



PREVENT RESIST SUPPORT

Episode 4: Intimacy Training in the Dramatic Arts

with Siobhan Richardson

PART 1



University
of Windsor

Sexual Misconduct Response
and Prevention Office

Prevent Resist Support Podcast

Episode 4: Intimacy Directing with Siobhan Richardson (Part 1)

Introduction (Anne Rudzinski): Hi everyone! Welcome to Prevent Resist Support. (Introductory music).

Prevent Resist Support is a podcast by the Sexual Misconduct Response & prevention office at the University of Windsor. I'm Anne Rudzinski - the Sexual Wellness & Consent Coordinator for the Office, and the host for this podcast.

Today we have an exciting episode! Our guest is Siobhan Richardson. Siobhan is an actor, a fight director and an intimacy director. She's located in Toronto Ontario, and works with the University of Windsor to deliver Intimacy workshops for students in the School of Dramatic Art.

Intimacy directing is super interesting - it's an application of consent to dramatic arts work. I love chatting with Siobhan - in fact, we talked so much that this is going to be a two-part episode!

If you need support and are a member of our UWindsor campus community, you can talk to Dusty. Right now the best way to get in touch is by email at svsupport@uwindsor.ca. We also have a resource list on our website for campus and community resources in Windsor - www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault

If you're not in Windsor, check out the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Their website is sexualassaultsupport.ca

Let's dive into our interview!

Anne: Welcome, Siobhan. We are so excited to have you here today.

Siobhan Richardson: Thank you. I am excited to be here.

Anne: I am so excited to chat about the work that you do and for you to tell our student and our listeners a little bit about your work with intimacy directing. So you're currently in Toronto and you work as an Intimacy Director, but you also work in acting and writing. So can you tell us a little bit about the work you're doing?

Siobhan: For sure. Before we start I want to acknowledge that I am in the traditional and treaty lands of the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnabeg, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, which is colonially known as Toronto/Etobicoke. I am a little bit on the west side, which is kind of fun for me because I am kind of based here but I have been lucky to do a lot of work around the province. And a lot of work on the west side. So moving to Etobicoke from downtown was a good move. But ya, thank you for asking about the other stuff I do. A lot of people know me as an intimacy director, but I am an actor, fighter, singer, dancer, like I am a performer first. That's actually how I got into intimacy directing. And I am also a fight director, which is like my other thing. My handle is a fighter actress. That's how you will find me on social media. It is very much a part of me. The idea of movement and expression. And how I got into intimacy directing was I was in a show and long story short I figured out that I wanted tools for approaching scenes of intimacy because I realized I didn't have them. And I found that having dual, triple specialities now. All of the work informs each other. And I feel like it has given me the opportunity to be uncomfortable in a lot of good ways and to support my growth and allow me to discover things that I wouldn't have known or done if I hadn't given myself the opportunity to explore all of the stuff that's exciting for me.

Anne: I love that you mentioned comfort and discomfort because that is definitely in our questions. I loved the conversation we had about that last week. So I am definitely excited to chat about that with you today.

Let's start at the top. What is intimacy and how would you define intimacy in relation to your work?

Siobhan: There's a couple of different aspects. When I get hired as an intimacy director, its often for sex, for kissing, anything of implied genital contact, implied acts of sexual nature in performance. Things that people don't think about that can be brought into the choreograph are flirting, physical contact between an adult and a minor. So that might be hugging, a parent or guardian and child. These are two actors who are maybe 10 and 40 and they have never met each other before. But now they are meant to have a familial intimacy. Or any other instances that an actor feels additional consideration is required regarding, lets say, issues of consent, power dynamics. Something where a sentient third party mediator might be helpful to work in the work context, establishing parameters of our work, which will then help clarify how we make art together. So in some ways the intimacy director is that third party negotiator. In a lot of ways they are creative collaborators because once we have established those parameters where we can work in, then it's taking a look at how do we craft the seed and engage together and make art together? Oh, intimacy director and a fight director are necessary, I mean, I could be soft about it, they are strongly recommended, but really it is best to have someone who covers those roles or two individuals who cover those roles whenever its violent intimacy of any kind. Whether it is consensual, like kinky sex, or whether its as violent like a crime is being committed.

