



PREVENT. RESIST. SUPPORT.

Episode 1: Bystander Stories

with Dr. Frankie Cachon



University
of Windsor

Office of Sexual Violence Prevention,
Resistance, and Support

Prevent Resist Support Podcast

Season 2 Episode 1: Bystander Stories with Dr. Frankie Cachon

Anne Rudzinski: Hi everyone, I'm Anne and you're listening to Prevent Resist Support, a podcast by the Office of Sexual Violence at the University of Windsor.

Music: I got your back my dear and I know that you got mine. I feel that hope and fear but I know we'll hold the line. Keep your head up. Keep your hand out when your breath is feeling short. Prevent, Resist, Support

Anne: Welcome, everyone. I'm Anne Rudzinski and this is Prevent Resist Support a podcast by the Office of Sexual Violence Prevention, Resistance & Support at the University of Windsor. This is episode 1 of season 2, which is really exciting. We have been doing this podcast for some time now and we are super excited to be bringing even more episodes to you this semester. Today I am interviewing Dr. Frances Cachon from the Bystander Initiative, and we're going to be talking about bystander stories, so she's going to be sharing some of her bystander stories and I am going to be sharing some of mine. We are going to chat through them in relation to our Bystander workshop. So, if you are interested in taking a Bystander workshop, I can only highly recommend it. Its a 3-hour workshop about bystander intervention where you get a whole bunch of tools for how to intervene in the moment to prevent sexual violence or any of the things that are a part of the larger umbrella of sexual violence, so stuff from, you know, catcalling, jokes that aren't funny, all the way up to sexual assault. And if you would like to register our workshops are listed now up until October

8th and you can find that on My Success, which is success.uwindsor.ca. As always, I just want to give the self-care reminder, we are going to be talking about sexual violence in our episode today. So if you'd like to reach out to our office, you can check out our brand new website www.uwindsor.ca/prevent-resist-support and you can find all of our support information on there or you can email us at svsupport@uwindsor.ca. So, S V like sexual violence, support @ uwindsor.ca. If you're not a member of our University of Windsor community, you can check out the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres to find support near you. Their website is sexualassaultsupport.ca. So, there is a lot of support options on and off-campus. And as always, just a reminder that we put all the links to the things we chat about in our episode description. And we also provide an accessible transcript on our website, so you can check that out if you would like to. So, let's get into our chat with Frankie.

Transition music

Anne: Alright, so today we have Frankie here from the Bystander Initiative and today we're going to tell bystander stories and talk about them. Welcome, Frankie.

Dr. Frankie Cachon: Hi. Thank you so much for having me.

Anne: Frankie, can you tell us a little bit about your background, how did you get into this work and what are you doing right now?

Frankie: So, my formal training is in sociology I am sociologist by training, a feminist sociologist with a specialization in social justice. And I was working in the area of youth-led social change and in employing feminist pedagogy to create capacity building among students to cultivate positive social change so that aligned well with the goals of the Bystander Initiative and I started teaching and from there just became part of the team.

Anne: That's awesome and we're going to talk about the Bystander Initiative at the end of our chat today, but first I think Frankie you want to tell us, one of the most well-known bystander intervention stories.

Frankie: Yeah so usually, when people think of bystander intervention what comes to mind is direct intervention in a highly visible harmful behaviour so one of the most common bystander intervention stories that come to mind for people is often the case of Brock Turner and his rape of Chanel Miller, because it was an obvious incident of sexual violence, where two international students intervene directly. They called the police, they stayed with Chanel Miller until emergency support came and they actually held Brock Turner down as well, so for many people, this form of bystander intervention is what comes to mind when they think of intervening to prevent harmful or to disrupt harmful behaviour.

Anne: Yeah I mean I remember hearing about this story when it happened, and I remember we've used it in a bunch of different bystander related trainings at the different schools that I have worked on. And I think one of the things that stands out to me is that this is a story about a stranger. Right like this is a story about like somebody who was not known to the target of the harm that he was causing and a story where these you know these kind of strangers intervened in an assault that was in progress. Is that typically what we see for bystander intervention?

