea of being objective and detached while at the same time acknowledging that journalists are simply human and can experience an emotional toll (PTSD)?**
  - Newsroom managers can play a key role in this balance by checking in with their staff members before and after a story has been covered. Different journalists may require different ways of decompressing after covering a beat, and the newsroom manager can help by really getting to know his or her staff, developing healthy relationships, and checking in on them.
- 3. According to Griffin, what are some strategies that newsroom managers can employ to minimize the risk of emotional harm for staff members? List and discuss.**
  - Talk about it; Allow journalists to opt out; Know your staff; Offer social support; Know the signs of trauma; If you see someone suffering, insist on further help.

“Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources” by Jane C. Hu, *The Open Notebook* (April 9, 2019) – this article appears in Modules 3, 7, and 9

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/04/09/journalists-of-color-face-harassment-by-sources/>

Hu examines the toll harassment can take on journalists of color by explaining how small microaggressions of racism build up and ultimately wear down those on the receiving end. This article delves into the role that editors and newsrooms can play in supporting journalists of color.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1. How are “microaggressions” defined in this article? Is there a clear line between these pinpricks of racism and a source being friendly or cordial?**
  - Microaggressions are “subtle prejudiced comments or actions directed at a member of a marginalized group.” Comments or actions may seem innocuous and, taken individually, may not have an impact, but microaggressions build up even if the source does not intend to offend. Intentional or not, that does not lessen the emotional pain a journalist may feel.
  
- 2. What role can editors (and newsrooms) play in supporting journalists of color who may be experiencing harassment?**
  - Ideally, newsrooms would have protocols in place to deal with all forms of harassment. However, each harassment case is different so there is not a “one-size-fits all” solution. Editors and newsroom managers can start by creating a welcoming environment for all employees. Editors and newsroom managers can also proactively reach out to journalists and encourage them to speak about their experiences in a safe environment. Trust is key.

## Module 4: On Assignment – Mitigating Risk

### Objective

The goal of this module is to mitigate risk when covering assignments such as riots, protests, and political conventions that may involve civil unrest. Instructors should emphasize the importance of conducting pre-assignment risk assessments to mitigate potential dangers. In addition to the suggested resource, this module contains two scenarios: (1) Aaron Mak of the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* covering Milwaukee's 2016 Sherman Park Riots that erupted after the fatal police shooting of a 23-year-old African American male, and (2) Cengiz Yar's experience covering the 2016 Republican National Convention in Cleveland. The 2016 U.S. political conventions had journalists on edge in advance, thinking the anger and fights that had been part of the campaigns might erupt into more intense and widespread violence. Although these fears did not materialize, advance preparations by many news organizations and freelancers were the right approach in preparing to cover civil disobedience-type events that have the potential for violence.

### Readings & Scenario

"The US is now a 'noticeably problematic' place to be a journalist, report shows" by Lucy Handley, *CNBC* (April 18, 2019)

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/04/18/the-us-is-now-a-noticeably-problematic-place-to-be-a-journalist.html>

This article highlights how threats to journalists continue to increase in the United States, making the profession more dangerous. According to this article, the Trump administration has fomented aggression towards journalists by making continued accusations of "fake news" and describing the media – individually and collectively – as being "dangerous and sick."

### Discussion Questions

- 1. What are some of the reasons why the US is considered a 'noticeably problematic' place for journalists?**
  - There is clearly animosity between the Trump administration and the free press, arguably greater than between any previous administration and the press. In addition to this strained relationship, this is an opportunity for students to consider factors that contribute to how the press is perceived. For example, social media and the 24/7 "news" channels can create echo chambers for those looking to have their views validated. This leads to a blurring of the line between fact and opinion, and between journalists and TV hosts.
- 2. How should journalists react to this in terms of how they perform their craft?**
  - Journalism functions best when shining a light on the truth. To argue journalism is not "fake news" is often a losing battle. The pursuit of truth must be done with safety in mind and an awareness that the perception of the press is often outside of journalists' control.

"Reporting Safely from Sandy Hook to Ferguson" by Yamiche Alcindor, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma*, (Nov 1, 2015)

<https://dartcenter.org/resources/reporting-safely-sandy-hook-ferguson-0>

Young journalists must recognize that risks are not limited to journalists covering war and conflict. In a 2015 panel hosted by the *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* at Columbia Journalism School, Yamiche Alcindor, who has covered the Sandy Hook school shooting, the Boston Marathon bombing, the death of Trayvon Martin, and protests in both Ferguson and Baltimore, shared tips for young journalists who may find themselves working in high-risk situations. Instructors and students should review and discuss the tips that Alcindor offers to help mitigate danger and protect journalists.

### Discussion Question

1. **What are the ten tips that Alcindor offers based on her extensive experience? List and then discuss how and why each of these suggestions are important for journalists to consider.**
  - Wear comfortable layered clothing and shoes. Also, have all-weather gear close by. I always pack sneakers, a raincoat, and an extra shirt in case I need to change.
  - Remember to be respectable and treat people fairly even if they are breaking the law or seem very angry. Some of the people who you want to speak with might be very emotional. You want to respect their anger, sadness, or other feelings.
  - Have mobile charging options. I always carry portable chargers and car chargers for my computer, iPhone and iPad. I have two portable chargers on me at all times and my colleague even has a solar powered backpack.
  - Make sure your phone and tablet have enough space to record events. If something happens and you need to record in an emergency, make sure you have enough data to do so. Back up your phone often and have a hard drive to store photos or videos on in case your phone fills up.
  - Always pack portable snacks and water! You do not think clearly when you are hungry and thirsty. It can really affect your reporting.
  - Pack light but smart. I always carry a backpack, but I try my hardest to keep it from getting too heavy in case I end up walking really far or running. Packing smart means having all your reporting tools but not having too much extra things.
  - Use your personality to help you. The best reporters feel authentic and use their life experiences to connect with people. This does not mean you have things in common with each interview subject. Being a real person will help you in emergency situations.
  - Be on media lists and check the Twitter and Facebook pages of officials connected with your story. Before I get on a plane, I sign up for as many media distribution lists as I can find because those may be the first ways information gets out.
  - Find someone to check in with in your newsroom. I emailed my editors regularly when I was in Ferguson to let them know I was safe and doing well. Doing so helped them know I was where I was not in danger.
  - Keep in touch with your family and friends. It is really important to take breaks and check in with loved ones. It keeps you balanced and allows you to vent to those close to you if you need to vent.

“7 safety tips for on-the-scene journalists” from *Muck Rack Blog* (July 8, 2014)

<https://muckrack.com/blog/2014/07/08/7-safety-tips-for-on-the-scene-journalists>

This resource provides seven specific steps for journalists to take when seeking out developing stories and giving firsthand accounts of things happening, especially if this requires potentially being in harm’s way in order to capture the story.

### Discussion Question

1. **What are the seven steps mentioned in this article? Why is it important to take these steps when covering developing stories? List and discuss.**
  - What to carry
  - First-Aid kit
  - Be aware of your surroundings
  - Bring important information
  - What to wear
  - Take care of yourself
  - Do not work alone

*“You’re Asian, Right? Why Are You Even Here?”* by Aaron Mak, *Politico* (August 23, 2016)  
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/08/milwaukee-protests-asian-american-black-lives-matter-214184>

Aaron Mak, an intern with the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, was attacked while covering Milwaukee’s 2016 Sherman Park riots. Mak describes his experience in this *Politico* article. After reading the article, students should read Mak’s three-part scenario about covering the Sherman Park riots in order to consider how a risk assessment may have helped Mak prepare for this situation as it spiraled into a riot.

**Scenario, Three Parts: Aaron Mak Covering the Sherman Park Riots (Milwaukee 2016)** from The James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide.

### **Part 1**

*It is Aug. 13, the last day of your summer internship. But your editor has an assignment. He sends you to the city’s predominantly black and socio-economically underprivileged Sherman Park neighborhood. There had been reports of a fatal shooting in the area. Because you have reported at crime scenes in the past without incident, it seemed like a routine assignment. But when you arrive you learn that the shooter is a policeman and the victim is a well-liked member of the community. An outraged crowd is forming around the cul-de-sac where the homicide occurred. This did not concern you because you had spent much of the summer covering police brutality protests, all of which had been peaceful.*

*You begin to suspect that the protest could turn violent when some in the crowd start shoving forward and throwing rocks at the police officers who are guarding the crime scene. In demonstrations that you’ve covered in the past, making any sort of physical contact with law enforcement is usually an unspoken line that protestors won’t cross. The police conducted their on-scene investigation throughout the afternoon, during which time the crowd grew progressively larger and more unruly.*

#### **Discussion Question for Part 1**

##### **1. Should Mak have shadowed an activist?**

- Activists typically command respect within the communities they represent, so rioters would not likely have attacked if he had an activist vouching for him. Mak was fortunate enough over the course of his earlier reporting to have developed a relationship with the community leaders at the protest, who escorted him out of the area after the attack; they had enough clout to make sure no one else assaulted him as he left. In the future, Mak should remain within earshot of a prominent activist in potentially volatile situations.
- Mak should have called his editor to develop an emergency plan. Mak said he was too concerned with reporting. But he also incorrectly assumed that if a riot did erupt, he would be safe because he is a reporter and Asian-American.

### **Part 2**

*At sunset, the officers place the body into the ambulance, pile into their squad cars, and begin to leave. Just as the last car in the procession is about to pull out of the cul-de-sac, someone runs up and smashes its back window. This emboldens others in the crowd to follow suit, and soon the rioters are smashing and setting fire to parked vehicles and small businesses that line the streets of the neighborhood. You run after the mob to capture video of the turmoil on your cell phone.*

*You also call your editor and inform him that a riot has broken out. He sends another reporter and a photographer, both white men, to help with the coverage. You meet them at a nearby intersection. Moments later, a phalanx of armored police comes marching down the street behind us. A rioter fires*

seven gunshots from the other side of the intersection. The police disperse, and you and your colleagues dive behind a Chevy Suburban. Once it seemed like the gunfire ceased, the photographer walks off to take more pictures, while you and the other reporter remain behind the car.

Minutes later, a man shouts, “Get your white ass out of here! You better not let me fucking catch you!” You see a group of around 20 people chase the photographer down the street. You don’t have a plan to diffuse the situation, but feel you can’t leave your colleague to fend for himself. You decide to run after him and make sure that he isn’t assaulted. It may not have been the right call, but you’re not sure what else you can do.

The photographer drops the bulky cameras that are around his neck so that he can run faster. Worried that you’ll lose all of his work, you run over to retrieve the gear. He stops and looks back, at which point you yell at him to keep running. You realize that picking up the cameras and shouting at him were ill-considered moves that likely endangered both of you. The mob realizes that you are associated with him, and so they begin chasing you.

### **Discussion Question for Part 2**

#### **1. When the rioting first started, what precautions should Mak have taken to mitigate potential dangers?**

- Mak should have contacted his editor and spoke with other reporters at the scene to devise an escape plan once he sensed that the protest could spin out of control (i.e., when protestors began making physical contact with police). After he fled the area, Mak still did not know where his colleagues were.
- Mak should have identified a rendezvous spot in the event reporters were separated, requested that someone sit in a car nearby who could transport him away from the scene, and created a group chat so that he could communicate with others at the same time.
- Mak and his colleagues should have stayed together once people started destroying property. Splitting up made it difficult for them to look out for each other, and for his editors to ensure his safety.

### **Part 3**

Because the photographer was a much faster runner, the mob caught up with you first, threw you to the ground and pummeled you. A few onlookers saw what was happening and ran up, yelling, “Stop, he’s not white! He’s Asian!” The attackers, after taking a step back to examine you, run off into the night. An activist who had been a source in earlier reporting on police violence comes over to help you get up from the ground and escorts you to a nearby park. Other people you have interviewed in past protests hear about what happened, and they too come over to make sure you are not attacked again. You call an editor and ask her to pick you up. Your two colleagues also managed to run to safety, unharmed, and you meet back at the newsroom.

### **Discussion Question for Part 3**

#### **1. Do you need to think about how a crowd might react to you based on your gender, race or ethnicity? Is that something to consider in assessing risk?**

- As a reporter, you may think of yourself as an impartial observer, but that is not necessarily how other people see you. You and other reporters and photographers should consider how your race may affect the way the crowd may view you and react to you.

“Arrests at 2008 RNC in St. Paul” (Video) from KARE 11, Minneapolis, MN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BYX9MQaK5A&feature=youtu.be>

In this brief video from the 2008 Republican National Convention in St. Paul, MN, protesters and journalists are rounded up and arrested. One of the photojournalists covering the event, Jonathan Malat, was held with protesters and journalists before his arrest. Malat and other credentialed journalists were cited for unlawful assembly and then released. This raises concerns about freedom of the press, free speech, and the right to assemble.

### Discussion Question

1. **What steps can journalists take to protect themselves when preparing to cover events, like this protest? In the video, Malat says he was going to keep filming until he was arrested. What rights do journalists have when it comes to covering protests?**

This video provides students a sense of what it can be like when covering a protest, and can stimulate discussion about the actions taken by the reporter and photojournalist. This also highlights some of the safety steps to be aware of like knowing your escape route, being aware of your rights, etc. This video also can serve as a good introduction into Cengiz Yar’s experience at the 2016 RNC in Cleveland.