Anne: I love that we are getting into the language of like mandatory because I am about the language of, you just have to do this thing for it to be comfortable and ok for people.

Siobhan: Yeah

Anne: Or not comfortable, but for it to be ok for people.

Siobhan: Right new words

Anne: yes

Siobhan: So actually something else I wanted to mention about what is intimacy. When we are looking at, so that's what I do in the workplace usually. When we are in an educational sphere, there's a few things. So when we are in the workplace together, there are several things that one assumes an actor has picked up through their educational experience. So it is important for us in the educational experience to look at what are those things that people will assume that you have figured out or learned. And that's a lot of the first stages of intimacy. Some of that is negotiating what is in my green zone, what is the stuff that I am totally comfortable with, what is the stuff I need more support and negotiation with, how do I be vulnerable with a scene partner, how do I act flirting or being in love. A lot of those things people will assume that people have learned within the educational experience. Rightly or wrongly, but that's the work context we often find ourselves in. So, I guess part of saying that is to remind directors and engagers that people haven't necessarily learned the skills and remind educators and students that that is part of something that you have the opportunity to engage in mindfully. And hopefully to give enough time to within the educational experience because it could be said that a lot of people say drama is conflict, but I would say that drama is also intimacy, so these two fields I have discovered in my own work, are really the two foundations of the work that we do. And it could also be said that stage combat and violence is the result of vulnerability in a different way. So intimacy and violence are vulnerability expressed in different fashion for use during entertainment or story telling. As we get slightly philosophical around what is intimacy and when it is important for an actor to engage in the learning at the skillset. And of course that learning will continue throughout your professional career. But it is important during education to help us all get on the same page as to how do we support ourselves in approaching that scene work and those topics and gaining the emotional intelligence for that.

Anne: Amazing. And then on the note of language, when we were talking about this today, I was using the word intimacy coaching and intimacy directing and I thought they were interchangeable but they are not. Can you tell us about the terms intimacy coaching, coordinating, coaching. What do those roles entail?

Siobhan: Intimacy directing is for live performance. Theatre, opera, dance, circus, those are some examples. Intimacy coordinating is for recorded media, so television, film, motion capture, performance capture. And originally our thought behind distinguishing between them is that it helped to equate intimacy, that the practice of intimacy, as parallel to fight directing and stunt coordinating. It takes a similar amount of training, skillset, necessity of good relationships with the people you are working with. But I've found that in the practice of it too that it is important to differentiate recorded from live because the responsibility of the coordinator or director are a bit different. The workplace of those different media is a bit different. And therefore, how a director or coordinator works within those media is a bit different. Like the paperwork, the cultures of the workplace. Now, coaching and before I go on, it is important to notice that different countries are using different terminology. Like some places use choreographer all the time and there's no differentiation between directing or coordinating, whereas in some cultures if you say choreographer, it kind of denotes a lesser level of education. Rightly or wrongly, but that's sort of the echelons that have been set up. But I see coaching in my work, part of what I do in the full set of being an intimacy director, but I think coaching also covers a slightly different area of the field. So to me coaching is a little bit more about the one to one relationship with the actor, it may be about the, kind of like an acting coach, how they would come in and support the actor with "are you cool with the choices that you are making here? Here are some offers for some movements and breath choices." And I would also equate intimacy coaching a bit more with what I do in education where we are looking at those first levels of how do I access intimacy safely? How do I support myself in being uncomfortable and learning new things? So the coaching part is a bit more of that. If we just think about the term coach, like a sports coach, so like the person helping you through the mountains of your psyche while you are learning this stuff.

Anne: Ya. And you also come in and work with our school of dramatic art and you have these workshops with students about intimacy in dramatic art.

