



## Incorporating Prevention into our Hobbies

Total time: 46min 30sec

### **Meg Foster** 00:01

Thank you for listening to this short recording. I'm Meg Foster Prevention Program Coordinator at the Sexual Assault Task Force. In this audio series we connect with people across Oregon to explore creative violence and abuse prevention ideas. In this episode, we connect with two people doing some creative work to incorporate prevention into other hobbies and activities that they love. This strategy helps us think about how prevention can be integrated into all that we do not just something that belongs in a classroom or conference center. Let's start by introducing our guests.

### **Eli Cox** 00:29

Hello, my name is Eli Cox. My pronouns are he and him and I'm the Prevention Education Assistant at Juliet's house. We're a child abuse intervention center located in McMinnville, Oregon. Part of the work that I do is I facilitate a four session curriculum in middle schools called Building Foundations for Healthy Relationships. That was created by CARES Northwest, another child abuse advocacy center in Portland. Hello to Sally and Denise if you're listening in the future, by the way. But how did that work that we're trying to do is to bring conversations into our community, about how we can prevent child abuse before it even starts.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 01:06

And this is Patrick Lemmon, hi, I'm am glad to be with both of you. I also use the pronouns he/him. And I am a violence prevention consultant and evaluation consultant primarily in Oregon and Oklahoma, but I work in some other places as well. And I came into this work as co-founder and former executive director of Men Can Stop Rape in Washington, DC. And so most of my work has been on focusing on how to engage men more effectively in ending gendered violence.

### **Meg Foster** 01:47

Thank you both so much for being here. Before we really kind of jump into today's topic, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about what brought you to prevention? How do you get into prevention in the first place?

### **Eli Cox** 02:01

So, for me, really prevention started off going to school for public health. And initially, especially with regards to violence prevention, I actually started out because I was interested in preventing suicide. And then from there, I started looking at, you know, ways that one of the biggest factors that we saw was having connection, having relationships, and building up for a support system for people. And then from there, I took a job as an AmeriCorps volunteer at a YMCA in Douglas County, Roseburg and it was



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a great position because I got to be the teen advisor there. And it just started coming out that so many of my teams that I was getting to work with were having issues in their own relationships, whether it's friendships, there's a lot of sometimes toxicity or already dating violence and I was just astounded by the fact that I was having teens that were experiencing dating violence previous I didn't even know that was a thing.

And so from there I just started as a way to kind of try and find more resources for the youth that I work with to help them have healthier relationships and led me getting to go and work at a domestic violence agency in Grants Pass, WCST and from there it was, it's been very life changing for me and also trying to learn more about how we can prevent sexual violence from happening.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 03:27

And for me, I'm a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. So that's certainly a piece of the story but not a major one. I think probably a much bigger component of my getting involved in prevention is that in my first year of college, my first semester of college actually, I had more than a dozen people, both men and women, disclose to me that they'd experienced sexual abuse. And, and I didn't know what to do with, right that's just this enormous confusion and feeling of helplessness and frustration and not knowing what to do. And then, one of my friends who disclosed to me also said that the reason that she was telling me this is that the person who assaulted her was a close friend of mine. And so it put me in this position of not being able to think of this as something that other people do, that these bad people do, but it's actually it's my friends, it's the people around me, and that I'm implicated in this conversation, right? If I'm not working to stop this, then I'm part of the problem. And so that really woke me up in some pretty dramatic ways, and led to my involvement in some other groups like DC Men Against Rape and other things of that sort that lead ultimately led me to co-found Men Can Stop Rape.

### **Meg Foster** 05:03

Thank you both so much. You both are doing such a really cool work. And I think that knowing how you got into this work is so valuable, but also this piece of then, how you are taking those prevention values, those that prevention work into other aspects of your life. So I'm hoping you all can talk a little bit more about how you've incorporated prevention into other hobbies, other aspects of your life, maybe what led you to those strategies? And what was your process in developing that approach?

### **Eli Cox** 05:35

For me, one of the biggest loves of my life has been getting to play basketball. It's something that from a very young age, it was how I learned to read because I wanted to read the paper and read the sports page and see how the Blazers did. That was actually one of the things that helped me learn how to read growing up, was, you know, being interested in basketball and so it's played a big part in my life, all the way growing up. And as I started reflecting more and more and more and started learning more about healthy relationships, but also learning more about sexual violence within our society, and really reflecting on ways that I ran across it in my life, or at times, or I had been someone that was also



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perpetrating oppressive acts around just through the ways I talked with people, communicated with people, treated people.

