

Deception in the media:

Advertising

Federal Trade Commission regulates advertising content

Public Relations

You must choose between your loyalty to your own integrity vs. loyalty to your client

Journalism

Two kinds of deception:

- Lying to your audience for whatever reason
- Lying to source in order to get the story

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

Seek the Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.

Journalists should:

- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.

Public Relations Society of America

- A member shall be prepared to identify publicly the name of the client or employer on whose behalf any public communication is made.

- A member shall not use any individual or organization professing to serve or represent an announced cause, or professing to be independent or unbiased, but actually serving another or undisclosed interest.
- A member shall not represent conflicting or competing interests without the express consent of those concerned, given after a full disclosure of the facts.

Is it sometimes ethical to lie to get the story?

The Principle of Utility (utilitarianism)
See the most useful action
 – seek the greatest good for the greatest number of people
 > weigh the amount of harm against the amount of good

The Veil of Ignorance
 – treat everyone equally and justice will prevail
 > we cover our eyes so we don't see differences in power wealth, education, responsibility etc.

- Ask yourself:**
- How do I feel about the action?
 - How will my actions affect others?
 - Can I justify this to other people, the public?
 - Is there any other way to achieve the same goal that will not raise ethical issues?
 - Does this decision fit the kind of journalism I believe in and how people should treat one another?

DECEPTION CHECKLIST
 To justify a lie or deception, one must fulfill all of the following criteria:

- When the information sought is of profound importance.

It must be of vital public interest, such as revealing great "system failure" at the top levels, or it must prevent profound harm to individuals.

- When all other alternatives to obtaining the same information have been exhausted.
- When the journalists involved are willing to fully and openly disclose the nature of the deception and the reason for it to those involved and to the public.

- When the individuals involved and their news organization apply excellence, through outstanding craftsmanship as well as the commitment of time and funding needed to fully pursue the story.
- When the harm prevented by the information revealed through deception outweighs any harm caused by the act of deception.

- When the journalists involved have conducted a meaningful, collaborative and deliberative decision-making process in which they weigh:
 - the consequences (short- and long-term) of the deception on those being deceived
 - the effect on journalistic credibility
 - the motivations of their actions

- the legal implications of the action
- the consistency of their reasoning and their action.