Siobhan: Ya it's one of my favourite parts of this job. Being able to support students in those first stages as they are transitioning from, for a lot of people, doing dramatic arts for fun as something you do outside of school and then transitioning into approaching it as a career. Or people who have thought it would be great because they have a talent and they are learning what the whole skill set and job actually entails. And I think part of the reason why I enjoy it is because I look back at my life and those moments where I would have appreciated knowing certain things earlier. With stage combat I was lucky to have good teachers early on, and one of my efforts is to provide the same level of detail and engagement for people so early in their career that it becomes, that thing they do becomes part of the work they do. And it's also great for helping to help set up the context of what is the work environment and what are our shifting relationships within the workspace because we have different roles depending on the context we are in.

Anne: I think that bridges so well into: why is this work important? You have kind of already told us a bit about how it is important because there's this sense of what did you wish you had going into the work or what do people need to think through thoughtfully as they go into this work. So can you tell us a little bit about the importance of this work and the impact it has?

Siobhan: Ya. I think the result is several things, but I think most importantly the result is great shows for the audience to appreciate because the actors have a rapport among them, they have their own practice that allows them to be vulnerable and courageous and to step away from that and they maintain mental health and physical health and safety. I know a lot of audiences have reported to me or have said through third parties how much more comfortable they were watching a show, whether the sex was consensual or not, but knowing that the actors had a practice that meant that they were totally cool with everything that was happening. The audience can feel it and see it. Whether they understand it or not, they can feel that difference when the actors are really on the same page with how this scene is going to go and what is the story they are telling. So one of the importance is that it is better storytelling for the audience, it is better work spaces for the performers. It means that we are able to clarify what is the context

of the work that we are doing. Dive into vulnerability with that work and step back out of it knowing that we can trust our scene partner is on the same page as we are and that we can approach emotional vulnerability with greater, daring, and looking our fear in the face if it is a scene that is ouuu this is really personally challenging. Knowing that our partner is going to be there to support us, knowing that our partner has heard that this is challenging for me. Great, we are going to work together to make sure it is supportive for us and I will do the same for you while we are there. In stage combat we call it making your partner look good. The idea of supporting your partner with what their challenges are and working within those boundaries that we have consented to. It means that we are able to approach challenges and we are able to have fun with it, like it doesn't always have to be challenging. Sometimes it's just really fun. And it becomes more fun the more we have that sense of trust because once we have more experiences of the fruits of being in that vulnerable space, there is a kind of excitement to vulnerability as opposed to vulnerability only ever being a terrifying challenge. I just had a moment of remembering the first workshop I did that I attended as a student as an actor. And there was a moment of really really simple exercise that was absolutely terrifying and in two instances I had some of the best people in the world as my scene partners. And I was really lucky they were there because they were the kinds of people that could support me in this moment, knew I was just losing my mind in terror, but they were able to support me afterwards. So the next time I did it, I was not as terrified. It was vulnerable, but I was not as terrified. So this means now that there's a bunch of stuff I would be happy to do on stage that years ago I would have just had an incredible flight or fight response while doing it. But now, there's a kind of like, I wish listeners could see me, there's this kind of delicious joy, like you are jumping into a ball pit, but instead of hard plastic balls they are soft, fuzzy balls. So it has that delightful bubbly contact but with plush.

Anne: I love that. I also wish everyone could see all of your super expressive, facial expressions, and all of that. OK so I think this bridges really well into the topic of the word comfortable. And you know, I said the word 'comfortable' a little while ago. And I have been trying not to use it as much in relation to the dramatic arts work because I think that there's

this inherent discomfort around vulnerability and I know you have a lot to say about discomfort as a part of the artistic process.