And one of the ways I started thinking about it was playing basketball. Sometimes, some of the conversations that we would have on the court, you know, just with the people playing. I'm a cisgendered, white male, and most of the time that I was playing basketball was with other men. I started really recognizing and thinking that a lot of things we were saying or doing and even talking about, as we were playing was harmful to folks around me, even if you know, maybe they weren't there right now, but it also harmful to people that we're playing with, and it kind of started building up. I recognize that some of the guys I play with after we talk, they talked to me about how something I said, you know, made them, you know, feel like I didn't know a piece of their history. And so I was, you know, I really I caused him some harm.

So from there, I started reflecting on that and thinking about it. And realizing that there's such a great tool right there in front of me, a tool to engage in conversation, and the tool for me to reflect on my own behavior, but then also, actually having a conversation with someone that when, you know, things are getting heated during the game, or know someone's using a very sexist language, racist language, and how to have that conversation and how to offer them, just build in basketball as a means of prevention education, whether that was you know, as a player playing the game, whether that was the coach coaching youth, and how a coach can you know, prevent violence. Maybe even just being a spectator in the stands and the things that you can really line up and be someone that can, you know, give, especially youth when youth are playing basketball give youth kudos in times when you recognize them doing something really positive that is just a healthy relationship aspect beyond that game of basketball because I think for me, it's been a big learning learning opportunity where so much growing up you're kind of grandpa's young man, especially playing a sport and for me, I'm a small, a smaller guy, pretty lightweight, but one of my favorite things is like, Okay, I've got to be tough out there. Like, this is where I've just got to bring it. I have got to get in people's faces, you know, and, and realizing that how much of that I was carrying off of the court sometimes too, and I you know, I think it would have been nice for someone to have a conversation with me in the past about where does you know, playing a game, stop, you know, once you're playing the game, once you get off the court.

And so I think from there, it's been, it's been interesting as I thought more about being in those different roles and being a coach or you know, being a spectator, being a friend of someone playing or playing the game. It's just been a lot of trial and error as addressed in my approach to you know, how to have these conversations, or even actions that come out.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 09:20

Well, Eli, I'm so glad that you went first in that because so much of your story reflects the story I'm going to tell about the passion that I have brought violence prevention education to which is poker, and I don't think of poker and basketball is being very similar most the time, but the the way you're describing it just feels so familiar. So I love that thanks for, for sharing that.

I've always been a big fan of games, games. I think they're really interesting, the psychology of them, the ways that they create opportunities for conversations, all of that stuff has been in a big part of

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my life. But I didn't discover poker until about 15 or 20 years ago. So relatively recently in my life, I've been doing violence prevention education for more than 30 years. So, so I actually had a lot of experience already. So when I was first introduced to poker, it was of course, a, you know, small home game, just a couple of friends. And about half of them knew me and knew what I did. And about half of them were friends of friends, so you know, starting to get together. And people found it really interesting what I did and so they wanted to talk about it. So I got really comfortable talking about sexual violence at the poker table. And kind of noticed, though, as you were saying, Eli, just conflict between the conversations we were having when I talked about my work and the conversation that went on at the table, which is a predominantly male environment, as you said, very aggressive, hyper masculine. And lots of racist and sexist language happening on a regular basis homophobic language, just as, as a normal part of the conversation and, and of course, it made me very uncomfortable. So I would want to challenge it and ask about it and, and, you know, sometimes it was very welcome. Sometimes people didn't feel very good about it, but it was kind of, you know, just like any conversation that I might have, until I actually started playing poker a bit more seriously.