### Biography of Cengiz Yar

Cengiz Yar is a documentary photographer based in the US with a long-term focus on Iraq and ISIS. Yar’s work focuses on mass displacement, religious and ethnic minorities, and the fight against the ISIS. Yar has written for *The Guardian*, *The Telegraph*, *Maclean's Magazine*, *Foreign Policy*, *Huck Magazine*, *The American Scholar*, *Vice*, *Makeshift Magazine*, and *Mashable*. Yar’s humanitarian clients include UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, and Mercy Corps. Yar’s work has also been featured in a variety of other places, including *BBC World News*, *Juxtapoz Magazine* and *Roads & Kingdoms*. In 2015, Cengiz Yar was awarded the *Online News Association’s* inaugural James W. Foley Award for Conflict Freelancers.

Scenario, two parts: Cengiz Yar Covering the Republican National Convention (Cleveland 2016) from The James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide.

### Part 1

*It is the summer of 2016. You are a freelance photographer and have been assigned to cover the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. Tens of thousands of protesters are predicted to fill the streets, along with thousands of police officers. The anticipation of violence is high with many news outlets reporting on it in the weeks leading up to the July convention. The weather during the convention is supposed to be in the 90s.*

*The city of Cleveland has a restricted zone in downtown that limits the items allowed near the convention hall. Included in that list are gas masks and tennis balls - not included are guns because Cleveland has a law allowing registered gun owners to carry concealed weapons.*

*Pro-gun activists from around the country likely will be traveling to Cleveland to exercise their right to carry weapons. Black Lives Matter protesters are heading to the city as well, as are branches of the Black Panthers. Members of Bikers for Trump are riding in from South Dakota and anarchists like Black Bloc are said to be traveling from the East Coast. There is also the possibility of Trump not receiving the Republican nomination, which could lead to violence on the streets from his supporters.*

*Your editor assigns you to cover the protesters and environment outside the convention hall as well as some Cleveland voices from around the city. You will not have to go into the convention hall to cover the speeches and nominating procedures. You will be outside and mobile on the streets. There will be*

*thousands of other reporters and photographers covering this event so the competition for compelling stories and imagery will be high.*

### **Discussion Questions for Part 1**

#### **1. What are the possible threats to your safety?**

- Your biggest concern at this point is the use of weapons from either side. Things are likely to get heated due to the presence of opposing groups. Anarchists are certain to take advantage of the situation.
- In such scenarios, you need to be cautious not just of the threat from protesters, but also from law enforcement personnel, lest they mistake you for one of the anarchists. Another cause for concern is the use of nonlethal force by the law enforcers. Always be on the lookout for police activity. If they are putting on gas masks and riot gear, it is best to start making your way to the periphery.
- You will probably be carrying expensive equipment with you, making you a target for opportunists within the crowd. Some of the protesters may be averse to the media and may target you simply for being there. Be on the lookout for any signs of aggression.
- You want to get the best images and footage, but keep in mind that getting too caught up in the motion of the crowd may drag you into the center and when something suddenly kicks off, you may not be in the best position to safely evacuate the premises. Always stay on the periphery and know your exit plan.

#### **2. What will you be wearing?**

- You will be running around with protesters in an urban environment in the middle of summer. Primary concerns should be staying mobile and cool. Wear lightweight clothing, good solid shoes and jeans.
- The shoes should have hard toes so that you will not be injured if people step on your feet if there are running or fast-moving crowds.
- Wear jeans or sturdy pants when covering protests because they are difficult to rip and add some layer of protection. Shorts also lead to exposed skin in the event of chemical agents. For this reason, pack a long-sleeved shirt in your day pack.
- Bring a T-shirt to change into and some deodorant. Being able to freshen up quickly makes a world of difference and will make you more comfortable and better able to work and face future challenges.

#### **3. Due to the security restrictions downtown where most of the protesting likely will take place, what might you bring to protect yourself that is different from other protests?**

- In a protest situation that might result in tear gas, you should bring a gas mask. While gas masks are not allowed in Cleveland, you may still need to protect your eyes and lungs from chemical agents. Yar picked up a pair of swimming goggles and a chemical painting mask and kept them with him for the week.
- A bike helmet or skateboard helmet is also a lightweight piece of protection to strap to your bag just in case rocks start flying. You can also buy a helmet that looks like a baseball cap but is hard enough to protect your head; make sure it has straps under your chin so it does not fall off.

#### **4. Should you bring body armor?**

- While some journalists wore body armor and others brought it, wearing body armor makes you stand out as a target. You will stand out to both the police and to the protesters



and, as a photographer, it is better to blend in. Body armor also adds to the expectations of danger.

- Wear body armor when you are covering a war, but not in a situation where it will make people more fearful or as a way to showboat. Body armor is not a joke and should be worn seriously and in serious situations.

#### **5. What should you discuss with your editor?**

- Be sure to get an assignment letter stating that you are working for the news organization so that you can get credentials. Credentials come from the House Press Gallery.
- Make sure you have a list of lawyers in case you are arrested. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press has lists.
- As with any possibly hostile situation and assignment, you should have a detailed check-in plan with your editor and possibly a risk assessment. I typically use a family member as a check in and do that nightly while on assignment.

#### **6. What other preparations could you make?**

- Pack water, a press pass, candy bar, protein bar, and medical kit
- Have plenty of whatever medicine you normally take
- Cash: Always carry around hard money
- Travel as lightly as possible to be able to move more easily and last longer in the field
- Create meeting places with other journalists and buddy-up. If you feel like situations are getting out of hand, pair up with someone and watch each other's back.

### **Part 2**

*It is the second day of the Republican National Convention in downtown Cleveland. The events so far have not been violent, crowds are small, there is a mass gathering of journalists and thousands of police. It is the middle of the day, and you're extremely hot. A crowd of police and journalists surround a group of men arguing. A scuffle breaks out and you are stuck between the police and protesters, including the men who are arguing. There is shoving.*

*Some small objects, most likely plastic bottles, are thrown through the air. The confrontation appears to be between masked anarchistic protestors and InfoWars, the conservative gun rights group.*

*You have seen people with handguns on their hips in the crowd and others earlier in the day walking around with rifles. The police, of course, are armed, and there are police snipers in nearby buildings. The situation appears to be escalating quickly.*

### **Discussion Questions for Part 2**

#### **1. What do you do, stay in the crowd or move? What gets you the best photos?**

Yar backed up and allowed the other journalists to surround the scene. He determined that he did not need close-up action shots for his story and being able to observe the melee from a short distance worked as long as he could maintain a view of the action. He stayed close enough that he could get back into the scrum if he felt it was warranted.

#### **2. How did you prepare for the day's work? Did you have a safety as well as a photography/storytelling plan?**

Preparation is key. No matter the assignment, what makes the job easier and more efficient is essential groundwork. Having a pre-ordained plan not only allows you to focus better, it helps alleviate many of the risks carried by certain assignments. The Rory Peck Trust offers the following template on drafting an assignment outline even before journalists assess the risks:

- **Create an outline**  
To identify risks, properly outline your project. Identify and list the key building blocks: sequences, interviews, travel plans and actions that are vital to your plans.
- **Locations and brief schedule**  
Where are you going, when and for how long?
- **Assignment details**  
Give details of what you intend to cover. What will you film, photograph, record, write? Include meetings, sequences, interviews and locations. This is the foundation of a risk assessment. This gives a clear idea of what and how to achieve your goals.
- **Project-specific risks**  
Is this a sensitive topic? Are you reporting in a high-risk location/event? Are the people you are meeting under surveillance? Might they be put at risk if they talk to you? What could you do to mitigate risks? For instance, could you leave sensitive interviews until the end of your visit so they are less likely to affect your plans?

## Module 5: Self-Care – Addressing Emotional Trauma

### Objective

The purpose of this module is to train young journalists to think about the importance of self-care as they begin their career. Included are emotional self-care techniques and strategies for young journalists to practice as they develop their craft. Journalists are not immune to trauma and they are not expected to be superhuman. Journalists must recognize that when they cover stories, what they witness AND hear becomes a part of them. Journalists need to realize and accept that it is okay to feel the weight of the stories they cover. In the documentary *Jim: The James Foley Story*, photojournalist Nicole Tung describes how journalists become “intimate chroniclers” when covering stories. Journalists’ close proximity to the stories to emerging stories can result in emotional and mental trauma.

### Readings

“For Reporters Covering Stressful Assignments, Self-Care is Crucial” by Catherine Stifter, *Center for Health Journalism*

<https://www.centerforhealthjournalism.org/resources/lessons/reporters-covering-stressful-assignments-self-care-crucial>

This article from the *Center for Health Journalism* provides specific examples of stories that caused emotional responses from the journalists covering them. The article provides warning signs that journalists can look for in themselves and in their colleagues as well as strategies for dealing with traumatic experiences.

### Discussion Questions

1. What is “vicarious stress” or “compassion fatigue”? What are some signs or symptoms?
  - “Vicarious stress” or “compassion fatigue” is a condition sometimes experienced by reporters who cover stories of people who are living in very stressful situations, or any emotionally charged reporting situation. Some signs or symptoms include tears, exhaustion, and procrastination.
2. What are the coping strategies that Thom Sterling, a clinical social worker, offers to alleviate on-the-job stress?
  - **Prevent isolation:**
    - Find someone to talk to so you do not feel alone.
    - Keep a journal of emotions, thoughts and experiences.
    - Understand the emotions you feel are normal.
  - **Practice self-care:**
    - Exercise and eat properly.
    - Relax regularly.
    - Get enough sleep.
    - Take some time off.
    - Avoid mood-altering drugs and alcohol.
  - **Practice mindfulness:**
    - Make time for simple activities that you enjoy: go for a walk, listen to music, spend time with a pet, or read a book.
    - Stay in the present by paying close attention to what is actually happening right now.
    - Learn a mindfulness technique such as meditation, tai chi or yoga. Or simply focus on your breathing for a few minutes as you inhale and exhale.

3. **What are a few of the different warning signs to look for when dealing with self-care issues?**
- **Physical:** Exhaustion, insomnia, headaches, getting sick more often
  - **Behavioral:** Increased use of alcohol and drugs, missing work, irritability, social isolation, impaired ability to make decisions, problems in personal relationships
  - **Psychological:** Emotional exhaustion, cynicism, reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy, distancing oneself from friends, family or colleagues, depression, your subjects' stories intrude on your thoughts, dreams and daily activities

“How journalists can take care of themselves while covering trauma” by Kari Cobham, *Poynter* (May 29, 2019)

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2019/how-journalists-can-take-care-of-themselves-while-covering-trauma/>

This article is framed around the experience of Jareen Imam, director of social newsgathering at *NBC News*, in the aftermath of the *Capital-Gazette* shooting. Like first responders, journalists need to make sure they are taking care of their own well-being. This involves coping techniques and being open about the trauma that so many journalists witness and/or experience.

#### **Discussion Question**

1. **What advice and reminders are offered for dealing with stress, depression, and trauma? Create a list and discuss. What techniques and strategies are the most useful for students (answers will vary)?**

- Do not underestimate the power of a good therapist
- Find out if the company you work for has good resources
- There is more to life – and us – than news
- Lean on your village
- Pay attention to your body
- Pay attention to your mind, too
- All coping mechanisms are not created equal
- Look out for your team
- Managers, be the change
- You are not immune
- Make small changes

“How journalists practice self-care while covering tough stories” by Elite Truong, *Poynter* (June 22, 2016)

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2016/how-journalists-practice-self-care-while-working-in-news/>

This article, which includes advice from three experienced writers, is particularly geared towards female journalists and journalists of color. It is a very useful introductory article for providing young journalists with strategies for dealing with the emotional stress they may encounter. The article also briefly touches upon online harassment and criticism, a topic covered in Module 3.

#### **Discussion Question**

1. **What strategies can journalists, particularly women and journalists of color, employ to deal with the emotional and mental stress they may encounter in their profession?**
- **Become part of a community**  
Find a group that you can rely on and lean on.
  - **Develop a threshold to better understand what you are able to handle**

The work of a journalist can be physically and mentally taxing. It is important for young journalists to think about the boundaries that they can realistically cover and handle.

- **Maintain a healthy life-work balance**  
Young journalists need to find ways to recharge themselves, and to create some separation between their personal and work lives. Time off should be considered time off. This can lead to a discussion about how young journalists manage their time off, especially after covering difficult stories.
- **Be willing to seek out help and/or advice**  
Ask questions. Be willing to listen to those you encounter who have experience in your field. If you are unsure or uncertain, it is not a sign of weakness to seek out advice and assistance. In fact, it is a sign of strength to recognize the need for guidance.
- **Recognize your worth; pay it forward**  
Journalism is an important profession, and the work young journalists do is valuable. Realize that. Then, be generous when someone has a question for you, or seeks advice from you. In that way, you help build a community of journalists.

“Journalist Self-Care” from *Mindset: Reporting on Mental Health (includes two videos)* (2014-20)  
<https://sites.google.com/a/journalismforum.ca/mindset-mediaguide-ca/journalist-self-care>

This brief article introduces the importance of emotional self-care. Embedded in the article are two brief videos. The videos show how reporters can check on themselves to make sure they are processing what they are experiencing.

#### **Discussion Question**

1. **Before watching the videos, engage students in a discussion about what they think Karen Pauls means when she says of journalists, “We’re not Teflon.” Why is this important for young journalists to recognize?**
  - Journalists must recognize that the emotional impact of a story can and will stick with them. It is only human for journalists to be impacted by the stories they cover, and these stories have the potential to stay with them for long a period of time, perhaps forever.