Siobhan: Ya. So we often talk about 'comfortable' and I refrain from using that in my teaching unless I really do mean comfortable because comfortable often denotes this sense of no challenge. And the work that we do as artists is not comfortable. Brene Brown talks about that discomfort of the first time and every single rehearsal process I have ever been in has a moment of "I don't know what I am doing", that extraordinary discomfort of the first time. So what is actually so important in the artistic process is to know that there is discomfort and to know what your own tolerance is. To know where, maybe you might not know you might be surprised by what you are uncomfortable with at some point, but to know that when you are in discomfort that discomfort will end and in that discomfort is where we learn things. We are uncomfortable because we are doing something unfamiliar and we are creatives, and so being in a space of not knowing is where the work happens. Where the creation and the new thing and the engaging happens. So, I often talk about this idea that our workspace is not comfortable, but it is trusting, it is generous, and so our sense of safety, which is also a word I try to refrain from using, is or rather to redefine. Rather than safety, which so often means comfortable no challenge, in our workplaces we can define it as a place of safety being one where I can take challenge and I will be supportive, a place where that oscillation between comfort and discomfort is the norm and when I do face something that is really challenging to me, maybe it is disturbing or challenging, I know I am in a space where there are folks who will be supportive of me oscillating back into a place of greater comfort or at least grounding, a generosity of spirit, tactfulness, where I can communicate clearly and folks can communicate clearly with me knowing that our intent together is to put up this show and we understand that part of that intention is this necessity of caring for each other while we explore this, who knows what will really happen. We have a script, but we don't really know what the terrain is between here and where we are going to get to.

Anne: Amazing. What does that look like for young actors? To explore, challenge, and vulnerability, and discomfort in a way that is safe in the way that you have redefined it.

Siobhan: So it can be really, it can be a terrifying place for some people. It depends on your family of origin, what your friendships have been like, that kind of thing. So, but a lot of times in dramatic programs because people are being asked to live lives that are not their own or they are being asked as like when you are inhabiting a character to maybe tell the story physically of something that you haven't done before. To really put yourself in someone else's shoes and to really be seen, to be seen uncensored. My vocal coach really gave me space to explore this idea. When we sing we sometimes try to craft that sound before it comes out, hear it before someone else does. But you do not progress that way, there's tension, and your instrument doesn't work right, and one of the things that I have discovered in learning how to sing was that sometimes you just have to let it out and what comes out comes out. And that is kind of the process a young actor is going through. We are so young when we are in college and I don't mean for that to insult anyone, but what I mean is that we are still coming into our own in a lot of ways for a lot of people. So at the same time as you are exploring who you are and what your self expression is while you are stepping in to the world in a new way, you are exploring this totally new skill set that you probably haven't been asked to explore before and you are being asked to dive deep into a lot of things that are perhaps in some ways a foreign concept. So for the students this can look like a lot of unknowns and not being sure what is being asked. Because this is vulnerable there can be a sense of well I don't want to be vulnerable until I know where I am going. Especially in the context where one is being evaluated, this grading happening, and not being sure how to get that grade. So it also looks like needing clarity about if I try something is that going to ruin my grade? And thankfully most programs out there are not doing the thing where you are being asked back to the next year. There are advantages and disadvantages, but I think one of the advantages is that you intend to be in the program, there is less pressure on a daily achievement and so there's more space to fail as it were, to try something and for it to not work. That is actually the job as an actor and as a creative you are doing a lot of experiment. It is a lot

closer to science. I know this thing and I don't know this thing, so let's try this thing and see what happens. We spend a lot of time, so if we think about consent for a moment, in our social world we have our enthusiastic yes and everything else is a no. In our art world, we have our enthusiastic yes, we have our absolute no, and we actually spend a lot of time in the middle which I call the brace yes. That whole space of "I am not sure, so I am going to try it and we will see what happens and we will discover if it is a yes or a no", but we actually need to spend a lot of time in that space. If it was a traffic light with our enthusiastic yes being green, our absolute nos being red, and the part of the middle, the amber light, we spend a lot of time in the amber lights. Where we are trying to see if it works. So again, for a student, that can be additionally challenging because there's no, it feels like there's no metric as to have I succeeded today, have I become an actor, have I learned anything or not. Because sometimes you're like I don't even know if I learned anything today. So there's a lot of discomfort because you don't know where that's gone. So what that means for a program, ideally, there is clarity on the success in this moment is having tried it. The success in this moment is having learned what the experimenting is. Success is having, being vulnerable and tried out, yet again, that cycle of let's pick something to try, we are going to try it, what have I learned? What do I keep from that? What do I try again another day? Or what do I say this doesn't work for this process? And sometimes success is really just having tried something, it going really poorly or being incomplete feels like nothing happened and understanding that is part of the creative process and your development as an artist includes being able to see ahead a little bit more as to that is probably going to be a great or terrible idea. This we have no idea, so maybe that's the choice I could make. So that's how you develop as an artist. But for the student, it does look like a lot of unknowns, so that's where specificity and clarity and guidance from faculty can really help us to support the diving into that vulnerability because that is where the learning happens and where the craft develops.