And the first time I ever went to Vegas, to play poker is when I really realized, hey, we've got something going on here. Because, you know, kind of as a professional hazard when I've been doing sexual violence prevention for all these years, most of my casual dress was Take Back the Night t shirts. So I was wearing a T shirt that said very simply stop violence against women. Seems like a fairly simple straightforward message. So I'm wearing the shirt. I wasn't even aware I was wearing it all my shirt said something like that. So I'm sitting down at the table. And you know, it's a group, of course of all men, because that's usually what a poker table looks like. Not always, but usually. And, you know, the guy sitting across from me after a little while says, Hey, I noticed your shirt. You know, what's that about? So I talked a little bit about what I did. He said, Well, that's really interesting. You know, my wife was married before so you know, this is her second marriage and her first husband was abusive. And, you know, it's just, it's amazing to me how to this day we've been married 20 years or whatever. And to this day, it still affects our relationship, the fact that she had this experience of violence. And so you know, I think it's really cool that you're doing that. And then the guy sitting next to him starts talking about how his daughter was sexually assaulted during her first year in college. And then the guy next to him had another story. And literally everyone at the table had a story to tell about someone important to them, who experienced sexual or domestic violence.

One player at the table actually started openly weeping in the middle of this poker game, which is, of course, not generally done. And given the history of homophobic and sexist and abusive commentary that generally goes on, I thought that we were going to have a real problem. But in fact, what happened is everyone stopped playing and we just gave him the space to collect himself and to express his emotions. The guy sitting next to him actually put his hand on his shoulder. Which again, very unusual in a poker room. And then he kind of collected himself. And we went on with the game and I realized that there was something happening here, right? There's some kind of magic moment that when we give men an opportunity and a space to talk about the impact of gendered violence in their lives, that they actually are really hungry for it, and they're going to seek it out. I've started since then becoming much more intentional about seeking out these conversations. And almost every time I



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play poker now, I have some interesting event happen of that sort. And it's just it's amazing to me is how hungry I'm experiencing men in particular are about having this conversation.

**Eli Cox** 14:53

That's amazing to have that kind of conversation, especially as you're combining all the work that you've been doing, and then having that flashpoint with other folks around them that realization that's, that is really cool.

**Patrick Lemmon** 15:09

Now one of the things that I think is really funny when Meg suggested that we have this conversation together, one of the things I thought was really neat about it is that, you know, I've thought about where else could these kinds of conversations happen in spaces in which men are going to tend to feel more comfortable, less threatened, Like in a formal presentation, I think frequently men will come in a little bit defensive, anticipating that they're going to feel attacked and all of this stuff. So the poker table felt like a great environment, you know, this, this environment that might gives them more space to talk more openly. And I compared it actually to basketball and I was saying, you know, that's a space where there's just not going to be much downtime, there's not going to be an opportunity for that kind of dialogue to happen. So it's so cool to me to hear that you are in fact bringing in the same concept in a space that I didn't see it as possible to happen. So I just think that's amazing.

With that in mind, I was wondering Eli, if you could talk a little bit more, I think both of you are talking about having just the importance of having conversations and making space for conversations. And I think that a lot of times in our prevention, where we focus on like formal relationships, like parent-child relationships, or those again, those like school structures, and I think really what you all are really talking about is how to incorporate and talk about prevention and prevention values and prevention principles and something that you love to do and you really care about that doesn't feel as maybe formal or conventional, I'm air quoting conventional, or thinking about what Patrick just said too about how it was, how he had perceptions about that being a challenging space to do that in and what kind of successes have you experienced in that and then Patrick and the poker table doing this work and bringing that to those spaces?

**Eli Cox** 17:10

One of the best things about basketball is kind of realizing all the different moments that you know people like to consume basketball, whether that is you know, constantly, you know, you're talking about, they're watching it, they're texting about watching it, or even it's the warmup time, I think that's something I found the best opportunity to have a lot of conversations has been when people are warming up and people are starting to shoot around and kind of getting gathered. My initial kind of lead into it was when I was working when and what I think to be one of my initial like, kind of key success moments that like, Patrick, you're talking about the poker table in Las Vegas that kind of brings it all together. My moment is similar to that would be when I was working as a teen advisor on the Roseburg YMCA and you always trying to keep things fresh when you're trying to make it so sixth graders through

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12th graders get along and you know, together and in a YMCA after school instead of getting in fights, everyone's you know, working together and building community which, you know, is actually easier said than done.

