

Life Sentence

A Roundtable Discussion

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BOUNDS



Spotify



Courage First Athlete Helpline

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About the PSA

Life Sentence depicts the experience of an athlete-survivor in the aftermath of abuse. A young girl is forced to carry a rock—taking it to class, to her home, to sports practice—symbolizing the trauma that she carries. This PSA takes a burden that is often carried quietly and makes it visible.

In the companion roundtable discussion, three experts discuss the cost of abuse to survivors and the larger communities around them, explaining how far-reaching and long-lasting the impact can be. Experts describe what supporting survivors looks like on individual, community, and institutional levels. Along with uplifting individuals who have experienced harm, they impress upon the importance of preventing abuse before it happens.

Conversation: Sexual abuse must be talked about. These conversations should happen before harm occurs, as a means of prevention, and in the aftermath of harm, as a means of support. Having age-appropriate conversations about these topics with children can help keep them safe. In the event that abuse has already occurred, open and supportive conversations can lessen the isolation that survivors often experience.

Reactive vs. Proactive: Currently, our institutions take a reactive approach when addressing the issue of sexual abuse. Policies change only when harm has already occurred. As the experts explain, meaningful progress requires a combination of reactive and proactive measures. Organizations have a responsibility to respond to abuse and to prevent it.

Responsibility: Just as we see the survivor in the PSA carrying too much alone, an unfair burden is often placed on survivors to create change. Survivors' voices are essential, but the responsibility to end sexual abuse is not theirs. It is communities, institutions, and policymakers who share that responsibility.

Before You Go

What impacts of abuse do you think are most overlooked?

In the PSA, we see the girl struggling to perform at a track meet. What is unique about the impact of abuse when it occurs in the context of sports?

In the aftermath of harm, how would you hope to be supported by the people around you?

Lessons From the Roundtable

Lasting Harm: The impact of abuse can be lifelong. Challenges with mental health, employment, sense of self, and relationships are incredibly common among survivors. Financial costs are another often-overlooked consequence, with legal and medical costs adding to the burden. The harm of grooming and abuse extends far beyond the time and space in which it occurs.

Accessibility: In the aftermath of harm, different survivors have different needs. When designing resources for survivors, institutions must prioritize accessibility. There is no one-size-fits-all response to abuse.

In Their Own Words

“It’s lifelong, and it’s incredibly widespread”
(de Silva, 57:34)

“The burden often rests on survivors to push the needle forward” (Click, 1:10:45)

“There’s a struggle between finding peace and finding justice” (Almonte, 13:32)

“It feels individualistic because folks think the burden is only carried within the [survivor], but it really impacts the communities that we’re in”
(Almonte, 53:12)

“[It is] the responsibility of organizations to step up and work in the prevention space” (de Silva, 1:08:14)

“People want to help, [...] but we have to equip them with the tools and the understanding of how they can help” (Click, 4:38)

Meet the Experts

Jennifer Almonte Founder, The I AM Journey

Bobby Click Executive Director, Sport Safety-EM

Natasha de Silva Founder, Intersection