Anne: I love that. And I love the phrase "the brave yes", and if we could just go back to that for a second because I was hoping to talk about one of the things I really loved from your intimacy workshop. I got to sit in on one about two years ago. It was awesome, it was so much stuff I never

would have thought of, which was super cool. But I feel like the thing a lot of people know...

Siobhan: OK I have to stop you for a second because that is so exciting for me. Because in your profession every once in a while I am repeating stuff that all of these mental health folks and sexual health people know and it is so exciting for me to listen to and watch the cross pollination of our specialties.

Anne: Yes! Well I feel its because we spend so much time thinking about the ways that this applies to just like the sex people have in their personal lives, or the consent as it plays out in all of these different contexts, but not in the dramatic arts context. So there's just so much you know that I thought about that I wouldn't have thought about unless I sat in on that so it was amazing. I feel like a lot of people know about improv and the concept of "yes, and.." but one of the things I really loved that you talked about was that "no, however..." Can you tell us about that?

Siobhan: So ya when we take it to improv and we think about theatre and acting we often think about the "yes, and..." part of it which is someone makes an offer and you have to go with it. And that is often taught early in improv because of this personal censoring because when people are coming into an acting class there's often transition between how I am supposed to behave in the social world and what can feel like taboo when you step into an acting world. So learning to pick up the ball and run with it, learning what "yes, and..." is is really important step. And the next step, though, is that I am allowed to say no if that was tactless, or tasteless, or that crosses a boundary for me. I am allowed to say no, but I need to make another offer in an improv context. So we can say "Well not that way, but what if we shift it slightly?" so that when I apply it to intimacy, one of the reasons, it is shifting but certainly years ago when I engaged in this work for the first time, one of the deep resistances was I can't say no. I have to give, I will be a bad actor, I will be a bad person, I will be labeled as difficult, I won't be asked back if I say no. But the reminder that no looks like an adjustment. Sometimes no looks like a counter offer, like negotiating. It's like where do we want to get to. So the idea of "no, however..." is that I can refuse this precise offer, but I can adjust it or I can make a counter offer. So where it expresses itself in our

workplace conversation about consent is that maybe my partner makes an offer for choreography like when we kiss they want to put their hand on the back of my neck. And that's not going to work for me, and you never need to explain it, but just know that if it's like that's going to trigger me, let's not do that, if it's like I don't think my character would do that, I think if it looks hokey or cheesy, if I think it's going to look bad. Sometimes that's the one where you need to say it's not going to harm me, let's see what the director thinks from the outside. So further context as to the application of "no, however..." But what that might look like in the practice of choreography, my partner offers a hand on the back of the neck, for me maybe that is triggering, I don't have to tell anybody, but what I can say "Well how about your hand on my lower back or maybe on the back of my head on the top here, or maybe that is running your fingers through my hair, maybe that's accessible for me." So it allows us to continue forward without feeling like we need to stop and say no that's not possible. It's not necessarily my responsibility to come up with something, especially if it has triggered something, I can't have a conversation right now but I can say that isn't going to work, anyone else can offer a suggestion. This allows us to continue the momentum of creativity forwards while respecting boundaries. I like to frame it in this idea of how exciting is it that we have continued to take a look at what are the boundaries. How exciting that we have gone from I think this is in our yes zone, it has been in our brave yes, we haven't been too sure, oh we have realized that is a boundary. How exciting it is to figure out that detail and nerd out on the excitement of getting to know each other more and how to support each other. The more we understand and practice where those edges of the yes space are, the more we know we can run around in that yes space. It's kind of like being in a bouncy castle. How much can I run into these walls? You sort of press onto them a bit and as it is confirmed no that is a boundary that we can work with then you can run inside that bouncy castle and have a really good time with it because you know where those edges are as opposed to walking around unsure of what space is available to you.

