



Rape Prevention Education: How can we help Cape Cod?

#MeToo Movement and the Disabled Community

Anna Milan & Chris Morin

Tarana Burke created the #MeToo movement in 2006 because of the endless stories that she heard from young black women about being sexually assaulted. Being a survivor herself, she knew that survivors needed their voices to be heard. She was not given the national acclaim for the movement, until white women came forward in 2017, to disclose the sexual assault/harassment behaviors of Harvey Weinstein.

While the “Me Too” movement has amplified the voices of many female survivors, survivors with disabilities are feeling left out of the conversation. The voices of disabled women and women of color are still not being represented in the ever growing “Me Too” movement, and it is time that everyone's voices are heard.

“Me Too” began as a way to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual abuse and assault in our society. Quickly, #MeToo turned into an inspiring movement where women were able to connect, share and begin to heal over their shared experiences of sexual violence. While the “Me Too” movement has amplified the voices of many female survivors, survivors with disabilities are feeling left out of the conversation. The slew of mainstream media coverage has reflected this, largely ignoring the issue of disability in conjunction with sexual harassment and violence. This is a deeply unfortunate because the disability community is significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment and violence—and exploring how, and why, should be an important part of any related discussion.

Women with disabilities are reporting that they are struggling with finding their place in the movement. Rather than being an outlet that is amplifying voices and stories, #MeToo has turned into a reminder of what a long way there is to go before women with disabilities feel their voices are truly being heard. Anne Wafula Strike, a Paralympic wheelchair racer, shared with The Guardian, “At the moment, when we talk about diversity, we are mainly referring to race and sexuality, while disability is left out”. Women with disabilities all over the world are trying to push forward, but it is hard when campaigning is still so focused on rights and opportunities for able-bodied women. Sexual harassment and violence can look different for the disability community in comparison to nondisabled people, and that can make navigating these kinds of discussions more difficult.

Many disabled women report that they are constantly having to validate their existence. But doing so is easier said than done. Maria Palacios, an author, motivational speaker and disability advocate, wrote “disability may affect our ability to physically care for ourselves, at no point at all do our bodies stop belonging to us.” Disabled people also face a strange contradiction: Even in a society where social movements push to reframe sexual harassment and assault around issues of power and control, not sex, disabled people’s desexualization still means that they’re often discounted in conversations like these about sexual violence. While the #MeToo movement is looked at as one of the leading movements in supporting survivors of sexual violence, it has not been able to break down the barriers women with disabilities face.

Our society has stigmatized having a disability, in turn making individuals feel as if they are lesser because of their physical or intellectual disabilities. If a female survivor does not feel like her voice matters due to the way society views her, she is less likely to report a sexual assault. While #MeToo is supposed to be an outlet for all survivors, we see very few women with disabilities sharing their stories still. It is time we not only listen to, but truly hear, the voices of the unheard, and amplify the stories of every survivor regardless of race, gender, age or ability. Including the disability community in these conversations about sexual harassment and abuse will make it much, much easier for disabled people to fight these issues and find solidarity when they reach out for help.



Environmental Mapping

Anna Milan & Chris Morin

As we know, people with disabilities are at a heightened risk of sexual violence during all parts of their daily lives. Individuals are more likely to be assaulted not only by someone they know and trust, but in places that they are supposed to be protected and safe. This could be at home, in day programs or out in public and even group homes.

Now consider what makes you feel safe, welcomed, and comfortable in an agency – “cool” locations – and what makes you feel unsafe, unwelcomed, or uncomfortable in the agency – “hot” locations. “Cool” locations, for example, may be a well lit hallway, with plenty of windows or cameras. The “hot” locations are ones that you are not feeling comfortable in, for example a dark stairwell, or cramped elevator.

These are the locations that are more likely to result in unwelcomed or unsafe contact between individuals. Identifying these “hot” and “cool” areas in agencies, homes and other frequented areas is known as Environmental Mapping.

By taking up this practice, and identifying these areas in buildings, environments will not only feel safer, but members, staff, volunteers and visitors will actually BE safer.

Reach out to Chris Morin, ChrisM@indhouse.net or Anna Milan, anna@cilcapecod.org to learn more about creating a safer environment in your agency, building or facility!

Get to know us!

Remote Services



<https://www.cordcapecod.org/>

- Independent Living Support
- Housing
- Youth Services
- Nursing Home Transition & Long Term Care Options
- Community Services
- Benefits



24/7 Hotline: 800-439-6507

<https://independencehouse.org/>

- 24 hour Domestic and Sexual Violence hotline
- Safehome & Shelter Search
- Individual/Group Counseling
- Medical and Police Advocacy
- Legal Advocacy
- Childcare
- Current Support Groups



[@cordcapecod](https://www.facebook.com/cordcapecod)



[@capeCORD](https://twitter.com/capeCORD)



[CORD: Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



cordinfo@cilcapecod.org



508-775-8300 (V/TTY)



508-775-7022



[@IndependenceHouseInc](https://www.facebook.com/IndependenceHouseInc)



[@IndHouseCapeCod](https://twitter.com/IndHouseCapeCod)



[Independence House](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)



indhouse@indhouse.net



508-771-6507
TTY: 508-771-6782



508-778-0143