We had some amazing moments and one of those days, I decided to bring in high heel platform kind of go go boots that are that are awesome. And they're no longer with me, unfortunately, they've been worn down to the ground, but they were great because it was such an amazing moment to, you know, to put them on, you know, wear them as kids are going in from school and just as you know, how's it going because, you know, they want us to see to see, you know, in that attire and that shoe wear and you know, but it was a fun conversation to be like, well, I'm the same me as just my shoes are just different and, and especially to kind of lead into a conversation about gender expression, even though wasn't really my intent to begin with.

But it was funny because so many kids on base started wanting to try them on or wear them or whatever. And so, but as this was going on before that happened a lot of students, they said, Hey, you know, can we go down the basketball court and shoot hoops? I said, Yeah, sure. And so I had to make rounds anyways. And so on the way down to the courts, and there is a dedicated group of teenagers would always play basketball, they're there every day after school getting warmed up. And a lot of times, I would jump in and play games if they asked me to and join the pickup game, but when I showed up that day, you know, wearing, I was four inches taller and wearing these, uh, you know, go go boots, I was received very differently. I was looked at with a lot of skepticism, and a lot of distrust, and a lot of, they didn't know what to make of that. And so, you know, as we were shooting around on the other court, and finally, I recognize it, but you know, kind of let them lead. And so one, one boy came over and asked, yeah, why are you wearing those boots? And I said, he said it in a way that was very, there's a little bit of malice in there like he wasn't quite. At this point, he was only probably eight years younger so I want to recognize that that was the age difference between us and especially [because] I look like a teenager and so as we start having a conversation like oh boy, you know, these are just some shoes I have that I think really cool. My friend gave them to me a while ago, and they're awesome. And then as I'm finding out I'm pretty darn good playing basketball in these too and then they started laughing. I got invited to join in their game and then even from there it became that thing where it was normalized. Once you're able to cross an overhand in platform boots and everything, it just kind of even amplifies the level of fun that we're having and then from there by the time I left that course, the whole conversation there was no focus on even the type of shoes I was wearing where initially as I walked in to that gymnasium, there was a lot of eyes on me, but by the time I left, it was just like, oh, whatever, you and the high heeled boots.

That was the thing then, especially in those conversations that we had was, you know, how would you treat someone, if you didn't know who they were just, you know, judging someone based off of just the types of clothing or shoes that they're wearing. And so we got to go on from there and have some great conversations about gender expression. And, you know, and how people deserve to be treated regardless if they shouldn't show their, you know, gender expression different than you show it. So that was kind of one of those, you know, fun success moments for me and it was funny, because that's something that's built another conversation because I've worked in other schools later on in the



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future. So yeah, that I always kind of go back to that is like my initial kind of success and doing something I didn't think there'd be a possible conversation.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 21:53

I love the way that you that you described us, all the eyes were on you when you started but very quickly, it was just accepted, it became okay because you didn't shy away from it. That's just such a powerful story. And I think the normalization of difference which is so important and and so valuable. So thank you for that. That's amazing. Yeah.

### **Eli Cox** 22:23

I've thought about and in reflecting it is obviously for me in that moment, I felt safe to be able to do that I know for for some folks with someone else's identity that may not have been safe for them to do, to show up to the court wearing those shoes and so it's reflecting on a little while, but yeah, it has been it's, you know, it's interesting to just be able to have that moment to normalize something and to start pulling that out and finding a space where I feel like I can be, you know, someone who can use some of that privilege to have that conversation in the space and start from there. So hopefully someone else in the future doesn't have to face repercussions or something that they shouldn't have to. Yeah.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 23:06

Yeah, thank you. That's that's a really important acknowledgement. I think that first that safety is critically important. And secondly, that privilege is part of what brings us safety, right. So when that sense of safety and so using it to create change is so valuable.

And for me, I think the first success that I think that I had bringing this up at a poker table, in an intentional way, kind of happened accidentally that I was, you know, sitting around with a group of people, we mostly knew each other playing poker and there's this one guy whose last name is butchers, and he goes by butchers, it's a great poker name right? And, and he's a really big guy. He's a bodybuilder just like very tough about six three very intimidating looking but he's a very very gentle person. And because of that that's what people tease him about because you got to tease everybody about something so they tease him about being gentle. Butcher sounds a little bit like bitch, so he gets called bitcher or bitch and all of this stuff and you know, this is goes down that path. And then you know, basically they he just gets called a woman or like a woman and all sorts of different ways starting with the word bitch. And you can imagine where it goes from there.