Anne: I feel like this conversation is making me want to go to a Burger King playground, and that is a really wonderful and delightful energy I think for today on this Thursday morning. Can you tell us a bit about, like let's

imagine that you have a scene you are working on. What does it look like for you to do that directing?

Siobhan: Cool. So the first thing that we do is, well before I get there I read the scene and I make some notes like what are some of the stories it is suggesting to me, what do I know about the characters based on what's in the script, I have a conversation with the director, what is the vision for this scene. In an educational context I might ask what are you hoping to explore in this scene so I understand is it a challenge with choreography they have never done before or is it to support the emotional arch of the characters. So all that is really important is some point of connection so we can continue with the text. So I get a bit of context about what is going on. Sometimes, if it so happens I am arriving in class to do that, it might just be "give me your two priorities and we will work on that." Once we are in space together, I facilitate a conversation about consent, parameters and boundaries. So I use all three of those words because I think they have three distinct meanings that help us out a lot. We talk about the boundaries, as in what is the edge between the no and yes space. A lot of people think about boundaries and they think just about the no it defines, but I like to encourage us to remember that our boundaries are actually the edge of our yes space. And that yes space we can call parameters, those are parameters that we have set. Boundaries feel like the outline, parameters feel like what is coloured in as the yes space. And then we consent to that agreement. So the first thing we do is facilitate a conversation about consent, boundaries, and parameters so we know what we are working with. I ask the actors what do they know about their characters, what sort of feels like the intent of the scene, what is the intensity, the tone, and hopefully I have had the chance to give people a little list of things they should learn or study ahead of time. I might ask the director the same things and also what experience is the audience supposed to have here. Should they be titillated, should they be feared, disgusted, laughing, should there be a laughter of recognition oh I remember that was me, or oh well I am on a date right now I wonder if that will be me later, what is our audience supposed to feel? Once we get a sense of that, we are on the same page of what the moment is, then we can make some offers of choreography, maybe this or this will work. If it is a longer complex scene, I will often jump right to

the pinnacle of the moment so that we have a sense of where we are building to. That often helps actors feel a bit safer, and I do mean safe, and sometimes it helps them to feel braver because they know where we are going to. There isn't that sense of if I consent to this, is that going to imply this? Will there be disappointment the moment I say no because I have been consenting this whole time. So it helps to set that parameter of like this is where we are going to, here's the pinnacle moment we are aiming for. Again, workplace safety increases as well as artistically helps us all to know where we are going. So we will land some ideas for choreography, we will confirm consent again or make some adjustments. If someone is not entirely sure, they are feeling a bit of like "uhh this is brave yes but towards the no" moment. That is an opportunity to say well what kind of discomfort is it? Is it that this is really new so it is challenging in that way? Is it that you and your partner haven't had a chance to work together physically so should we spend more time confirming what the consent of this is? Do you want to have more detail about what are the contact points here? Do you need more detail about timing? Unclear about anything in the choreography? Sometimes clarifying the choreography will help. Especially if it is someone's first time working with intimacy. There also may be some questions about what the process looks like. So we may even take a moment to say "oh, ok. So we are going to try this choreography without any acting, just doing the movement of it" Using your hands instead of legs like ballet, just walk through the choreography, make sure we are on the same page, and then we will try with acting in it. So we are dealing with one set of feelings at one time. The body has little bit of capacity of how much newness it can handle in a moment, how much energy, how much spoons it feeds from in a moment, so I try to facilitate a slow walk into the pool instead of throwing people into the deep end until they're like yes give me the deep end, then you dive in off the high board. So we will talk about choreography, walk through it as pure movement so we are clear about what that consent is after we have clarified any questions. Give the actors an opportunity to connect before we begin. It's part of a process we call bracketing or tagging in and tagging out. Something that helps to define the moment that we transition from we are crafts people talking about the work to the moment where the actors are the art itself. Where they transition from being themselves to being in the