Frankie: No. I think that it is unique it's rather unique because we know that in anonymous settings that what tends to happen is the diffusion of responsibility. And people do not step up and intervene, for various reasons there's many barriers to intervention, and so this is a profound example in the in the ability that they had to take ownership of being the people who would help into assisting Chanel Miller, and I know she very much credits them for interrupting and getting her the help she needed at that time, which was obviously a very traumatic and harmful experience. So it is quite rare but it's also important for us to note that this type of intervention is not actually what most bystander intervention is needed, or the type of intervention that mostly is what we're called to do. Most of our work is actually at the what we call the low end of the continuum; the everyday harmful conduct comments attitudes that enable escalating violence to occur within our culture.

Anne: Yeah, so I think on that note we're going to tell some stories of some bystander situations that we've been in today. And then we can chat about you know what those look like what they felt like at the time and, and you know what it tells us about bystander intervention and hopefully it will interest folks in taking the bystander workshop, because those are currently running. And we're very excited to be you know to be hosting those even though we're virtual this year. And so I was going to tell the story that I used to tell when I was a facilitator in the workshop. And it was a story that made me realize that I really was not a person who ever wanted to get involved in things like I was very like "not my business I'm not getting involved", and so my story takes place at Milk Coffee bar, which I don't know if you remember Milk, Frankie.

Frankie: I do.

Anne: It's so sad that it's not open anymore, but I used to love Milk and I had a friend who is a singer-songwriter and she used to perform there a lot and I would watch the door for her. And we were there one night and she was performing and her sisters were there, and this guy came in and he was very drunk and he was being really disruptive and I was so annoyed at him I was like you're interrupting my friends show. I wasn't sure whether or not we should try to like remove them from the space or like what we should do, but he ended up leaving on his own. And he went outside and kind of like slumped up against the wall and actually passed out. And my friend sister is like just an excellent bystander she's, just like the best human and gets involved and just does good things all the time, and so she went outside to check on him and tried to call somebody from his phone to come get him and nobody was able to come get him, and so we ended up having to call an ambulance and I believe that he did have to go to the hospital, because I think he had alcohol poisoning. And so it was just one of those moments, where I was like "I really should have done something you know", like at the time I was just like I don't want to get involved in this like this isn't my business this guy's being disruptive I don't want to have like a messy night like I'm just I'm here to support my friend I'm not gonna I'm not going to do this thing. And then, like when she got involved, I was like oh dang like this guy really needed help, and I wish that I was the kind

of person who got involved in those things, and that was one of those moments when I really started to think about you know intervening.

Frankie: Well, thanks for sharing that. First of all, one of the things we always emphasize in our program is that well, we know better, we do better. And if intervention was natural and it was our go to we wouldn't need bystander training to really enable our bystander intervention. But the reality is there is a multitude of factors that act as barriers to prevention and one of them is that we have to practice. We have to develop strategies and we have to recognize the situation calls on us and feel empowered and enabled to feel like we can have a meaningful impact. So I'm glad the experience ended up being positive for you, because it led you to seek out programs that could build your capacity to be an activated and effective bystander. But again there's many, many reasons why we don't intervene and that's why we're really working hard to build the capacity of our community to develop bystander skills to intervene and to be effective at addressing harmful behaviour or supporting those who may need support.

Anne: Yeah 100% I've like thought about that so many times I used to tell it every time I taught a bystander workshop when I was in undergrad and you know, I was teaching quite a few at that time, so, I haven't told my friend sister yet, but it had such a big impact on me and I think I'm going to see her at my friend's wedding in the future, and so I might track her down and be like "hey I just want you to know this was really impactful for me."

Frankie: And it also reminds me of what we know from the literature, which tells us that role modelling is very, very important in terms of the development of our bystander skills, I think many of us are very fortunate to know individuals who role model that effective activated bystander intervention and we know that once we witness other people engage in that effective role modelling, we're a far more likely to be activated and to think that is something I can do as well, so yes role models are so important and I'm glad that she had that effect on you.

Anne: Yeah. um okay so, then I think you had a story, you were going to tell me and I love this story, because you told it to me when we were

planning this episode and I think it was a really good example of creative bystander intervention, so I would love to hear your creative bystander intervention story.