“Covering Trauma: Impact on Journalists” by River Smith, Elana Newman, Susan Drevo, Autumn Slaughter, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (July 1, 2015)  
<https://dartcenter.org/content/covering-trauma-impact-on-journalists>

This resource provides an overview of current research on the occupational hazards for journalists covering traumatic events, the risk factors that aggravate those effects, and some suggestions for mitigating those factors.

#### **Discussion Questions**

1. **What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and how does it impact journalists?**
  - Instructors and students should take some time to discuss what PTSD is and how it can affect journalists and other media members. Journalists are not immune to psychological trauma and should not feel like it is a sign of weakness to acknowledge that certain stories and events have had an impact on them.
2. **What are the risk factors for PTSD, and what are some protective factors for PTSD?**
  - Instructors and students should generate a list of the risk factors for PTSD and then compare it to the work they do (or intend to do). Being aware of the risk factors is important for young journalists. As students consider the risk factors, they should also start to discuss protective actions that they can take. Again, young journalists must learn about self-care, and recognize that emotional trauma is real.

“Self Care Tips for News Media” from *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (April 30, 2009)

<https://dartcenter.org/content/self-care-tips-for-news-media-personnel-exposed-to-traumatic-events>

This resource from Columbia University’s *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* provides several tips to assist in fostering healthier newsrooms and better journalism. The advice offered is based on research findings on well-being, resilience, and the practical experience of news professionals in the field.

### **Discussion Question**

**1. The Dart Center offers a list of self-care tips for journalists. Which of these self-help tips do you think would be most effective during the following phases of an assignment: Before a potentially traumatic assignment? On the job? After the job? What are some common responses immediately after witnessing trauma? Why? Explain.**

- Self-care is not a one-size fits all proposition. Starting a conversation with young journalists can help them recognize their strengths and vulnerabilities while opening up the possibility of discussing how to employ these various strategies. Young journalists should understand that they are not expected to be invulnerable, nor can they be.

## Module 6: Dealing with Online Harassment and Cyberbullying

### Objective

This module aims to make sure students recognize the safety risks associated with online harassment and cyberbullying. Most young journalists have grown up with social media as an omnipresent part of their lives and will have at least some familiarity with online harassment and cyberbullying. But how will young journalists react when the harassment and cyberbullying – often vicious in nature – is directed at them personally? Journalists must recognize that anonymity on the internet enables mean-spirited, even dangerous trolling without risk to the perpetrators. When should journalists respond, and what should journalists ignore? When should journalists inform the newsroom manager – or even the authorities – about online harassment? Depending on the diversity in the classroom and the goals of the instructor, this module offers resources that focus on the online harassment and cyberbullying of journalists, in general, as well as resources that focus more specifically on female and minority journalists. When implementing this module into the classroom, it may be useful to combine with Module 2, which deals with the emotional trauma journalists may face.

### Reading(s)

“RSF publishes report on online harassment of journalists” from *Reporters Without Borders* (Aug 1, 2018)

<https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-publishes-report-online-harassment-journalists>

This resource from *Reporters Without Borders* is **geared toward instructors**. This shows how the phenomenon of online harassment is occurring around the world and provides interesting statistics.

### Discussion Question

#### 1. What are the three types of online attacks that journalists face?

- **Disinformation:** journalistic content on social networks is drowned in a flood of fake news and pro-government content.
- **Amplification:** the impact of pro-government content is artificially enhanced by commentators who are paid by the government to post messages on social networks or by bots, computer programs that automatically generate posts.
- **Intimidation:** journalists are personally targeted, insulted and threatened in order to discredit them and reduce them to silence. For this module, this is probably the most relevant point.

“Patrolling the Trolls: How Journalists Can Cope with Harassment and Threats” by Shannon Ramlochan, *Beyond Bylines: Covering the Intersection of Journalism, Emerging Media and Blogging* (June 7, 2015)

<https://mediablog.prnewswire.com/2015/06/17/patrolling-the-trolls-how-journalists-can-cope-with-harassment-and-threats/>

This brief article describes the online harassment that journalists will undoubtedly face and then provides a list of steps that can be taken when harassment occurs. This resource is the result of a panel from the 2015 *Online News Association* conference.

### Discussion Question

#### 1. What five steps do these media veterans suggest journalists who experience online harassment should follow? List and discuss the importance of each step and how to implement each step.

- Have your editor review social media comments
- Make the repercussions for online abuse forceful

- Have a network of industry peers you can rely on in times of crisis
- Keep offenders out of sight
- Do not respond to negativity

“Tips and tools for journalists to deal with online harassment” by Natasha Tynes, *IJNET: International Journalists’ Network* (Feb 23, 2018)

<https://ijnet.org/en/story/tips-and-tools-journalists-deal-online-harassment>

This resource from the *International Journalists’ Network* provides steps for dealing with online harassment as well as links to apps that can help with blocking trolls. The brief article also considers ways of distinguishing harassment from criticism.

### Discussion Question

**1. What advice does Michelle Ferrier of the *Daytona Beach News Journal* have for journalists facing online harassment? List and discuss.**

- If threatened with physical harm, go to the police and document the harassment.
- If the criticism is insulting (but not threatening), step away from the computer.
- If your professional reputation is attacked, consider having friends or colleagues provide professional endorsements.
- Potentially consider outing the online trolls. Be aware, there is no conclusive evidence on the success in doing this. You might consider if this is worth the time and effort.

“The column I won’t write because of a troll with a gun” by Theresa Vargas, *Washington Post* (July 4, 2018)

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-column-i-wont-write-because-of-a-troll-with-a-gun/2018/07/04/0dc6db64-7ee7-11e8-b0ef-fffcabeff946\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.409493ab6a3b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-column-i-wont-write-because-of-a-troll-with-a-gun/2018/07/04/0dc6db64-7ee7-11e8-b0ef-fffcabeff946_story.html?utm_term=.409493ab6a3b)

Theresa Vargas describes an article about gender, power and motherhood that she has delayed writing because of current dynamics surrounding journalism, including threats from online trolls. Vargas also discusses difficult stories to cover and references the shooting at the *Capital Gazette*.

### Discussion Questions

**1. Why do you think that women – and journalists of color – are particularly targeted by online trolls? What role does gender play? Discuss.**

- Multiple studies have shown that female journalists and journalists of color are disproportionately targets of online harassment. For instance, Hannah Storm of the *Institute News Safety Institute* notes that female journalists are three times more likely than their male colleagues to experience online harassment. This can lead to a discussion about why women and journalists of color endure more harassment as well as ways of dealing with this reality.

**2. What do you think about Vargas’s decision to reply to most emails, even those that contain racist sentiments? Discuss. How would you react/respond to such emails?**

- This question is open-ended and can be used as a vehicle for discussing how to draw boundaries between what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Journalists need to develop their own thresholds between what is acceptable and what is not, and when it is appropriate and/or necessary to respond.



“Trolls and threats: Online harassment of female journalists” from Maria Ressa, Sagarika Ghose, and Hannah Storm (Contributors), *Al-Jazeera: The Listening Post* (Oct 6, 2018)

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/listeningpost/2018/10/trolls-threats-online-harassment-female-journalists-181006101141463.html>

While this resource notes both men and women face online harassment, the primary focus is on how women are particularly targeted and explains the impact this harassment can have on female journalists. The article examines how the harassment women journalists face – about appearance, gender, and sexuality – goes far beyond the harassment most of their male colleagues endure.

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1. According to Hannah Storm, director of the International News Safety Institute, how much more likely are women to be harassed online than men? How does the harassment that female journalists endure differ from what their male counterparts face? Discuss.**
  - Female journalists are more than three times as likely to face online harassment than their male colleagues. The harassment that women endure tends to focus much more on their appearance, gender, and sexuality.
- 2. According to Trollbusters and the International Women’s Media Foundation, what impact does online harassment have on female journalists? Discuss ways that journalists can deal with this.**
  - “A recent study by *Trollbusters* and the *International Women's Media Foundation* found that around 40 percent of the female journalists they interviewed had stopped writing about stories they knew would be lightning rods for attacks. Around 30 percent indicated they had considered leaving the journalistic profession altogether as a result of the effect online abuse had had on them.” Instructors are encouraged to open up dialogue about the impact of online abuse on all young journalists. However, the evidence shows women and minority journalists are targeted more frequently and explicitly than their white, male colleagues. This is an issue that should be addressed early.

## Module 7: Diversity in the Newsroom – The Targeting of Female and Minority Journalists

### Objective

Currently, diversity in the newsroom lags behind the overall diversity in the workplace. There have been some encouraging trends as younger newsroom employees “show greater racial, ethnic and gender diversity,” according to the Pew Research Center. However, the Pew Research Center notes nearly 77% of newsroom employees are non-Hispanic whites and nearly 48% are non-Hispanic white males. This lack of diversity raises concerns about how different stories and beats are covered. Another pressing concern deals with safety issues for female and minority journalists as evidence indicates they are targeted more than non-Hispanic white male colleagues.

### Readings

“Five decades after Kerner Report, representation remains an issue in media” by Darren Walker, *Columbia Journalism Review* (March 5, 2018)

<https://www.cjr.org/analysis/race-media.php>

This article explores the racial and gender dynamics that exist, on average, in most newsrooms. The article considers the 1968 Kerner Report which suggested that there was a “lack of adequate representation among the people assigning, reporting, and editing media coverage.” This article considers how and why women and people of color comprise a smaller percentage of employees in the newsroom than in the overall workplace and how being more frequently threatened and harassed can lead to even further isolation.

### Discussion Question

**1. Why is it important that newsrooms more accurately reflect the diversity of our country?**

- According to this article from *Columbia Journalism Review*, “We [as a nation] must push media companies to be more transparent about the makeup of their staffs, and work to hold them accountable on issues of diversity, inclusion, and harassment. And we must also recognize the ways in which a healthy, thriving, independent media is necessary for the survival of our democracy, and do our best to preserve both.” A more diverse newsroom can have the added benefit of providing support to journalists who face harassment.

“Journalists of color facing racism head-on: ‘It kind of rips you apart’” by April Simpson, *Current: News for People in Public Media* (Nov 10, 2017)

<https://current.org/2017/11/journalists-of-color-facing-racism-head-on-it-kind-of-rips-you-apart/>

This article includes several firsthand accounts from male and female journalists of color. These experiences range from feeling uncomfortable to feeling physically and emotionally threatened. There is also a discussion about whether journalists of color should cover certain types of stories.

### Discussion Questions

**1. Should journalists of color avoid covering situations where they may be singled out for their race or ethnicity?**

This article examines different points of view about covering certain events, like Trump rallies, where journalists of color may be targeted. Quincy Walters, a reporter and host for *WGCU* in Fort Myers, FL, believes that these situations are too “tiresome and traumatic” and journalists of color should avoid them unless no other journalist is able to cover the story. In contrast, Gus Contreras, a digital producer and reporter, sees this as a double-edged sword.

While these stories may involve risk, it is important for journalists of color to show they belong and make sure their voice and perspective are heard. This would be a good opportunity to discuss the role race and gender play when covering different stories.

**2. Do journalists of color need any “special training” when it comes to cover these stories/events?**

Different viewpoints are offered about the need for “special training” for journalists of color. One perspective is that journalists of color should receive “special” or extra training to prepare for certain situations where race may be a factor. On the other hand, another argument is that journalists of color have been navigating the issue of race their entire life and that no special training is required. Along these lines, David Sweeney, an NPR managing editor says, “[T]he guidance and training is the same for everyone: Be aware. Be careful. Don’t take unnecessary risks.” Similar to Question #1, this would be a good time for students to discuss their views on this topic.

**3. What is the benefit of having journalists of color covering events, even if it may be more dangerous for them? What is the drawback if journalists of color do not cover these events? Discuss.**

This could lead to an important discussion about the importance of having multiple voices and multiple perspectives in the media. Just as diversity is important in any newsroom, diversity is also important in terms of who is covering the stories we read.

“IWMF Emergency Fund” from *International Women’s Media Foundation* (2019)

<https://www.iwmf.org/programs/emergency-fund/>

The IWMF Emergency Fund was established in 2013 to provide women journalists direct lines of support.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What type of resources does the IWMF Emergency Fund provide for women journalists?**

- Small grants for psychological and medical care for incidents directly related to threats and crises caused by one’s work as a journalist
- Three months of temporary relocation assistance in the event of crisis or threat
- Legal aid to counter threats of imprisonment or censorship
- Non-financial assistance in the form of information about additional access to resources

**2. What criteria must be met for women journalists to qualify for assistance from IWMF?**

- Be a staff or freelance woman reporter, working in any medium, whose primary profession is journalism.
- Have worked full-time as a journalist within six months of applying for assistance.
- Apply for assistance with a crisis situation directly connected to work as a journalist.

“Why going solo is a risk for female reporters in the US and Canada” by Lucy Westcott, James W. Foley Fellow, *Committee to Protect Journalists* (Sep 4, 2019)

<https://cpj.org/blog/2019/09/female-journalist-broadcast-safety-solo-risks.php>

Lucy Westcott, a former James W. Foley Fellow, describes the experience of an anonymous female journalist who was sent out on a solo assignment by her editor. The story involved reporting on a man who was known to be targeting and attacking young women. The young journalist felt like she had no choice but to take the assignment. According to Westcott, many female and gender non-conforming

journalists feel “they lacked support or empathy from editors, who appeared to have an attitude of do the job or move aside, no matter the risk.”

