

Stop Asking

A Roundtable Discussion

Learn More

OUT OF
BOUNDS



Courage First Athlete Helpline
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About the PSA

Stop Asking reveals the harmful questioning that athlete-survivors are often subjected to when they disclose experiences of abuse. Instead of taking the time to listen, people may immediately request timelines, explanations, details, or proof. Questions such as “why didn’t you tell anyone?” and “why didn’t you get a rape kit?” can be incredibly harmful, regardless of intent.

In the companion roundtable discussion, three experts explore both the harmful and helpful ways to respond to disclosure. Their conversation outlines what survivors need from the individuals around them, the communities they’re a part of, and the institutions responsible for them.

Lessons From the Roundtable

Disclosure: Delayed disclosures are sometimes met with skepticism. However, when you consider a survivor’s fear of retaliation, an athlete’s commitment to their sport at all costs, the non-linear path of processing abuse, along with countless other factors, delayed reporting becomes more understandable. Disclosure is a vulnerable moment for a victim, and they deserve to be believed, no matter the time frame.

Education: Education is paramount in preventing abuse. Without education, important topics such as power imbalances, grooming behaviors, and reporting processes will remain largely inaccessible to the general public.

Digital Landscape: In the digital age, everything is better connected. Perpetrators have easier access to vulnerable individuals, but on a more hopeful note, survivors have greater access to resources. Technology evolves constantly, and our understanding of grooming and abuse must evolve with it. The complexity of digital communication further increases the need for research, education, and conversation.

Identity: Race, sexual orientation, and abledness, along with many other facets of identity, impact a survivor’s experience disclosing. Words like “victim” or “survivor” implicate identity, too. The process of sharing about abuse can both shape and be shaped by who that survivor is.

What Survivors Need: On a large scale, survivors need institutional reform. Our current systems were not designed to center victims, and the magnitude of this issue is still underappreciated. However, on an interpersonal level, your actions can have a profound impact. If a victim of abuse discloses to you, believe them. When in doubt, listen first and ask questions later.

In Their Own Words

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“Parents need to be comfortable talking about uncomfortable things” (DeTomasi, 45:19)

“It’s actually a public health crisis that we’re not even talking about as such” (Johnson, 22:44)

“You are asking someone who has been a victim to try to navigate all these systems that don’t talk to each other” (Morris, 59:49)

“We have to have the social capital where calling it out gives you social capital” (DeTomasi, 32:25)

““Your teammates are your brothers or sisters. [...] you go through a lot together” (Morris, 18:02)

“For the person who is receiving that disclosure—just listen” (Johnson, 1:06:20)

Before You Go

If someone disclosed to you today, how would you respond?

Do you hold any assumptions or stereotypes about victims or perpetrators?

Who is a safe person in your life you could disclose to?

How can you help foster an environment where survivors are believed and supported?

Meet the Experts

Kenyora Johnson CEO, End Rape On Campus

Tracy DeTomasi CEO of Callisto

Abby Morris Athlete Protection & Safety, USA Lacrosse