Frankie: Yeah, so this is a story that a student had shared with me and shared with the class and had said it was okay to continue to share and in our programming, we focus on de-escalation and safety and creativity, so when people recognize that there's a harmful situation unfolding reading the red flags, if you will, to recognize that mmm what's happening is is not cool it's uncomfortable and and we need to intervene and so what had happened was they were at a party. And there was a young man who was behaving in a very predatory and aggressive way towards a woman who was at the party who was highly intoxicated he was pushing shots and she was you know essentially passing out on the sofa and he kept getting closer and closer in her personal space, it was very obvious that the attention was unwanted and, most importantly, that she was unsafe because she was so intoxicated, she really needed water, food and to sleep it off, not to be aggressively pursued by this male. So the young men recognize the harmful situation and they acted as a group and played what they called the bro card by going up to him and saying "hey it looks like your beer is empty we're just going to the kitchen to get a nice cold brew do want to come with us?" And while they did that their female friends got the young girl home in a cab and when he returned she was gone and they were able to act in that stealth activated bystander way where the harmful situation was prevented, and there was no no escalation of harm, and you know they went on partying and he he was confused, didn't know where she went. Yeah and and I think one of the things that's interesting too is. You know, sometimes when I tell or share that story students will say you know that's great and it's excellent, but I wish they also would have really had a conversation with them about why his behaviour was harmful and while I appreciate that, and you know, maybe that's for another day and that's part of the multitude of interventions that we can have as bystanders. We can't do all things all the time and the key thing there was that this person was removed from home and they feel very proud of that.

Anne: I love that and I love bro card, I think that you know as women, sometimes I don't know I sometimes feel like as women like we don't have as big of an impact, sometimes intervening. When men don't respect women, and I think that's one of the reasons why men can use their privilege and their position as men to intervene in some really powerful ways I think that. That actually really it's so much to the next story on my list, which is about a timeline. And a guy that I know said something really gross to another guy that I knew, and I knew that this guy like wouldn't have heard me if I said anything. And felt like I had just wished like another guy had had intervened and said something so yeah I think there's there's so much you know there's so many different ways, all of us can intervene and get involved, I think that, and some of these situations that like bro card is so important.

Frankie: Yes, and again the research tells us that men tend to overestimate the support that other men have for sexist attitudes and behaviors and that serves to self silence them. We know that men feel a lot of pressure to conform to expectations of masculinity. And we also know that most men are good guys and most men do not perpetrate a harmful behavior so part of our approach with the Bystander initiative is to really enable our entire campus community to take meaningful ownership of preventing and addressing sexual violence and men have a critical role to play in this regard because they do have the ability to influence their peers to model, a progressive way of addressing the issue and making sure that they're modeling a masculinity that does not support toxic or harmful behaviour towards women. And that's really, really critical. So, we're very proud of the men who are taking that ownership and they're involved in our program and their leadership is needed and necessary.

Anne: I love that and I do think it is about community responsibility right like it's about knowing that the people in your community will have your back and that we can all share that responsibility, because having to do these things alone is it's too much, and I think that a lot of us think like yeah I care about this I'm always going to be the one to intervene I'm always going to do the things and like that's just easier to do, and you know to care about if we know that other people also take that up.

Frankie: yeah so yeah I was gonna say we met we emphasize that the best interventions are those interventions we do with others that there is safety in numbers and that creative story that I shared was a highlight of that you know one individual could not have had that positive outcome, but because they work together, they were able to effectively defuse the situation. And when we think of those harmful comments again that role modelling for other men that they won't accept this and that they will model, a culture that says no that's not cool it's not in my presence not around me I don't support that is very, very important. So, for sure For too long we have tended to think about sexual violence as a woman's issue. And one of the goals of our program is for everyone to understand that the only way we will meaningfully address it is for everyone within our campus to see themselves as important stakeholders in the prevention of sexual violence and this again requires all of us to really get involved to be proactive to create a culture where we don't enable or support the types of behaviour that manifests and when we don't check the things like the everyday comments like you just mentioned those things need to be checked in needs to be clearly communicated that that's not okay, and we don't support those attitudes and behaviours.