This article also delves into the safety training gaps that exist domestically. For many editors, the risks are not recognized. For instance, Jason Reich, vice president of corporate security at *The New York Times* and the former director of global security at *BuzzFeed*, argues, “It’s a problem that we’ve created what I consider a false dichotomy between a conflict zone, and everything else, which is [considered] safe. It’s an outdated model.” The article points out that many female journalists believe that the risks they confront need to be taken more seriously by newsroom editors.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **1. What are some of the risks that female journalists face?**

There are many risks that female journalists face, including physical, emotional, and digital threats. Instructors should cover the risks that female journalists face while also addressing the detrimental effect this has on diversity in the media. For instance, a CPJ safety survey of 115 female and gender non-conforming journalists showed that “[t]he majority (85 percent) said they believed journalism was becoming a less safe job. When it came to safety, respondents cited working alone and crude comments as concerns.” These concerns, according to other studies, may provide the impetus for female journalists to leave the field.

#### **2. What are some of the safety training gaps that are identified in this article?**

According to Jason Reich, the false dichotomy between conflict reporting and everything else often leaves editors believing that reporting is safe and, as a result, safety risks are easily overlooked. This is especially true when it comes to solo work. Reich champions training that focuses more on “training [that] focuses on harassment, security issues—including those women face—civil unrest, and natural disasters.”

“Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources” by Jane C. Hu, *The Open Notebook* (April 9, 2019) – this article appears in Modules 3, 7, and 9

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/04/09/journalists-of-color-face-harassment-by-sources/>

This resource examines the toll that harassment can take on journalists of color by explaining how seemingly small “microaggressions” of racism can build up and ultimately wear down those on the receiving end. The resource also delves into the role that editors (and newsroom managers) can play in supporting journalists of color.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **1. How are “microaggressions” defined in this resource? Is there a clear line between these pinpricks of racism and a source being friendly or cordial?**

- Microaggressions are defined as “subtle prejudiced comments or actions directed at a member of a marginalized group.” These comments or actions often seem innocuous and, taken individually, may not have an impact; however, these microaggressions can build up over time even if the source does not intend to offend. Unfortunately, that does not lessen the impact journalists may feel.

#### **2. What should journalists of color consider when deciding how to respond to harassment and threats?**

- There is not a “one-size-fits-all” response to this question, especially if the comments or actions encountered are not overtly racist. Some journalists feel it’s better to ignore the harassment and threats because responding may risk access to the source; on the other

hand, many journalists feel they must challenge the harassment and threats because choosing *not* to respond proves too difficult to stomach.

“The cost of reporting while female” by Anne Helen Petersen, *Columbia Journalism Review* (Winter 2018)

[https://www.cjr.org/special\\_report/reporting-female-harassment-journalism.php](https://www.cjr.org/special_report/reporting-female-harassment-journalism.php)

**Discussion Question**

**1. What are the three themes that Nadra Nittle touches upon when discussing reporting as a woman? Discuss.**

- First, you teach yourself to downplay whatever threat there might be. (“I didn’t feel like my life was in danger, necessarily.”)
- Second, you tell people about the actual menace, so you have a record of your concern.
- And third, you realize your supervisors may or may not have the same level of concern, or first-hand exposure, to the threats you face.

## Module 8: Protecting Sources – Emotional Trauma

### Objective

The purpose of this module is to impress upon young journalists the importance of considering the emotional needs of their sources. Journalists not only have a responsibility for their own safety, they have a responsibility for the safety of their sources. This includes taking into consideration their sources' emotional well-being. Journalists must have the best interests of their sources in mind and make efforts to ensure that when covering a story and/or interviewing victims, re-traumatization is avoided and/or minimized.

### Reading(s)

“Tragedies & Journalists: A Guide for More Effective Coverage” by Joe Hight and Frank Smyth, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (2003)

[https://dartcenter.org/sites/default/files/en\\_tnj\\_0.pdf](https://dartcenter.org/sites/default/files/en_tnj_0.pdf)

This 16-page guide covers the wide-ranging effects that tragedies can have on all involved. From the newsroom perspective, this includes managers, reporters, photojournalists and everyone in between. Hight and Smyth write, “Reporters, editors, photojournalists and news crews are involved in the coverage of many tragedies during their lifetimes. They range from wars to terrorist attacks to airplane crashes to natural disasters to fires to murders. All having victims. All affecting their communities. All creating lasting memories.” In order to cover tragedies, Hight and Smyth point out that that the three areas to consider are the following: (1) The victims; (2) the community; and (3) the journalists.

### Discussion Questions (for each question generate a list and discuss responses)

1. What are tips for interviewing victims?
2. What are tips for writing about victims?
3. What are tips for covering traumatic events in your community?
4. What are tips for taking care of yourself?
5. What are tips for photojournalists who respond to tragedies?
6. What are tips for managing those who cover traumatic events?
7. How can those in the newsroom deal with PTSD?

“When interviewing trauma victims, proceed with caution and compassion” by Sherry Ricciardi, *IJNET: International Journalists' Network* (Nov 7, 2018)

<https://ijnet.org/en/story/when-interviewing-trauma-victims-proceed-caution-and-compassion>

This resource from the *International Journalists' Network* discusses how to proceed when working with sources/victims of trauma. Excellent advice is offered and should serve as a very useful classroom reading to open up discussion on this topic. There is an embedded video, “Getting it right – ethical reporting on people affected by trauma,” where victims and survivors discuss how the media treated them.

### Discussion Questions

1. What suggestions are offered by media expert Steve Buttry in terms of approaching trauma victims? List and discuss.
  - Never assume they will say no
  - Ask about them, not just about what happened to them
  - Use third parties
2. What rules does Sherry Ricciardi follow when interviewing trauma victims? List and discuss.

- When approaching a victim, identify yourself as politely as possible before asking questions. Tell them the material could be published.
- Treat each person with dignity and respect.
- During the introduction, simply say, “I am so sorry for what you’re going through” or “I am sorry for what happened.” Let them see that you care.
- Give victims a sense of control. Ask them where they would like to do the interview or if there is someone they would like to have with them.
- Bottom line: Do no harm.

“Interviewing people who have experienced trauma” by Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project* (Dec 26, 2017)

<https://thegroundtruthproject.org/interviewing-people-experienced-trauma/>

This resource from *The GroundTruth Project* provides key considerations for journalists who are interviewing victims of traumatic events. This resource consists of two articles that work well together to inform journalists of best practices when interviewing victims.

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. What are the “Six Tips for Interviewing People Who’ve Experienced Trauma”?

- Treat people with respect and gratitude.
- Be human and express empathy.
- Respect boundaries and give the subject their agency.
- If possible, get to know the person before interviewing them about the traumatic event(s) they have experienced.
- Do not start an interview by asking about the traumatic event.
- Take care of yourself.

#### 2. In “Thoughts on Interviewing Victims of Trauma,” what are the three things Beth Murphy focuses on in terms of her experiences? What can we learn from these experiences? Discuss.

- No conditions: What does Beth Murphy mean by this? Why is this an important starting point?
- Be trauma-informed: From your perspective, what does it mean to be trauma-informed?
- Choose kindness over story: Why is this important when deciding whether or not to pursue (and publish) sensitive stories?

“Tips for Interviewing Survivors” from *RAINN, the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization* (2019)

<https://www.rainn.org/articles/tips-interviewing-survivors>

This resource provides helpful information for journalists who interview sexual assault survivors. As noted in this resource, “As journalists continue to cover stories related to sexual assault or abuse, it can be helpful to have a better understanding of how to interview survivors of these type of crimes. A thoughtful approach to the interview can help educate the public and support survivors in sharing their story.”

### Discussion Question

#### 1. What are the main things that every journalist should know about how to interview victims of sexual assault? Under each main idea, there are several bullet points. Be prepared to discuss them.

- Before the interview, do your homework.
  - Is the survivor’s experience a good fit for your story?

- Do you need an exclusive on the survivor's story?
  - Are there legal considerations?
  - Can the survivor remain anonymous?
- At the start of the interview, set expectations.
  - Explain how the interview fits into the larger story.
  - Set a time frame.
  - Provide an overview.
  - Be upfront about editorial control.
  - Talk about fact checking.
- During the interview, be respectful.
  - Avoid generalizing.
  - Try not to make assumptions.
  - "Victim" or "survivor"? Ask your interviewee if they have a preference.
  - Be mindful and respect boundaries.
- At the end of the interview, show appreciation.
  - Thank the survivor for sharing their story.
  - Avoid giving advice.
  - Ask for additional input.
  - Discuss next steps.
- When you are writing, do the following:
  - Provide resources.
  - Take care of yourself.



## Module 9: Working with Hostile Sources

### Objective

As students gain confidence in their interviewing skills, instructors should incorporate instruction in how to deal with hostile sources, especially considering the changing political climate where journalists are often targeted and/or harassed. Precaution and preparation are the key. Just like performing a risk assessment before covering a story, journalists should consider in advance how they plan to react if a source gets hostile. Journalists must remember that the purpose of an interview is not to get into a debate with the source, but rather to gather information. Journalists, to the best of their ability, must remain level-headed.

### Reading(s)

“The art of the interview: Asking the hard questions about asking the hard questions” by Ann Friedman, *Columbia Journalism Review* (May 30, 2013)

[https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/the\\_art\\_of\\_the\\_interview.php?link](https://archives.cjr.org/realtalk/the_art_of_the_interview.php?link)

This article from the *Columbia Journalism Review* discusses how to prepare to deal with hostile sources, including asking the hard questions. Eight important steps to asking good questions are provided. In discussing the value of each of these steps, instructors and students can also discuss how to respond if asking hard questions leads to some pushback from sources.

### Discussion Question

1. **What advice does this article offer in terms of how to ask the hard questions? Do you agree with these steps? Why or why not? Discuss.**

- Know your subject
- Come in with a plan
- Write questions ahead of time, *but* prioritize conversation
- Just come out and ask the hard stuff
- Embrace the silences
- Think in soundbites
- Play dumb
- Keep the mic running after you finish

“How to Conduct Difficult Interviews” by Mallory Pickett, *The Open Notebook* (Dec 11, 2018)

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/12/11/how-to-conduct-difficult-interviews/>

This resource provides firsthand accounts of conducting difficult, tense interviews. Students should read how these journalists overcame their fears and uncertainties and pushed forward to complete their stories. It is common to feel anxious or nervous before conducting interviews. One of the keys is to steadfastly remain open-minded. Avoid heated discussions.

Embedded in this article is the following list of strategies for conducting difficult or uncomfortable interviews:

### **Key Takeaways for Difficult Interviews (by Mallory Pickett. @ The Open Notebook, Inc.):**

1. **Don't fear the fear!** It's natural to be nervous before an important or difficult interview.
2. **Prepare.** Make sure you have all your facts and reporting in order and that they will be accessible to you during the interview if you need them. Then practice the interview as much as you can – map out an interview flowchart and/or role play with a colleague.

3. **Stay calm and stick to the facts.** During the interview, if your interviewee starts to get upset or shut down, ask them to share their concerns. “I can tell you’re upset/reluctant to talk about [X]. What specifically are you worried about?”
4. **Make every effort to include all voices in your story.** Don’t just send one email and then say the source didn’t respond to a request for comment. If you can’t get a phone or in-person interview, put serious thought into writing questions for written response. Remember that your questions are on the record; keep them neutral.
5. **No surprises!** If you work with a publication that has a fact-checking department, they will run much of your reporting by the source. If you don’t have a fact-checking department, a “no surprises” letter that goes through everything you said about that source and gives them a chance to respond can be useful. A “no surprises” phone call can also be a great idea, but make sure you record it.
6. **Be kind and fair.** The relationships you build with the people you’re investigating will make reporting easier, and could even lead to new stories down the road.

“How Do I Handle a Hostile Source?” by Joe Grimm, *Poynter* (June 1, 2007)

<https://www.poynter.org/reporting-editing/2007/how-do-i-handle-a-hostile-source/>

This brief resource points out that every story is important to someone no matter how innocuous it may seem. For new interns or journalists, this resource provides a succinct response to this question: How do you deal with angry sources?

#### Discussion Question

1. **What advice does this resource offer in terms of dealing with hostile sources?**
  - Ask source to fill you in on the background. Listen. Ask for clarification. Do not defend.
  - Explain, briefly, your desire to understand and to be accurate and thorough.
  - Spend enough time so you and the source know each other as individuals, not caricatures.
  - Give the source your contact numbers and invite reaction to whatever you write.
  - This will take time. But it is a good rehearsal for when you develop a beat of your own.

“Journalists of Color Face Harassment by Sources” by Jane C. Hu, *The Open Notebook* (April 9, 2019) – this article appears in Modules 3, 7, and 9

<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2019/04/09/journalists-of-color-face-harassment-by-sources/>

This resource examines the toll that harassment can take on journalists of color by examining how seemingly small “microaggressions” of racism can build up and ultimately wear down those on the receiving end. The resource also delves into the role that editors (and newsrooms) can play in supporting journalists of color.

#### Discussion Questions

1. **How are “microaggressions” defined in this resource? Is there a clear line between these pinpricks of racism and a source being friendly or cordial?**
  - Microaggressions are defined as “subtle prejudiced comments or actions directed at a member of a marginalized group.” These comments or actions often seem innocuous and, taken individually, may not have an impact; however, these microaggressions can build up over time even if the source does not intend to offend. Unfortunately, that does not lessen the impact journalists may feel.
2. **How should journalists of color respond?**
  - There is not a “one-size-fits-all” response to this question, especially if the comments or actions encountered are not overtly racist. Some journalists feel it is not worth confronting because responding may risk access to the source; other journalists feel they

must confront because making the choice to not to respond proves too difficult to stomach.

