Episode 5 Un-assault-ed Truth with Chanel Contos

HOW TO START THE CHAT

for the girls

This episode is a hard one, and Maddie says so herself: if today isn't the day, that's okay. **Nothing on this page needs doing today.** The numbers at the bottom are there either way.

1

"I don't know if what happened counts."

SAY IT TO - your trusted adult, a school counsellor, or a number below

Chanel had finished two degrees and was partway through a master's before she came across the words "sexual coercion". She names that as the one thing she'd tell her teenage self. Not having the word for something has never been evidence that it was nothing.

2

"He keeps asking me for photos and he won't stop."

SAY IT TO - your trusted adult, a teacher, an older sibling

A girl on the panel asked whether that was harassment or whether she was overreacting. Chanel's answer was immediate: you are not overreacting. Being asked over and over can be harassment, and it can be coercion.

3

"It wasn't violent, and it still wasn't okay."

SAY IT TO - anyone you trust, in your own time

Coercion means being pressured, threatened, tricked or blackmailed into something, including being got drunk on purpose. Chanel is clear that it counts, and that it's hardest to name when it's someone you know. In Australia, that is who it usually is.

4

"That's not my responsibility."

SAY IT TO - anyone who tries the blue balls line on you

Chanel calls it one of the most common forms of coercion going. The actual condition is rare, not serious, and can be sorted out by the person himself. Maddie asked men across several generations and nearly all said they'd never had it, and one said it's a myth they tell women.

5

"I laughed along, and it's been sitting weird with me."

SAY IT TO - your trusted adult, a trusted friend

A girl asked whether laughing at gross comments makes it her fault. Chanel: no. You are getting through the day with the people around you. Going along with something to stay safe is not the same as agreeing to it.

6

"I want to tell you something, and I don't want anything to happen yet."

SAY IT TO - your trusted adult, a school counsellor, or a number below

Telling someone doesn't start a machine you can't stop. You want to be heard and to be believed. You are allowed to say what you do and don't want to happen next.

IF YOU ONLY TAKE ONE THING...

Chanel Contos on what consent actually is

- Consent comes from "con" and "sentio". It translates as "feeling together".
- It's meant to feel wanted, comfortable and good. Nerves and awkwardness are normal. Pain isn't.
- "If it doesn't feel safe to say no, then the yes doesn't count."

1800RESPECT 1800 737 732 · 24/7 · sexual assault, domestic and family violence
Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 · 24/7 · free and confidential, ages 5–25
Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC) 1800 199 888· 24/7
You don't have to have reported anything, or decided anything, to call any of them.

This is designed as a conversation starter, **not legal or clinical advice**. Nothing here is your responsibility to have prevented. If something has happened to you, it was not your fault, it does not matter what you were wearing or drinking, and you are allowed to tell someone about it years later.

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