Anne: Yeah hundred percent so that story, I was going to tell with the time that I was at a meeting with a bunch of folks to do some like activist work. And we were all just kind of like you know shooting the shit before the meeting started, and we were kind of like chatting about. You know, some you know I can't even remember what the conversation was about it was about like how somebody had been like doing some reorganizing in their home or something, and this guy had said, like yeah I would never let my partner organize my home for me because I'm not a pussy. And it just like the conversation just died like it was so awkward because he had called this other man, a pussy for letting like his partner participate in like setting up his home or something and and you know, and so the conversation absolutely died, nobody said anything. And at the time, like, I was just really frustrated because I was like you know I could say something, but I don't think that this man will like taken anything that I'm saying about it, like I don't think it will have an impact. And I was also annoyed because I was like I feel like you know there's so many guys here that could just be like

hey man that's not funny or like that's not cool like it doesn't always have to be like this big intervention right like we don't have to sit down and have this massive conversation about it, but even like, you know, with a funny look or like anything could have impacted that situation positively and it was just one of the times in my life when I was like wow the community responsibility around like these sexist comments right that harm women and men like it doesn't just harm women, it also harms men, but the community responsibility just didn't feel like it was there in that moment.

Frankie: And then oh sorry.

Anne: Go ahead Oh, I was just gonna say I think it's also just an example of yeah like a time when these kinds of things do harm men right like it's not just it's not just having women it's also harming men in our community.

Frankie: Absolutely and that's you know part of the harm of that narrow definition of masculinity. That it really limits men from having fuller more dynamic relational lives that's part of what our program really problem ties is the narrow ideas around masculinity that are so harmful for men, but also, I think it's really important to think about the plethora of opportunities and ways of intervening in those everyday harmful behaviours because many people a great barrier to intervention is this sense that I have to be direct and I have to call this person out. And because much of this harmful behaviour is occurring within our know pure cultures that's an additional barrier to intervention that we might harm the relationship we have with this person. And so many of us self silence, we don't object, we don't communicate our lack of support for these types of ideas or behaviours or attitudes and one of the things we like to emphasize in our programming is intervention can be like a really well-placed eye roll, it can be like really dude or you know, is it ahem. You know that kind of a comment can have a powerful communicator effect on the group to say like not cool. And, and sometimes that is all that's needed, you know to just signal your lack of support and then others feel more empowered to do the same as well and to really show the person that that's an antiquated attitude it's a harmful attitude. And that doesn't mean we can't be friends anymore,

we just want you to really reflect on perhaps how problematic that framing is of gender roles.

Anne: I love that you said it doesn't mean we can't be friends anymore, because I think that's so important like we don't have to like sever our social connection just because somebody has done something we don't like. And sometimes we might feel that that's what we want to do and that's also okay I don't want to like invalidate that but I also think you know. We have this fear that, when we label, something that someone we know, has done us wrong then we can't be friends with them anymore, and I think there's actually so many nuanced ways to be friends with people who have done something that we don't like and to continue that friendship and be that positive influence i'm just going to like really quickly throw back to our episode with Robin from our previous season. And so, if you're interested in thinking through that like accountability piece check that episode out because it was so good, and has a lot of info about the like, how do you stay friends with somebody when they're doing shit that's harmful right so.

Frankie: yeah and and again we we think about strategy, sometimes if someone is in a very public meeting and someone has said something. And we want to maintain that relationship and, but we want them to also recognize the harm and what has been said, it may be more appropriate to make an appointment and say you know i'd like to have a follow up conversation, and we know power differentials can also have a profound impact on our ability to really ask someone to consider a comment that was harmful, and if the person is in a position of authority, we might think oh there's no way I could possibly say something. But again, we really want to create a culture and cultural norms around being able to voice our concern in a way that's respectful in a way that causes someone to really consider the harm of what's happened in order to create more inclusive and dynamic learning work environments that respect piece is so critical and if we don't check harmful behaviour, then we are not creating the thriving communities where we will all do better so yeah I think it's really, really important for us to think about how do we have an effective intervention and do so in a way that people don't become defensive, we often emphasize that shame is not effective it's not a way that people change.

We recommend, for example, appealing to their self-concept, perhaps they think of themselves as you know, obviously a good person. And so really effective intervention is if someone says something harmful perhaps racist sexist we may see something like I'm really surprised to hear you say that I've always thought of you as a fair person. And you know I'm really surprised that you think that way and it just kind of puts the ball back in their court to consider oh wow I don't want people to perceive me as as harmful or unfair, why would they say that right and that invites the curiosity and the growth that we're trying to promote.