**3. What role can editors (and newsrooms) play in supporting journalists of color who may be experiencing harassment due to color or race?**

- Ideally, newsrooms would have protocols in place to deal with all forms of harassment. However, as mentioned, harassment cases all differ so there is not always a “one-size-fits all” solution. Editors and newsroom managers can start by creating a welcoming environment for all employees. Editors and newsroom managers can also proactively reach out to journalists and encourage them to speak about their experiences. Trust is key.

## Module 10: Digital Security

### Objective

The purpose of this module is to illustrate how important it is for journalists to ensure the security of their electronic devices that store personal and work-related data. Students should develop a heightened awareness about how to protect their data and begin determining the level of security needed in different situations. One thing to keep in mind is that *nothing digital is ever completely safe*. The safest way to get and protect information is to meet face-to-face. Encryption tools may lower the risks and mitigate danger, but they do not prevent them.

### Reading(s)

Digital Safety Kit from *Committee to Protect Journalists* (July 30, 2019)

<https://cpj.org/2019/07/digital-safety-kit-journalists.php>

This Digital Safety Kit is designed to help journalists protect themselves and their digital content from attack. According to the *Committee to Protect Journalists*, “Journalists should protect themselves and their sources by keeping up to date on the latest digital security news and threats such as hacking, phishing, and surveillance. Journalists should think about the information they are responsible for and what could happen if it falls into the wrong hands, and take measures to defend their accounts, devices, communications, and online activity.”

### Discussion Question

**1. When it comes to digital security, what are some of important things the *Committee to Protect Journalists* suggest journalists should be aware of? List and discuss.**

- Protect your accounts
- Phishing
- Device security
- Encrypted communications
- Secure internet use
- Crossing borders

“Tips for digital security” by Qainat Khan, *The GroundTruth Project* (June 15, 2017)

<https://thegroundtruthproject.org/tips-digital-security/>

This article from *The GroundTruth Project* points out that digital security is now a basic requirement for all journalists. To provide advice to combat the threat of digital attacks, *The GroundTruth Project* spoke with Tom Lowenthal, staff technologist at the *Committee to Protect Journalists*, who worked on the tech safety chapter of *CPJ’s Journalist Safety Guide*. Lowenthal provides baseline precautions every journalist should take to protect their devices and their communications.

### Discussion Question

**1. According to Tom Lowenthal from the *Committee to Project Journalists*, what are the baseline precautions every journalist should take to protect their devices and their communications? List and discuss.**

- Protect your accounts
  - Use a password manager
  - Use two-factor authentication when possible
- Protect your devices from malware
  - Update your software
  - Secure your web browser
  - Use secure equipment

- Protect your communications
  - Do not use email for secure communications
  - Use Signal (<https://signal.org/>) for texted conversations and voicecalls
  - VPNs can be hit or miss

“Journalism School?: Lessons in security they might not teach at your J-school” from *Surveillance Self-Defense*

<https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#assessing-your-risks>.

This reading, *Surveillance Self-Defense* from the *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, covers “Lessons in security they might not teach at your j-school.” There are 10 clickable lessons that provide information for journalists to take necessary measures to protect their digital data. Depending on the specific subject matter being taught, instructors can pick and choose which of the links to assign to their students.

**Here are the topics covered:**

1. Your Security Plan: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#your-security-plan>
2. Communicating with Others: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#communicating-others>
3. Creating Strong Passwords: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#creating-strong-passwords>
4. How to: Delete Your Data Securely on macOS: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#how-delete-your-data-securely-macos>
5. How to: Delete Your Data Securely on Windows: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#how-delete-your-data-securely-windows>
6. How to: Delete your Data Securely on Linux: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#how-delete-your-data-securely-linux>
7. Keeping Your Data Safe: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#keeping-your-data-safe>
8. Protecting Yourself on Social Networks: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#protecting-yourself-social-networks>
9. How to: Circumvent Online Censorship: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#how-circumvent-online-censorship>
10. What Should I Know About Encryption?: <https://ssd.eff.org/en/playlist/journalism-student#what-should-i-know-about-encryption>

“Five digital security tools to protect your work and sources” by Spencer Woodman, *ICIJ: International Consortium of Investigative Journalists* (January 29, 2018)

<https://www.icij.org/blog/2018/01/five-digital-security-tools-to-protect-your-work-and-sources/>

The threats to digital security continue to compound, yet many journalists are failing to take advantage of some security safeguards to protect themselves from digital attacks. In this article from the *International Consortium of Investigative Journalists*, Spencer Woodman identifies “five security tools that have emerged as among the most commonly recommended for reporters and news organizations as well as their sources.”

### Discussion Questions

1. **What are the five security tools that Spencer Woodman identifies that are recommended for journalists and news organizations as well as their sources? List and discuss how to employ these tools.**
  - Signal (<https://signal.org/>) and other end-to-end encrypted apps
  - Secure file storage and encrypted sharing
  - Password managers

- Two-factor authentication and its innovations
- Slack alternatives for your office

“Are You Savvy About Digital Security?” by Sarah Wild, *The Open Notebook* (August 14, 2018)  
<https://www.theopennotebook.com/2018/08/14/are-you-savvy-about-digital-security/>

According to this resource, “Many journalists mistakenly believe that their stories are not sensitive enough to warrant increased digital protection.” Unfortunately, as this resource suggests, this is a misconception. The fact is that all digital communications, including email, texting, instant messaging, and voice-over-internet services, team collaboration tools (such as Slack), and social media applications, are vulnerable to digital threats, including viruses, eavesdroppers, and hackers. This resource provides useful techniques and strategies to protect digital communications.

### Discussion Questions

**1. What is the benefit of using the encrypted app Signal (<https://signal.org/>) to deliver communications?**

- Signal is known for its strong focus on privacy: Only the sender and receiver have the code to decrypt the messages. This app can also be set to automatically delete conversations from a specific contact.

**2. What is threat modeling and why is it important in terms of protecting journalists and their sources?**

- According to the Electronic Frontier Foundation (<https://ssd.eff.org/en>), threat modeling is “a way of thinking about the sorts of protection you want for your data so you can decide which potential threats you are going to take seriously. It is impossible to protect against every kind of trick or adversary, so you should concentrate on which people might want your data, what they might want from it, and how they might get it. Coming up with a set of possible threats you plan to protect against is called threat modeling or assessing your risks.”

Once journalists identify what they are trying to protect – and from whom – they will be better equipped to protect themselves and their sources.

**3. What are the high-impact steps that all journalists should take to protect themselves and their sources from digital attacks? List and discuss.**

- Basic Digital Hygiene
  - Use two-factor authentication
  - Spiff up passwords
  - Install updates when prompted
- Encrypt Communications and Devices
- Avoid the Temptation of Pirated Software
- Take Special Care When Crossing Borders

## Module 11: Foreign Conflicts – Staying Safe Abroad

### Objective

The purpose of this module is to prepare students who have an interest in reporting abroad, particularly in conflict zones. Students will learn about the various risk assessment strategies, tools and applications that have been created to help while they are in the field reporting. This includes ways of thinking about what types of conflicts they feel capable of covering. For many newly minted journalists, freelancing abroad may be a way to start their career as a foreign correspondent as opposed to finding work with an organization that will eventually send them overseas. This module, gleaned from the James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide, examines some of the realities on the ground, ways to prepare for such a career, and how to build a career as a foreign correspondent in a sensible and safe manner.

### Readings/Resources

*Jim: The James Foley Story* (2016), HBO, Director: Brian Oakes

This documentary created by Brian Oakes, a childhood friend of James Foley, looks at Jim's life from small-town New Hampshire to the frontlines in Libya and Syria. Oakes examines Jim's motivations for reporting from the front lines as well as his desire to return to conflict reporting after being abducted and detained in Libya. For this module, instructors may consider showing the first half of the documentary, which concludes with Jim's abduction in Syria, or watch the documentary in its entirety. (*Jim: The James Foley Story is available on HBO and Amazon*).

### Discussion Questions

- 1. What preparations should be taken before going to a combat zone, an area of violent civil unrest or other dangerous situations? What are the risks and how can they be mitigated?**

Instructors should stress that adequate preparation is key and provide some sense of the scope of training that reporters need before working in a combat zone. This includes, but is not limited to, seeking advice from experienced reporters, securing safety equipment, acquiring any necessary travel documents, knowing demographics and cultures, becoming familiar with the language and laws, obtaining insurance, etc.

Reporting from conflict zones will undoubtedly bring risk. Journalists must mitigate as many risks as possible by completing a thorough risk assessment that considers the risk/reward of pursuing stories in dangerous locales.

- 2. Thinking about James Foley's motivations for reporting from Libya and Syria, how do they resonate with students' motivations to become foreign correspondents?**

Understanding why James Foley went to Libya and Syria helps highlight the different realities faced by conflict reporters versus other journalists. Both the lifestyle and the risk are different. Discussion questions should help put students inside the psyche of someone going to the frontline. Students should understand that each conflict area is unique and that conflict reporting is not a uniform experience.

James Foley went to Libya out of a desire to give a voice to those without one. After his release from Libya, he said it was not worth putting friends and family through the stress of getting kidnapped to report in the region. But then, despite protests from friends and family, Jim headed back to Libya after a few months at home and eventually moved on to Syria, saying it was something he felt he had to do.

This provides an opportunity to bring up the lure of reporting on crucial issues in dangerous situations, the adrenaline rush that journalists in the documentary describe, the feeling that providing information from war-torn areas is important and meaningful, and how those emotions must be weighed against risks and responsibilities to family.

### **3. What are news “black holes” and what are their consequences?**

This is very much a purpose-of-journalism question, and hopefully an exploration of one of the key motivations of being a conflict journalist. If, for example, Syria is too dangerous for journalists on the ground, the threat of a news “black hole” – or absence of first-hand, authenticated and unbiased information – is a very real possibility. Comparing Syria to other countries where a free media does not exist will help students think about the importance of newsgathering in these life-threatening environments. Without independent journalists on the ground, reliable information is hard to gather to allow for good decision making and an informed citizenry. As part of this discussion, students should consider what other areas of the world can be considered “black holes.”

“The Principles: We Must Embed a Culture of Safety in Our Profession” from *ACOS Alliance*  
<https://www.acosalliance.org/the-principles>

A Culture of Safety Alliance (ACOS) was formed in January 2015 at a freelance journalism safety conference in Washington. The goal of ACOS is to encourage the news industry to protect the journalists it hires, both staff and freelancers, and to encourage journalists to learn best practices in protecting themselves on assignment. The “Freelance Journalists Safety Principles” were launched in February 2015.

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **1. What principles and practices should journalists, particularly freelancers, follow to mitigate dangers? List and discuss.**

- Have basic skills to care for themselves and/or injured colleagues.
- Complete a first aid course, carry a first-aid kit and stay up to date on standards of care and safety, both physical and psychological. Journalists should have medical insurance.
- Have protective ballistic clothing, including armored jackets and helmets. Complete an industry-recognized hostile environment course.
- Work with colleagues on the ground and with news organizations to complete a careful risk assessment and measure the journalistic value of an assignment against the risks.
- Plan and prepare in detail routes, transport, contacts and a communications strategy with daily check-in routines. Secure digital communications from intrusion and tracking.
- Understand the risks of any specific assignment. Consider the safety information and travel advice of professional colleagues, local contacts, embassies and security personnel. Share safety information with colleagues to help prevent them harm.
- Leave next of kin details with news organizations, ensuring that these named contacts have clear instructions and action plans in the case of injury, kidnap or death in the field.

#### **2. What principles and practices should editors and news organizations follow to help protect journalists, particularly freelancers? List and discuss.**

- Recognize that local journalists and freelancers, including photographers and videographers, play a vital role in international coverage, particularly on dangerous stories.
- Show the same concern for local journalists and freelancers that they do for staffers.
- Treat journalists and freelancers similarly to how they treat staffers in issues of safety training, first aid, safety equipment, and responsibility in event of injury or kidnap.



- Be aware of, and factor in, costs of training, insurance and safety equipment. Before an assignment, determine what a freelancer will be paid and what expenses will be covered.
- Recognize the importance of prompt payment for freelancers. When setting assignments, provide agreed upon expenses in advance, or as soon as possible upon completion of work, and pay for work done in as timely a manner as possible.
- Ensure all freelance journalists are given fair recognition in bylines and credit for work they do unless the news organization and the freelancer agree that crediting the journalist can compromise the safety of the freelancer and/or the freelancer's family.

“A Field Guide for Correspondents” by Charles M. Sennott, *The GroundTruth Project* (Oct 8, 2015)

<http://thegroundtruthproject.org/the-field-guide/>

Charlie Sennott, founder and executive director of *The GroundTruth Project* as well as friend and colleague of James Foley, describes the importance of “ground truth” when it comes to reporting. Sennott discusses how this is both an exciting and dangerous time to be a journalist overseas. It is suggested that both instructors and students download “A Field Guide for Correspondents” to use as a resource when planning to work in dangerous areas here or abroad.