mindset and perspective of their character. The clarity of this helps us to define what we have consented to in these moments, what is our relationship to each other, what conversations are we going to have? Once we are in character we are living in the world of the play so our power dynamics, our conversation is dictated by the circumstances of the play. Once we are done we tag out, we do that same action, whatever it is, to define the end of the character life in that moment so that those imaginary circumstances live in their own context. And then we come back to the crafting where again we are peers, we are talking about what happened in the scene, we are evaluating the work we did with the idea of well what is the audience perspective, does this fulfill the ends that we intend? So that the audience is telling a story and it is sustainable for the actors. So we check in afterwards, saying is this doing what we wanted it to do? Is it sustainable for each person involved? And depending on the type of scene, we might even check in with the room after, especially if we have done it multiple times, asking if anyone needs a break, are we cool to continue or have we used up our spoons for this scene today? And that is the thing. The first time you do a scene, especially in a theatre setting, it's not going to be perfect, in any setting, but in theatre we have more time to polish it. So for the first time is not going to feel great insofar as there may be a lot of questions afterwards, it may not be perfectly telling the story, but it may be the beginning of the right context, the right trajectory. So, while that was sort of lengthy, the short version of the steps is I do my background, I do my homework on what is the scene, what are we doing, I talk to the director, I talk to the actors. We all get on the same page, or at least the same field, with regard to what is that story. We make some offers for choreography, we make sure we walk through our boundaries and parameters for consent again. We try it out as pure movement, we might do that a couple of times. We answer any questions along the way, and then at a certain point you'll have more questions, but it is time to try it in context because the context of the characters will add more information and may clarify a lot of things. So we try in character, making sure we tag in and tag out, and then wash, rinse, repeat. Where we talk about what we did, what we would like to try, tag in, try it, tag out, reassess. And then take a break when we need it because that continual stepping into vulnerability, stepping out of vulnerability, can be really tiring, but that tagging in and tagging out really helps the

brain to go it is vulnerable time, it is closing time, so we know when the imaginary circumstances expire. And what I mean about imaginary circumstances, one of the definitions of acting is living truthfully in imaginary situations. So the actors are feeling real things, your heart rate may increase, you may sweat, you are going to smell each other, there may be vascular reactions throughout the body that we associate with sexual arousal. Doesn't mean it is a better or worse scene, doesn't mean that someone is trying to be a predator, it just means that your whole system is having a genuine response in this imaginary context. Which then expires when we are done the acting, when that imaginary context no longer exists.

Anne: That is so helpful to have that view of it. And I think one of the things that's really important is the idea that when you close out that space, then the consent rules change.

Siobhan: Ya.

Anne: I consented to you touching the back of my neck in this scene, and now we are not in this scene anymore and I don't want you to touch the back of my neck when we leave the classroom.

Siobhan: Right, because we are not in that relationship. We are classmates, we are work colleagues and it is important for us to maintain the clarity as to what is our relationship. Now some people are huggers, some people are touchy feely, but some people are not and some people only have the spoons and energy for that amount of physical contact when they have prepared for it when then are in the work space. It is important to recognise that even though you may look at an actor and their work and they are a touchy feely actor, it may just be that their characters live in that way, and that actor prepares themselves for that physical, emotional, mental context, and in their own time and space they are not a toucher, they are not a hugger, they express their affection through words and gifts, through a third party object that I hand off to you. I don't actually want to touch you at all, but this object carries my love for you. So we get this impression, it is interesting because I think I am saying this for the first time in this interview, we get this impression that all actors are touchy feely people, but that is

not necessarily true. For some people it is part of their jobs and it is different from their personal expression.

(Transition music)

Anne: So that is Part 1 of our chat with Siobhan. Check our Part 2 up soon. You can learn more about Siobhan's work at <http://www.siobhanrichardson.com/> - we'll put that in the episode description for you!

If you need support and are a member of our UWindsor campus community, you can talk to Dusty. Right now the best way to get in touch is by email at svsupport@uwindsor.ca. We also have a resource list on our website for campus and community resources in Windsor - www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault

If you're not in Windsor, check out the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Their website is sexualassaultsupport.ca