Anne: yeah hundred percent. And I think you have a really great story about indirect bystander intervention, something that was not necessarily like a full some conversation, or like getting right involved in a situation. And I think you told me that happened, while you were at Hamilton which I love, so if you'd like to tell us that story I would love to hear it.

Frankie: Yes, and my daughter Ellie is like the biggest fan of Hamilton or she or she was for quite a period of time and we were fortunate enough to secure tickets to go see the show in Detroit for my birthday present, which was really her present, but it was an amazing show, I really enjoyed it, and when we were leaving the show there was a man and a woman who were involved in a very heated argument, and it was escalating and I became fearful for their safety, in particular, the safety of the woman, he was becoming more aggressive more in her face, and they were just really escalating and I didn't know what to do, it was late, I was in an unfamiliar city. As I mentioned, we were rather alone at the time when we first entered the parking lot, so what I did was we got into the car and I just turned on the car and Sean the lights of the car at their direction. And then other people they continued to argue and then other people were coming out of the theatre and getting into their cars, but also noticing. And so they just kind of stood around and what happened was the attention that they were getting from us created enough of a distraction that they became more self-aware. And there was a cooling off effect that was happening, they became more self-referential. And they just realized that you know, whatever it wasn't they were arguing about they certainly didn't want a public audience and they got cooler heads and eventually both got into separate vehicles and left. So I think that's a really powerful example of you know,

creativity and intervening from a distance safely and de-escalating and diffusion defusing the situation before there was the opportunity for escalating harm.

Anne: And that's so important because the creativity, right, like we don't all have the same ways of intervening. We don't all have the same like types of things that we're comfortable with, and so I think finding things that feel comfy for us and that work for us are so important um yeah like I just think that's a really great example of like a different type of thing that you can do.

Frankie: Yes, and there's no one size fits all bystander intervention strategy, we all have different capacities different strengths different personalities.: And we all encounter so many different types of situations, so in our program, we really try to emphasize that you know we can't tell you what to do, but we can give you tips to think through. And ways that you can feel empowered and comfortable and to be proactive to think about Okay, if I encounter this or perhaps even think about- a harmful situation that you left going Oh, why didn't I say this, I should have said that, and now you should we hope you feel more empowered if you were to face a similar situation, the future that you would know how to handle it and he would feel like you were able to communicate effectively and to do something that would address the harmful behaviour.

Anne: yeah I love that. And I think um you know, one of the things that you folks have been putting a lot of effort into is to make your programming more intersection all to think about how bystander intervention, you know is applied in situations that are related to sexual violence, but also might be related to like racism or homophobia or transfer being ablism. And that leads us into our last bystander story which happened to me at new year's I don't know if it was this last new year's or two new years ago, but it was a situation where we were. On this like virtual new year's zoom call because it was you know the pandemic and and somebody on the call dropped to the R word and I like waited and I was like Is anybody gonna say anything about this, and no one did so I just kind of said that's not cool like can we not. And the guy was like oh my God yeah I'm so sorry like won't say that again um you know, and I think it's

just like it's one of those things where you know, we can highlight that the tools that we give you in the conversation we have in our bystander workshop is so much about sexual violence, but it doesn't just relate to sexual violence right like it's a tool kit that you can use in so many different ways.

Frankie: Yes, absolutely, we know that by saying intervention is highly transferable to multiple domains of harm. And what we tried to emphasize is that once you gain those skills, you can effectively intervene when you witness evil is when you witness anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, sexism, transphobia right and so again, while our programming is focused on the domain of sexual violence, we know that these skills are highly transferable. And I really like the case that you just shared or the scenario just shared because it's those opportunities, as I was mentioning those frequently occurring harmful behaviours that some people are like oh it's not a big deal it's just a joke but we know that it is harmful, and what we want to do is really create awareness about that harm, but also to give bystanders the tools in those peer relational context, to be able to say, like oh man that's not cool and to communicate that we don't want that kind of harmful behaviour and in our friend groups in our peer groups with our colleagues. And that's actually you know, some of the hardest times to intervene, because we think Oh, am I not going to belong to this group anymore will anyone support me do I risk my friendship with this individual, so I think that's all really, really important and I'd like to share that I have had friends who have said homophobic things are racist things and one of my friends his role models really effectively like do this it's not cool like just don't do that around us or not, in my home like I really don't support those kinds of attitudes and that's all they had to be said. And in the moment the person kinda was like awkward and the subject was changed, but what was really awesome is in both of those instances one was with racism and one was with homophobia. The person came back and said, you know I really want to apologize for my behaviour I thought, a lot about what you said and it's absolutely not cool and you know, thank you for you know just letting me know and I love that, right, because when we know better, we do better. And we want to get the opportunity to grow.