### Discussion Questions

1. **In terms of journalism, what does Charles Sennott mean by the term “ground truth”? What is this type of truth necessary for a free press? Discuss.**
  - According to Sennott, “ground truth” is an example of solid journalism resulting from being there, on the ground, to tell the stories that matter. And even though there is much peril and instability for journalists these days, there is a great need to be on the ground working in the spirit of a free press. The goal is to do this as safely as possible.
2. **What is the risk of NOT being on the ground covering stories? How do we determine if the dangers/threats are too great to cover a story? Discuss.**
  - This is an opportunity for journalists to start determining what their personal boundaries are in terms of risks. This is also where performing a thorough risk assessment can help journalists decide whether they wish to pursue certain stories.

“In Syria, freelancers like James Foley cover a dangerous war zone with no front lines” by Ellen Shearer, *Washington Post* (Aug 22, 2014)

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-syria-freelancers-like-james-foley-cover-a-dangerous-war-zone-with-no-front-lines/2014/08/22/25e4bfda-295b-11e4-86ca-6f03cbd15c1a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8f213e281f45](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-syria-freelancers-like-james-foley-cover-a-dangerous-war-zone-with-no-front-lines/2014/08/22/25e4bfda-295b-11e4-86ca-6f03cbd15c1a_story.html?utm_term=.8f213e281f45)

Ellen Shearer, co-director of Medill's National Security Journalism Initiative, one of James Foley's journalism professors, and the creator of the James W. Foley Journalist Safety Guide, examines how media coverage around the world has changed and provides insight into Jim's motivations to continue covering dangerous areas of the world despite personal risk.

### Discussion Questions

1. **How has access to dangerous areas changed over time? Why are more and more freelancers covering dangerous conflicts overseas?**
  - Frontlines are becoming more and more blurred to the point where it feels that the frontlines are everywhere and nowhere at all. In addition, the number of foreign bureaus has diminished, there are less staffers, and news organizations are less willing to send their reporters to these dangerous areas of the world. As a result, freelance journalists are often filling this void.

**2. What were Jim Foley’s motivations to continue to report in conflict zones? As a journalist, do you think these reasons indicate that this type of reporting is necessary? Why or why not? Discuss.**

- According to Shearer, Jim “believed, rightly, that giving Americans a complete picture of the Syrian conflict means going beyond officials’ statements. Jim also knew well that the cost of getting the truth could be high. But the cost in not getting the full story is real, too — we have fewer witnesses to the historic events unfolding in Syria and elsewhere.”

This is a good chance for instructors to start a conversation with students: Do they feel the risks – which Jim recognized – are worth “getting the truth”? Why or why not?

“James Foley’s Choices” by Mark Singer, *The New Yorker* (August 22, 2014)

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/james-foleys-choices>

In this article, Singer explores James Foley’s background and delves into the choices Jim made before he was captured in Libya. The article also considers Jim’s initial motivation to cover overseas conflicts. Included is a fascinating multi-part narrative that Jim wrote about his experience being detained by Gaddafi’s forces, life as a captive, his release, and ultimate return to Libya.

**Discussion Question**

**1. What are your motivations for becoming a journalist? Are you interested in covering conflict areas? Why? Discuss.**

- Foley did not become a journalist until later in his life. He was inspired to travel the world and to learn more about all people. This is a good opportunity to discuss with students their motivation to work overseas and to connect that with the importance of completing risk assessments before venturing into conflict zones.

“Why the Best War Reporter in a Generation Had to Suddenly Stop” by Mark Warren, *Esquire* (Sep 15, 2015)

<https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a37838/end-of-war-1015/>

This article profiles war journalist C.J Chivers, a former Marine and an expert in ballistics and battlefield tactics. Chivers, considered by many the best war reporter of this generation, ultimately walked away from conflict zones, in large part because of the impact on his family.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. How much should family considerations factor into choices made by journalists who wish to cover conflict zones?**

- C.J. Chivers discusses how he could no longer put his family – particularly his son who developed hives once while Chivers was away on assignment – through the trauma of war reporting. This echoes James Foley’s concerns about the worry he caused his family while reporting in dangerous parts of the world.

Students should consider the concern they will cause those who care for them when considering the type of journalism they would like to pursue.

**2. Chivers notes that he recognized he was becoming too hypervigilant about common moments in everyday life. Do you think this is connected to PTSD that many journalists experience? What are ways of dealing with this?**

- PTSD is a very real concern for journalists that cover traumatic events. In other modules, the importance of self-care is discussed. Journalists (and newsroom managers) need to

take necessary precautions to make sure they are taking care of themselves, physically and mentally. Journalists should make efforts to talk through their experiences and/or find other strategies so they are not bottling up everything on the inside.

“The Rules of Conflict Reporting are Changing” by Janine di Giovanni, *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* (April 27, 2015)

<https://cpj.org/2015/04/attacks-on-the-press-the-rules-of-conflict-reporting-are-changing.php>

This article examines the death of Marie Colvin, a 58-year old Irish American reporter, who was killed by a rocket blast in Syria. Colvin was an experienced conflict journalist and her death served as a wakeup call to many conflict journalists. According to di Giovanni, Colvin’s death signified a change in how conflicts are covered. Being experienced, prepared and brave no longer was enough to protect conflict journalists.

### **Discussion Questions**

**1. According to di Giovanni, what changes have made conflict journalism increasingly more dangerous? Discuss.**

- While the threat of kidnapping had always been a concern, the sheer number of kidnappings increased in ways not seen before. Journalists James Foley, Steven Sotloff and others were brutally murdered and the videos used as propaganda. Another change that di Giovanni points out is that foreign journalists no longer can count on the trust of the local population.

**2. Once controversial step that di Giovanni “gingerly” suggested was to have a system of journalistic accreditation. What do students think about this type of system? What, if any, steps can journalists take to stay safe in light of the increasing dangers they face?**

- There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer. Students should be willing to have a frank and honest discussion about what steps can and should be taken when reporting overseas. These are tough questions, and there are no easy answers.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP): *US Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs*  
(Last updated Aug 8, 2018)

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/step.html>

This free service allows U.S. citizens traveling or living abroad to receive the latest security updates from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. It is strongly encouraged that journalists planning to work overseas enroll in STEP to stay informed about threats that may arise.

## Module 12: Covering Natural Disasters and Weather-Related Events

### Objective

The goal of this module is to make sure young journalists are aware of the dangers involved with covering natural disasters and other weather-related events. Covering any type of weather-related disaster can prove to be very difficult for everyone in the newsroom. Young journalists should learn how to protect themselves, and also how to be sensitive to those who are victims of these events. If these are local events, journalists might not only be covering the story, they may be part of the group at risk.

“This is our Super Bowl: why do reporters go into the eye of the storm?” by Luke O’Neil, *The Guardian* (Oct 10, 2018)

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/10/reporters-storm-coverage-extreme-conditions>

This article discusses why journalists travel into dangerous weather situations and the risks they face in order to provide reports. As stated in the article, “Destruction and mayhem is simply more interesting for viewers, most of whom are far from the storm themselves, to look at than a talking head simply reading off a list of facts. It’s pretty clear that networks wouldn’t be broadcasting so much of this stuff if there wasn’t a big audience for it.” Instructors and students should be willing to discuss where and when to draw the line when it comes to covering extreme weather.

### Discussion Question

1. **Does it set a dangerous example for reporters to cover extreme weather when other people have been asked to remain indoors and, in other cases, ordered to evacuate? Or as Mark Strassman of the *New York Times* asks, “Why would you have reporters standing potentially in harm’s way who are telling people to do exactly the opposite?”**

#### Discuss.

- This a great conversation to pursue in the classroom. First, a comparison might be drawn between covering other dangerous events (riots, mob scenes, etc.) and covering dangerous weather disasters (flooding, fire, hurricanes, etc.). Is there a difference? Instructors might also ask students to consider whether journalists have a responsibility to share these stories with the public. And, if so, do they need to be present to tell it?

“Self-Care Amid Disaster” by Joe Hight, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (Aug 31, 2005)

<https://dartcenter.org/content/self-care-amid-disaster>

This resource focuses on steps that can be taken by the entire newsroom when covering local disasters and/or weather-related events. This means the newsroom must band together as a team to cover the story. Often, this involves rotating journalists to tend to their own worries and concerns.

### Discussion Question

1. **When covering natural disasters or weather-related events, what should all editors and reporters be encouraged to do? List and discuss.**

- Get away from your desk and take brief breaks.
- Try deep breathing.
- Talk to a person that you trust about how you are feeling during these times.
- Exercise.
- Listen to music. Do your favorite hobby. Go to church. Laugh. Do something that relaxes you or provides you with relief from the pressures.
- Eat right—most difficult for any journalist.
- If you can, get enough sleep.

“Hurricane Reporter’s Checklist” from *RTDNA: Radio Television Digital News Association* (Sep 10, 2018)

[https://rtdna.org/article/hurricane\\_reporters\\_checklist](https://rtdna.org/article/hurricane_reporters_checklist)

This resource points out the many responsibilities that newsrooms have when it comes to reporting on extreme weather. According to *RTDNA*, “Journalists have a special responsibility during hurricanes and other severe weather situations with potentially wide impacts to be accurate and to be measured in the tone of their coverage. Newsrooms need to prepare in advance to establish expectations.... [N]ewsrooms should review *RTDNA*’s coverage guidelines for hurricanes and natural disasters.”

### Discussion Question

**1. What precautionary measures can journalists, in particular, take as they head toward a storm? List the precautions and then discuss their importance.**

- For the car
  - Windshield washer fluid; Fix-a-flat; Portable car battery jumper; Air freshener/damp rid
- Clothing/Personal Items
  - Blankets; Waterproof boots/overalls (if necessary); Extra socks (many); Rain gear (if necessary); Warm clothing/layers
- Equipment
  - Towels; Portable chargers; Battery packs and batteries; Duct tape; Pliers/tool kit
- Personal Care
  - Toilet paper; Baby wipes; Sunscreen; Bug spray; Dry shampoo
- Safety
  - Cash; Important medications and medical information in plastic zipper bags; List of emergency numbers including local law enforcement and Red Cross; Medical kit; Battery-operated weather radio; Flashlights
- Food and water
  - Bottled water – at least three gallons per person; Plastic utensils; High-protein food that does not require cooking: tuna packets, peanut butter, beef jerky
- For reporting
  - Plastic zipper bags for phones and small electronics; Non-lubricated condoms for keeping small electronics like microphones dry; Plastic trash bags and grocery bags for wet items and for keeping items dry; Zip ties for securing equipment; Local maps (paper and downloaded); Pencil and paper

“In a Tornado's Path: Reporting the Spring Storm Season” *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (May 2, 2011)

<https://dartcenter.org/content/in-tornados-path-reporting-tragedy#.UZuXTIKELft>

In this resource, experts from Columbia’s *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* offer tips based on their experiences covering an array of recent natural disasters, including hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, earthquakes, and forest fires. This resource also includes several other useful resources from the Dart Center that students can explore.

### Discussion Question

**1. What advice do the experts from the *Dart Center* offer to journalists who are documenting the emotional, psychological and physical impact of weather-related disaster? List and discuss the importance of each of bit of advice offered.**

- People caught up in a disaster have a right to decline being interviewed, photographed or filmed. News professionals in the field and in the newsroom need to respect that right. Exercise the principle of doing no further harm.

- Do not feign compassion – it cannot be faked. Use a supportive phrase like “I’m sorry this happened to you,” rather than “How do you feel?” or “I know how you feel.”
- Thoroughly check and re-check facts, names, times and places. Nobody likes to make mistakes, but errors are particularly painful to traumatized people mentioned in news stories and cause them unnecessary stress.
- Disaster reports do not need added sensation. Rely on good, solid, factual journalism and a healthy dose of sensitivity.
- Resist the “pack” mentality, especially when reporters from many news organizations are on the scene. Pool resources where possible to limit demand on individuals and communities.
- For the families of victims and survivors, their loss, grief and concern are intensely focused and personal. Do not force the timeline: You may get a far better story or image if you hold off a little with those immediately affected.
- Remember that victims, survivors, their families and friends are struggling to regain control in their lives after a devastating experience. Allow them to have some say as to when, where and how they are interviewed. Read back their quotes or replay raw tape; allow them to suggest which photos of a deceased or injured relative should be used.
- Allow vulnerable interviewees to tell you when they would like to take a break, whether they want you to put your notebook down or turn off recording equipment so they can go off the record.
- Remember that people caught up in traumatic circumstances are rarely media-savvy. Explain the media process and how your story/picture/footage is likely to be used. Explain that the material may be reshaped prior to publication, or afterwards, or not used at all. Be honest if you know something is likely to run more than once.

“Weather” by Mike Reilley, *Journalist’s Toolbox* (July 12, 2019)

<https://www.journaliststoolbox.org/2019/03/17/weather/>

The Society of Professional Journalists provides an in-depth list of resources to track flooding, rain, storms, hurricanes, volcanoes, droughts, etc. Students should be directed to this website with links to over 200 valuable weather-related resources.

## **\*Additional Module: Reporting on – and during – the COVID-19 Pandemic**

### **Objective**

This module provides instructors and students with information and strategies for staying safe – physically and mentally – during this crisis. Journalists reporting during the pandemic must make sure they take precautions to protect themselves, their colleagues, and their sources. Knowledge of the coronavirus continues to evolve so staying informed with current resources is of paramount importance.

Covering health-related crises presents risks for journalists. Journalists should remain informed on updated information about the coronavirus while also drawing upon past health crises to develop action plans. Journalists must take steps to mitigate risk as nothing is more important than staying physically and mentally healthy. There are additional concerns regarding the effect the pandemic is having on journalism, including how many journalists are working from home and newsrooms are virtually empty. As journalists find themselves spending more time secluded indoors filing stories, this raises concerns about digital safety. This module offers resources for journalists adjusting to this ‘new’ normal.