And I was watching this happen and it wasn't the first time I saw it, but for some reason in this moment, it felt like just over the line. I don't know what that line looks like, but I just felt like I had to say sometimes it's like, yo, do you think we could find a way to insult butcher that doesn't also attack women. And Butcher kind of looked up. He was like, yeah, that's your thing. And and so it kind of became a game at the table that everybody was like, how can we insult Butcher without also insulting women? I mean, of course, initially, it went to homophobia when people were calling him gay and all of that stuff. But almost immediately someone else at the table said, well, that's no better. So they put that aside, and then they just so it became a game. It didn't take away from the playful teasing and abuse

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that was going on. In fact, in many ways, it enhanced it, right? But it changed the tenor of the conversation in this poker room, and it's a poker room where I would go regularly and I feel like it changed the tenor quite significantly, for a good long time. Like people kept bringing it up. It was a conversation that people remembered and we'll talk more about. People came up to me privately and said, Hey, you know, I was thinking about this and what does this mean? So it really played out in some powerful ways, and again made me think more, there's really something behind this.

And the more I thought about it, the more I realized that there are actually a lot of things that I could talk about is similarities between working at poker and working at prevention and things like you know, what's your strategy look like? And how do you deal with either luck because that falls in your lap or bad luck that, you know, derails things, and all of this and so I've actually developed a workshop. That's called poker as prevention bringing feminism to the felt, which is specifically about, you know, how these two very different worlds actually have a fair amount in common.

### **Meg Foster** 27:01

I love that. And one of the things that I think is really sparking for me from what you all are sharing is like the ways you've intentionally not just carved out space in your lives to enjoy the things that you enjoy, whether it be poker, or basketball or something else, but also ensure that you're bringing that prevention lens to those things that you like. We often use the mantra of sexual violence is preventable and we all play a role and have a responsibility in preventing it. And I think that when we think about that, we think about this really daunting, like, I have to implement this, like 10 step program with all this stuff and all this other stuff. And I think we missed that piece of like, how do we we walk that in every part of our lives. And so I really appreciate those examples of how you are not just bringing them into your work, but like that there is intention behind it. Maybe it doesn't start out with that intention, but it's grown into that intention now.

I'm curious, like, you're talking about these two specific things. For someone who maybe hasn't thought about how to do that work intentionally yet, what are some of the lessons that you've learned along the way? Like, where are places that maybe you've struggled? What made you think differently about this?

### **Eli Cox** 28:18

You know, what I have found, and especially implementing intentional prevention into, you know, playing basketball and the activities that involve basketball, and found that even, you know, doing lots of reflection, I'm always going to be continually learning. And even having that ready, ready idea and ready set go into an activity that I'm bringing this form of primary prevention, whether it's social norms change, whether it is you know, engaging men, whether it is addressing, you know, racism or something that was being said, or, you know, experienced throughout the game. It's the times were in the moment, I found myself reverting back to relying on that same oppressive stance with regards to engaging people in these conversations or in my prevention work now I'm using air quotes but and so I've had to reflect for myself am i doing prevention if I'm when I'm also falling back on the traits that I've learned you know just you know through socialization growing up.

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One one thing that comes out from is a really amazing learning moment was a time where I was at a middle school this past year and in the morning I had I finished setting up my classroom and there's all students are you know, playing basketball morning basketball in the gym. I go watch, check it out. And so I standing on the sideline, and again, I sometimes can still look like a middle schooler. And the great thing about that is at that moment, sometimes other middle schoolers, you get to hear conversations that someone doesn't know that you're an adult standing there listening and so as I'm just kind of sitting standing on sideline, one of the students who is playing, seventh grader, was using a lot of homophobic slurs toward the other, you know, people that were playing in the game at that moment in time and so instantly right there, I was able to, you know, interrupt that and talk about that, you know, bring your attention in that moment and have a conversation. And but then also, when I was then picked to go into that game, and I was guarding that player who had been saying all of that stuff, I checked into that stance where I was like, Okay, my team, we're not losing, and we're gonna win this game. Which is pretty ridiculous for a grown adult, you know, and I was not by any means I was not bigger, stronger than the student. They are much bigger, stronger than I was faster even though I was wearing Romeo's. But I'd say I use that to make sure I stole the ball from every time so my team one we kept rotating through. But even during that time, we were having conversations and discussions about and building up that student yards, we're talking about things because they're playing great defense, they're trying to find that moment to make sure that, you know, even though we've been having that conversation, and they stopped to their credit, they stopped using those homophobic slurs after, you know, we had that initial conversation, but I still found when I finished playing the game, we talked about it a little bit more, because I was going to see that student in class just a couple periods later. And so we had a conversation about, you know, ultimately we're talking about with, you know, especially language that we use, but then I had to own it from my moment and say, Hey, you know what, I have to apologize too because I think the way I was playing, the way I was guarding you, I think I was, you know, I was putting too much pressure on you and, you know, this was wanting to ask for that should be time to just enjoy it. You know, and I think I was, you know, apologizing them because I found I was, you know, being kind of oppressive in the way that I was treating you this morning. So, my bad I'm really sorry about that. You didn't deserve to off your day like that, you know.