Anne: I love that and I think to like just as we're closing out this conversation I feel like it's important to highlight that, like none of us are perfect. I've like used words or said things that were not great, because you know these words that are harmful are so ingrained sometimes in our in our like cultural language right and so I've had experiences, where a friend said, like oh actually like that's not great. A great phrase to say and one a really great example of that is the word "crazy" like you know that's something that's often tied to like mental health and wellness and so that was something I said, all the time when I went to Grad school and I had a friend go like hey you know actually that's like not a great word to use and so instead you know we've been saying that's so wild. Right we're like. You know, or just just describing it more accurately like that so that's unbelievable or that was so that was so difficult to deal with, or you know, whatever it is. And at the time, you know when that happens when people call you out sometimes there's this moment of like oh shit like, there's this feeling of like I've really messed up um you know but coming back around and being like yes Okay, this was valuable like thank you for giving me the opportunity to correct my language, and to make like the people around me more comfortable I think it's still important, and so I think like a flip side to this that maybe we'll chat about in a future episode is just like, how do we accept the call outs and how do we accept the information that we receive about the stuff that we're doing and I think I think that's really important too, and I just I feel like this workshop is so valuable and i'm helping folks are feeling a little bit peaked to like come and learn more about the tools that you are offering and providing.

Frankie: Thank you, and you know that really reminds me of something we do talk about which is none of us are at our best when we're embarrassed right well we're embarrassed it brings it are worse, we tend to be defensive and reactionary. Being embarrassed is not a good feeling, but in that discomfort there's a real opportunity for growth and we're all works in progress, and when we recognize oh wow I never realized, I was being very unintentional around that or we need to be educated, we need to unlearn much of what many of us don't know can be harmful.

So, yes it's important for us to just take that opportunity to soak it in and say wow I needed that chat or I'm I'm glad someone educated me so now that I I no longer save things that are, can be harmful.

Anne: yeah I think that's so important um so Frankie, tell us about the bystander workshop is being offered right now students can register right now to take a workshop.

Frankie: yeah we're so excited because the virtual programming has been a great success, the feedback we've gotten from our campus community has been so overwhelmingly positive and we have an amazing group of students who are dedicated and passionate about our programming. You can register through MySuccess at the University of Windsor's experiential learning portal, and we have, I believe, seven workshops, a week so there's a lot of options, and you can select the workshop that best suits your own schedule. It's best to come with friends. And and it's also a cool way to meet others within our campus community right now, as we know, many of us are navigating virtual lives and there's not that many opportunities to meet people from other programs and things of that nature. And I always say our our workshops are best when we're in community over creating that kind of connection. So yeah we're thrilled and excited to say that they're filling up. So if you're interested in attending please register sooner rather than later, because i'm excited to say that they're filling up and waitlist are occurring So yes, encourage everyone who's interested to register as soon as possible.

Anne: That is so cool well Thank you so much for sharing some bystander stories with me today, Frankie. I'm so excited to you know be sharing the news of the bystander workshop with all of our new incoming students and i'm just like happy to always chat about this topic and I hope we'll have you back on our podcast in the future.

Frankie: Wonderful Thank you so much for the invite it's always lovely to talk to you.

(Transition music)

Anne: So that was Dr. Frankie Cachon from the Bystander Initiative and like she mentioned you can register today for a Bystander workshop on MySuccess which is success.uwindsor.ca, and remember if you need support you can reach out to us at svsupport@uwindsor.ca or you can check out our website at uwindsor.ca/prevent-resist-support. Thank you so much for listening. Remember to like and subscribe and check out the episode description for all of the links we talked about today. Take care, folks.