### **Readings/Resources**

“CPJ Safety Advisory: Covering the coronavirus outbreak” from *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* (April 28, 2020 – regularly updated)

<https://cpj.org/2020/02/cpj-safety-advisory-covering-the-coronavirus-outbr.php>

CPJ offers this very thorough and easy to digest resource with information and advice for journalists for every step when covering stories during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a versatile resource for introducing journalists to various aspects of reporting during this – or any – health-related crisis. The resource includes information on the following: (1) Pre-Assignment Planning; (2) Psychological Well-Being; (3) Avoiding Infection and Infecting Others; (4) Digital Security; (5) Crime and Physical Security on Assignment; (6) International Travel Assignments; and (7) Post-Assignment. Depending on the daily lesson in class, this resource could be used in a single class period or spread about to complement the material covered over several class meetings. CPJ also provides a link for their helpful “Safety Kit for Journalists”: <https://cpj.org/safety-kit/>

### **Discussion Questions**

- 1. When preparing to cover stories during this pandemic, what are steps that journalists can take to mitigate risk, including protecting their mental well-being?**
  - During the crisis, assignments can change or be cancelled at a moment’s notice. Journalists must prepare themselves for that. When possible, phone or online interviews should be conducted. Due to the transmission of the virus, older or health-compromised journalists must seriously weigh the risk of their exposure, and journalists of certain nationalities must consider the risks of being targeted. Plans should be in place if a journalist falls ill, whether working near or far from home. To ease concerns, be prepared to discuss with family and friends about why this work is important *despite* the risks.
- 2. What precautions can journalists take to avoid infection and infecting others?**
  - First and foremost, journalists should be well-aware of the hygiene measures that have been put in place in the location they are reporting from. Journalists should review and understand the following: (1) standard recommendations to avoid infection, (2) how to avoid transmitting the virus with their equipment, and (3) how to properly use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including face masks.

**3. Why should journalists be particularly aware of digital security during this pandemic?**

- The threat to digital security has increased. Journalists covering the pandemic may encounter more online hostility, governments may be using increased surveillance to track the spread of the virus, and criminal hackers may be targeting journalists with sophisticated phishing attacks. Journalists should exercise caution when opening links with information on COVID-19 and when using social media.

**4. Is there increased risk of crime and concern for physical security when reporting during the pandemic?**

- There is an increased risk of social unrest with more people out of work and struggling to provide. Many urban areas are deserted, and police resources are often stretched thin. In rural areas, there may be a fear of ‘outsiders’ that may increase risk. Journalists should make a concerted, intentional effort to know the areas they are reporting from. This is especially true for journalists on international travel assignments.

**5. What post-assignment precautions should journalists be prepared to take?**

- Journalists should continue to monitor their own health while being prepared to self-quarantine after reporting from the field. CPJ recommends journalists keep a journal of all people they come into contact with for 14 days after working on assignment. If symptoms develop, inform the management/newsroom team and find safe passage to a hospital or medical clinic. Be sure to follow [WHO](#) or [CDC](#) guidelines.

“Media ethics, safety and mental health: reporting in the time of Covid-19” by Hannah Storm, Director, *Ethical Journalism Network (EJN)* (March 19, 2020)

<https://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/media-ethics-safety-and-mental-health-reporting-in-the-time-of-covid-19/amp>

This resource will help students gain a better understanding of the changes happening in journalism. *EJN* Director Hannah Storm explains how the pandemic is causing newsrooms and journalists to change decades of work habits in order to effectively cover COVID-19. Storm notes that “nothing compares with the events of recent weeks in terms of the global impact on media around the world of Covid-19 and the unprecedented scale of the story, and the demands it is making on our journalism and on us as journalists.” Storm offers advice based on her experiences, expertise, and interactions when explaining the importance of responsible and ethical reporting of the pandemic, strategies for how journalists can stay safe, and tips for managing mental health.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. Why is it increasingly important that journalists practice the core principles of journalism, including truth and accuracy, fairness and impartiality, humanity, accountability, and independence?**

While students may consider this a common sense exercise, instructors are encouraged to lead a class discussion on Storm’s suggestions and consider why these suggestions are increasingly important due to the havoc being wreaked by the pandemic. Storm emphasizes the following:

- Avoid sensationalism and scaremongering
- Avoid racial profiling; Protect affected people
- Be accurate and report facts; Seek expert opinions
- Provide context; Point people to credible information sources and resources
- Be careful when using maps showing case distribution
- Be cautious of using images of people in masks



- **First Draft News** also compiled the following helpful list, including tips on debunking misinformation: <https://firstdraftnews.org/long-form-article/coronavirus-responsible-reporting-and-ethics/>

**2. What steps can journalists take to protect themselves while working during the pandemic?**

These are rapidly changing times. Journalists must monitor their physical health and, should they experience any symptoms, inform their newsroom manager and follow health and medical policies of the area where they are working. It is imperative that journalists perform risk assessments and make sure they have all the necessary safety equipment needed – do not rely on already affected communities to provide these things. Journalists should make sure they have contingency plans in place should they become ill or if they are unable to leave the area in which they are working.

**3. How can journalists manage their mental health when covering the pandemic?**

Storm, based on her discussion about mental health with Professor Anthony Feinstein, explains that during this stressful time, it is important for journalists to acknowledge that they fill an important role when covering the pandemic. Reporters are essential and that means that reporters must make sure that they remain healthy. Storm suggests all journalists complete the following exercise: make a list of the things you can and cannot control. This should lead to a robust classroom discussion. Storm suggests journalists can exert control by doing the following:

- Get enough sleep; Eat properly; Avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine
- Take breaks from work, digitally and physically; Switch off news/social media
- It is normal to feel affected by difficult images or stories
- Go for a walk, if able; If you cannot get outside, consider something else to give yourself a break; Try meditation or mindfulness; Watch a comedy or read a book
- Spend time with family and friends, even remotely; Isolation is difficult
- Take time off: if you feel unwell, mentally or physically, do not be afraid to ask.
- Newsroom managers – lead by example. Be clear about policies and priorities; be as transparent as you can; be aware of those who may be more vulnerable

“U.S. video journalist shares tips for covering COVID-19: ‘We have to get creative’” from *Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)* (April 2, 2020)

<https://cpj.org/blog/2020/04/us-video-journalist-shares-tips-for-covering-covid.php>

This resource provides insights into tackling the new challenges created by the pandemic. Jon Gerberg, a veteran video journalist with experience reporting on conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, is currently reporting from New York City. Gerberg examines changes he has observed, precautions he takes, obstacles and concerns when covering current stories, apps for ensuring digital security, and how to deal with misinformation about the coronavirus. Discussing this resource will help journalists gain a greater understanding about how to incorporate safety into their reporting.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What impact has the pandemic had on covering regular beats?**

- This is a great opportunity to engage students in understanding how the pandemic will most likely inform all the reporting they do, regardless of their beat. Gerberg notes that he has had to reconsider most long-term projects and believes that this pandemic will be the primary story for a long time to come. From that perspective, this is a good time to impress upon young journalists the importance of adapting on the fly. Gerberg also points out how much he relies on Slack and video conferences to engage editors and colleagues.

**2. What safety measures can – and should – journalists take when preparing to report during the pandemic?**

- Journalists must take risk assessments seriously (see page 57). Journalists must honestly assess whether the risks of covering the story are worth the potential rewards. If the answer is yes, then take these practical steps: choose the right equipment, wear proper PPE gear, maintain social distancing, wipe down all gear, etc. After completing daily assignments, remove clothing and put it directly in the laundry – this is not extreme; this is protecting yourself and others, and it is a journalists’ responsibility.

**3. How can journalists protect their communications?**

- This is a chance to discuss the importance of digital security. Gerberg mentions the use of encrypted communication tools, like Signal, and making sure to use PGP encryption and Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to provide digital security. Whether experts on digital security or not, instructors and students should be willing and able to discuss this topic since so much reporting is conducted remotely.

**4. What responsibility do journalists have when dealing with misinformation during the pandemic?**

- Journalists should always be concerned about getting the story right; however, Gerberg points out that the stakes are even higher right now. Gerberg writes, “Since most of us are not [his italics] epidemiologists or medical professionals, we have to be honest with ourselves and our audience about what we do and do not know.” Instructors and students should be prepared to discuss what they are comfortable reporting on and what they feel is beyond their grasp due to the medical and scientific nature of the virus. This type of assessment will prevent journalists from making unnecessary mistakes.

“Reporting on coronavirus: Handling sensitive remote interviews” by Jo Healey, *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (originally published by *BBC Academy*) (April 20, 2020)

<https://dartcenter.org/resources/reporting-coronavirus-handling-sensitive-remote-interviews>

Jo Healey, senior BBC news journalist, develops and delivers Trauma Reporting through the BBC Academy. In this resource, Healey explains why there are “added considerations” beyond the typically sensitivities when remotely interviewing those impacted by the coronavirus. Healey notes that interviewees may be in isolation or semi-isolation, they may have lost someone who died alone, the ‘normal ritual’ of death and mourning has been altered, there is still so much unknown about the virus, and anxiety and fear about the safety of other loved ones may still exist. Because of all these potential factors, Healey suggests that reporters provide extra support before, during, and after the interview.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What can journalists do to before a remote interview?**

- Some of the tips Healey provides include acknowledging the grief of the victim, be as clear and honest about your intentions as possible, check facts carefully as inaccuracy can cause distress, build rapport and make sure the interview is about them not you, avoid assuming that there is a certain way victims should respond.

**2. What should journalists consider when choosing the right technology to use when conducting a remote interview?**

- Be sure to carefully explain the technology that will be used as different people have different comfort levels and expertise when it comes to technology. If possible, conduct the interview in a quiet spot. Journalists should try to make sure the interviewee can see

as well as hear. Using empathetic body language can provide comfort during the interview. Avoid any distracting images.

**3. What should journalists keep in mind during the interview?**

- Use short, simple questions and remember that the goal is to hear the interviewees account, not hold them to account. Avoid asking ‘how do you feel’ or saying that ‘I know how you feel’: journalists are not in their presence to provide comfort and can’t be sure what the interviewee feel so this may come across as insensitive. Structure the interview to make sure to guide them out of traumatic memories and allow space and control if the interviewee becomes emotional.

**4. What responsibilities do journalists have after the interview concludes?**

- After concluding the interview, journalists should manage expectations and be clear as to how the interview will be used. Be sure to show gratefulness, including not quickly wrapping up after the interview. Interviewees may feel vulnerable after opening up – journalists should be reassuring and contact them to follow up when the piece is broadcast or published. Lastly, journalists must recognize that they are being exposed to trauma and should talk through their experiences with someone they trust.

“How Journalists Can Deal with Trauma While Reporting on COVID-19” by Olga Simanovych, *Global Investigative Journalism Network (GIJN)* (March 24, 2020)

<https://gijn.org/2020/03/24/how-journalists-can-deal-with-trauma-while-reporting-on-covid-19/>

This resource examines the delicate balance journalists face in causing no additional harm to victims while also remaining focused on their own mental well-being. Dr. Cait McMahon, director of Dart Center Asia Pacific, reminds journalists of the following: “During a natural disaster or outbreak of violence, a journalist — like a psychotherapist — often takes on the role of a witness, who at times may experience a horror, rage and despair that is almost like that of the victim’s.” In the process, a journalist “risks psychological harm at three different stages of his or her work: firstly, as a witness or participant in the event; secondly, while communicating and showing compassion to the victims; and thirdly, by telling their stories — allowing their experiences to pass through the reporter to an audience.” Instructors can assign this resource to help prepare journalists for covering all three stages – before, during, and after – of an assignment to better understand why developing a strategy for their own mental health is so important.

**Discussion Questions**

**1. What can journalists do to prepare for covering an assignment during this pandemic?**

- A risk assessment is a great starting point (see page 57). Instructors should stress the importance of having an action plan in place. From there, emphasis should be placed on making sure that journalists plan times when they can step back from the story, including putting away their work and their devices before retiring for the night. This can also be a good time to make sure that journalists identify their own limits – physically, mentally, and psychologically – when reporting during this pandemic. Dr. McMahon includes a checklist for evaluating psychological risk that we strongly encourage all journalists complete. Perhaps most importantly, Dr. McMahon suggests that journalists do the following: “Pursue attainable victories – both personal and professional.” Journalists must not be too hard on themselves. These are extraordinary times.

**2. What do journalists need to know about their behavior, and the behavior of others during the pandemic?**

- This is a chance to discuss what is expected and what is possible when reporting during the pandemic. For instance, Dr. McMahon notes that eye contact can be extremely

important when physical distance is required. On top of that, students need to prepare for the fact that the trauma involved with this pandemic will impact how they respond. Remember, it is normal to feel anxious and in distress. Students should know that it will be normal to need to take a step back, to leave a room, to catch their breath. And it will most likely be the same for their sources. These unprecedented times will result in unexpected behaviors.

### 3. What can journalists do to protect themselves after completing an assignment?

- Instructors should stress that the completion of an assignment does not mean that the story has ended. Besides checking for symptoms of COVID-19, journalists should look for signs of anxiety, confusion, shame/guilt, and desperation, among others. Instructors can help their students by letting them know that these are normal human reactions. Covering stories can be traumatizing, and journalists *must* make time for themselves. Be sure to go over strategies that Dr. McMahon offers, e.g., do not rush to transcribe, vary story angles, support each other, and take time to think over responses.

“Covering COVID-19: Concepts, sources, treatments, and more” by Aldana Vales, *International Journalists’ Network (IJN)* (April 3, 2020)

<https://ijnnet.org/en/story/covering-covid-19-concepts-sources-treatments-and-more>

This brief article can be applied to nearly *all* journalists. Typically, a health crisis would be covered by journalist well-versed in science; however, due to the wide-reaching impact of this crisis, most journalists, regardless of their beat, are reporting on the pandemic. In this article, science journalist Aldana Vales provides tips so reporters can “familiarize[e] themselves with new concepts, sources and data.” Vales briefly explains key concepts, offers advice on incorporating testimonials, and examines ethical dilemmas that should lead to robust discussion about the role of journalists when covering stories during the pandemic. **Note:** Provided is a link for additional resources about covering the pandemic:

<https://ijnnet.org/en/stories#story:7100>

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. Why is important for journalists to understand key concepts about COVID-19, regardless of their beat?

- The pandemic is influencing the way all stories are covered – and read. Even though most journalists will not have scientific expertise, they must be increasingly aware and careful of the terminology used in their stories. This will prevent the spread of misinformation.

#### 2. Why should journalists be aware of how they incorporate testimonials of those with first-hand experience of COVID-19?

- The goal around the world is to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Journalists must be sure they do not weaken the public health interventions currently being implemented to slow the pandemic. For instance, certain stories may provide undue optimism for the public – journalists must do their due diligence to make sure that optimism is warranted. In the same vein, journalists should be careful not to create further panic. This highlights the importance of being an ethical journalist.

“How journalists can work from home securely” from *Freedom of the Press Foundation* (March 18, 2020)

<https://freedom.press/training/blog/wfh-securely/>

The pandemic is making remote work necessary. With so much work taking place outside the newsroom, there must be increased awareness about the importance of digital security. This resource examines systemic changes journalism faces while focusing on the importance of digital safety for newsrooms and

for individuals working from home. Instructors can utilize this resource to help newsroom managers and editors understand basic infrastructure needs and to offer reporters tips on digital security.

### Discussion Questions

#### 1. What can newsroom managers and editors do to help ensure digital security?

- Instructors should go through the list of steps newsroom managers and editors can take to build an infrastructure that protects the digital security of the team. This includes having Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), a team-friendly password manager, and two-factor authentication for shared accounts.

#### 2. What much, or all, of reporting taking place without the benefit of a newsroom, what precautions can journalists take to protect their equipment and their stories?

- With journalists almost exclusively working remotely, there is an increased need to put digital security efforts in place. A number of important steps for instructors and students to consider are addressed, including following IT guidance, bringing inventory items home, tightening wireless security, updating connected devices, watching out for phishing attacks, shutting down devices not in use, and sharing resources with colleagues.

### Additional COVID-19 Resources

These resources – webinars, newsletters, a journalist toolbox, additional tips for working from home, etc. – can supplement and/or replace those listed above. The webinars provide instructors and students the opportunity to hear experts discuss the many challenges journalists face in covering the pandemic. Instructors and students are encouraged to register for one or more of the newsletters listed below. These newsletters will keep instructors and students updated on information about the pandemic. Instructors can encourage class discussion by requiring students to report back on newsletter updates.

“Reporting and Covid-19: A Webinar Series for Journalists” from *Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma* (with Bruce Shapiro) (March 24 – April 30, 2020)

<https://dartcenter.org/events/2020/03/reporting-and-covid-19-webinar-series-journalists>

Columbia Journalism School’s Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma hosts online conversations about the challenges of reporting amid the COVID-19 pandemic and are led by Dart Center executive director Bruce Shapiro. These webinars provide a great opportunity for students to learn from experts. Links to previously recorded webinars are available.

“IJNet webinar on 'Journalists' mental health” *International Journalists' Network* (April 3, 2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNtAh4gRBc4&feature=youtu.be>

This webinar, hosted by *IJNET* editor, Taylor Mulcahey, and with Bruce Shapiro, executive director of Columbia University’s *Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma*, and Sherry Ricchiardi, professor of journalism at Indiana University, examines trauma and journalist self-care.

*New America/ASU Coronavirus Daily Brief* (Daily Newsletter)

<https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/blog/new-america-coronavirus-daily-brief/>

The Coronavirus Daily Brief is a daily news and analysis roundup edited by New America’s International Security Program and Arizona State University. The brief is edited by Peter Bergen and co-edited by Melissa Salyk-Virk, Emily Schneider, and David Sterman.

*COVID-19: Poynter* (Daily Newsletter): <https://www.poynter.org/covid-19-poynter-resources/>

Poynter champions the duty of a free press to inform, educate and hold the powerful accountable. Poynter also offers journalists the opportunity to sign up for free, real-time chats with Poynter experts.

*Columbia Journalism Review*. (Daily and Weekly Newsletters): <https://www.cjr.org/email>

CJR offers **The Media Today**, a daily email providing commentary on the biggest media story of the day, and **Top Stories**, a weekly digest of CJR's most popular stories. There is also a weekly **Tow Center COVID-19 Newsletter**, which tracks news of the virus through research and analysis.

Global Health NOW, *Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health* (Free Weekday Newsletter)  
<https://www.globalhealthnow.org/subscribe>

Global Health NOW is an essential daily read for anyone interested in US and global public health. Every weekday, Global Health NOW aggregates and summarizes the latest global health news—delivering critical stories to each subscriber's inbox.

“Journalist Toolbox: SARS, Flu, Coronavirus” by Mike Reilley, *Society for Professional Journalists*

[https://www.journalisttoolbox.org/2020/04/12/flu\\_and\\_miscellaneous\\_medicalhealth\\_sites/](https://www.journalisttoolbox.org/2020/04/12/flu_and_miscellaneous_medicalhealth_sites/)

The Society of Professional Journalists provides this regularly updated list of resources for covering and responding to Coronavirus, SARS and Flu Resources.

“Tips for journalists working from home” by Maeve Hennessy, *The Lenfest Institute* (April 21, 2020 – regularly updated)

<https://www.lenfestinstitute.org/local-journalism/tips-for-journalists-working-from-home>

“Over the past couple of weeks, newsrooms have abruptly transitioned from operating in an office to newsroom members being spread out in their homes, working remotely...Here are some valuable tips on how to have an equally productive workday from home.” This resource provides several links to help those adjusting to working from home.

“Confronting the emotional toll of covering COVID-19” by Cynthia Gluck, *The GroundTruth Project* (April 6, 2020)

<https://thegroundtruthproject.org/confronting-the-emotional-toll-of-covering-covid-19/>

This resource originally appeared in *Navigator*, *GroundTruth*'s newsletter for early-career journalists. Instructors can assign this to help prepare journalists for the emotional impact of covering this pandemic. In this article, Gluck interviews Mike Niconchuk, Director of Research and Development at [Beyond Conflict](#), with a focus on helping young journalists prepare themselves for the impact/trauma that may result from covering stories during this pandemic. Niconchuk focuses on the following topics: (1) The effects of reporting on crises; (2) Strategies to self-regulate; (3) Avoiding the common coping mechanism of romanticizing the work; and (4) What editors and managers can do to help.

## ***Risk Assessment for Journalists***

(modified from Rory Peck Trust: <https://rorypecktrust.org/freelance-resources/safety-and-security/risk-assessment-get-started/>)

### **Assignment outline**

- To identify risks, you need to outline your project. Before beginning your risk assessment, it is important to write an assignment outline. Identify and list the key elements of your project: interviews, travel and actions that are vital to your plans.

### **Locations and brief schedule**

- Where are you going, when, and for how long?

### **Assignment details**

- Give specific details of what you intend to cover to complete your assignment. What will you film, photograph, record, write about to make your piece? Including relevant meetings, sequences, interviews and locations. This is the basic foundation of your risk assessment and will provide a clear idea of what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve it.

### **Project specific risks**

- Is this a sensitive topic?
- Are you covering a high-risk location, activity or event?
- Who will you be meeting, and might they be at risk if they talk to you?
- Is your security threatened by talking to specific people, visiting or working in a specific area?
- More than anything, effective risk management is about asking questions, listening to the answers, and working within the realm of the possible. Seek advice from experienced journalists, if possible.

### **Travel Risks**

- Have you made travel arrangements? Plan and research the safest means of travel.
- Have an alternative plan in case you need to adjust travel arrangements or if you do not feel comfortable with your initial plan.

### **Profile Risks**

- This is not about how you perceive yourself, but how others may perceive you. Be aware of your image and presence online. The same questions apply to those accompanying you.
- Is there an increased risk as a result of your gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs or nationality? What about those accompanying you, and how does your profile affect them?

## ***Risk Assessment for Newsroom Managers***

(modified from Rory Peck Trust: <https://rorypecktrust.org/freelance-resources/safety-and-security/risk-assessment-get-started/> with input from Mark Zoromski, Director of Student Media, Marquette University)

***Before sending a reporting crew into the field, the newsroom manager should complete the following:***

### **Assignment outline**

- What is the project?
- Is the story sufficiently newsworthy to justify the risks to our reporting crew?
- Does the situation require that I send a two-person crew to ensure safety?

### **Location/schedule**

- Does the journalist and/or crew know the neighborhood?
- Has a timeline been established for when the assignment will be happening and how long it should take?

### **Assignment Details**

- What will need to be done to complete this project? Provide specific details about your expectations for your journalist and/or crew? This is similar to what is expected when a journalist does his or her own risk assessment.
- Is it situation-safe for live transmission?
- Does your reporter know how to assist your photojournalist by maintaining a broad view of the entire scene while the photojournalist concentrates on collecting images?
- Does the crew know the procedure to stay in contact with the assignment desk?

### **Project Specific Risks**

- Do I need to hire private security?
- Is there a heightened risk due to the equipment my crew needs to carry, and if so, what can I do about it?
- Are there health hazards for the reporting crew? Do they need gloves, respirators, safety masks?
- Is there a need for personal protection equipment (helmet, flak jacket, gas mask etc.)?
- Are sources at risk because of the presence of a journalist and/or crew?

### **Travel Risks**

- Has the crew made travel arrangements?
- Should I send the crew in an unmarked vehicle?
- Does the crew have an evacuation plan?
- Is there an extra key to the news vehicle in possession of a member of the team other than the driver?

### **Profile Risks**

- Is there any heightened risk due to the gender, ethnicity, or nationality of the crew?
- Have I thought about emotional safety of my crew?
- Have you briefed your crew on deciding whether to wear their identification badges in view or hiding them if they want to blend in?



## Additional Resources

U.S. Press Freedom Tracker

<https://pressfreedomtracker.us/>

Instructors can refer students to the U.S. Press Freedom Tracker. This nonpartisan website aims to provide reliable, easy-to-access information on press freedom violations in the US, including the number of journalists arrested, physically attacked, equipment seized, stopped at the border, etc. in a given year.

*The Salama Project: A Risk Assessment Application for Journalists and Media Organizations*

<http://salamaapp.org/>

Salama started as a risk assessment application for journalists and media organizations. It later became a project to protect safety, privacy, data, sources and investigations of journalists who work on sensitive stories, fulfill assignments in dangerous places or are under threat.

*Reporters Without Borders: Safety Guide for Journalists*

<https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-publishes-new-version-its-safety-guide-journalists>

In response to the growing dangers for journalists, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) released an updated version of its Safety Guide for Journalists. Produced in partnership with UNESCO, it is available in French, English, Spanish and Arabic.

“Photojournalists Bringing Gas Masks and Kevlar to Republican Convention” from *Petapixel* (July 18, 2016)

<https://petapixel.com/2016/07/18/photogs-bringing-war-zone-gear-cover-2016-rnc/>

A report by Petapixel on the preparations by photojournalists for the Republican National Convention. Due to the security risks, some journalists wore helmets and Kevlar jackets as a basic layer of protection for the coverage until it was clear the violence risk was low.

“Photographers Are Gearing Up for the Republican Convention Like It’s War” by Nick Stockton, *Wired* (July 17, 2016)

[https://www.wired.com/2016/07/photographers-gearing-republican-convention-like-war/?mbid=social\\_fb](https://www.wired.com/2016/07/photographers-gearing-republican-convention-like-war/?mbid=social_fb)

A report by Nick Stockton for Wired.com on how photojournalists took precautionary measures for the Republican National Convention (RNC). Although precaution is always necessary when covering political conventions, even veteran journalists felt like this was different.

“Some Practical Advice about Covering High Profile News Stories” by Mickey H. Osterreicher, NPPA General Counsel, *NPPA: The Voice of Visual Journalists* (2020)

[https://nppa.org/sites/default/files/2020\\_Practical%20Advice%20about%20Covering%20High%20Profile%20News%20Stories%2001-29-20.pdf](https://nppa.org/sites/default/files/2020_Practical%20Advice%20about%20Covering%20High%20Profile%20News%20Stories%2001-29-20.pdf)

Mickey Osterreicher, General Counsel for the National Press Photographers Association, provides important information about safety training and situational awareness for journalists and photographers covering high profile news stories like political conventions and potentially volatile situations.

“Tips from the Pros” from Paul Burton, training director for *Global Journalist Security*

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uby4NR82Ky4uK1lLkKcFeLZdJYeydiPyYQ5iAmJhRPYg/edit?ts=5c3416ba>

Paul Burton has trained hundreds of journalists, aid workers and others on safety measures in the field. This is a brief outline of his tips on reconnaissance prior to a protest or rally and recommendations for operating during the event.