And I think a lot of those times where, you know, maybe I've fallen back on using some of those aggressive tactics that I've learned growing up, even while I'm trying to do prevention, or I'm thinking about interrupting something, and how do I how do I interrupt something in a way that can be a change moment, without falling back on that practice? So that I think that has been a struggle. It's something I'm going to keep learning to keep working on. But even so even in that moment, I think something that makes me think differently, it's just the way that you can, in that same game, one of the students that your boy, saying a lot of homophobic slurs to was a student who is way bigger than all the other students around them. And he especially and this kind of makes me pause a little bit because I think about this and I think if I was at seventh grader and I was way bigger than everyone else, I would have just said Hey, good. On the pain all the time, let me just go Let me scroll on the score. And the student had someone who is a lot smaller Guardian them. And, and one of the things that drew the ire of the other student is that that student wouldn't just, you know, back down in the paint and score easily at will



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against the smaller students, they continue they took shots from the outside, they didn't just go their bread and butter and just, you know, quote unquote, dominate that student like the other kid wanted them to do and was telling them, you know, we're and then dominate him dominate him dominate and was a conversation that they had. And so after the game at the end, I got to talk with Alejandro and say, Hey, I think it's really amazing that, you know, you recognize your advantage, they're playing that game. Yes, in a real basketball game, maybe you would have scored in that position, but you chose to do something different. You took a different approach and you did something that made it so everyone got to play, you know, you want to, quote unquote, dominating someone in morning basketball and so a chance afterwards to talk and have that conversation just to recognize that quality and then I said I think that's really caring. I think that's something that's inclusive and you're both bringing other people into the game, and making them you know, want to play. So kudos to you. And I probably wouldn't have done that when I was in seventh grade. So I think those are some of the moments to, I'm thinking more and more about going forward.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 34:18

Thank you, Eli, I love that image of the guy who could have dominated and chose not to, chose to engage in other ways and make it competitive. And you're honoring that I think is so powerful and it's one of the things I definitely learned from interacting with you is the ways that you recognize what other people bring and I think that's just that's an incredibly powerful tool in your in your repertoire. So thank you for that.

My lessons, I see lessons and struggles as a little bit different. I think the biggest lesson that I've learned at the poker table is the importance of picking your spots. Right? Like, not every time someone says something, is it the best idea to step in and try to do something, but try to figure out how to take advantage of the best situation and not every situation that happens. And I say that kind of vaguely intentionally, because I think that that's true in the game of poker as well, right? That if you play every single hand, you're guaranteed to lose, because you can't possibly win every hand and you're gonna, you know, it just, it changes the dynamic. And I think that's true also about interrupting oppression. Is that, you know, the best way to do it, the most effective way is to pick your spots, figure out where it makes the most sense, who you have the most influence with, and start there. Those are the conversations that you can have.

So that's an important lesson and it's, of course, learned by having messed that up more than once. You know, I think that I've certainly seen people get frustrated with me about raising issues at the poker table and seeing, you know, the tables turned on me not intending to be funny, but that's the language that came up, right is that the whole table is just like, Alright, we've heard enough from you, let's move on, you know, get back to the game. Because I wasn't picking my spots, right. And so I think that there is a lot to be gained by finding those opportunities to redirect the conversation more gently or to let something slide and address it differently or later or when something comes up.

The other thing that, because I come from an education background, one of the things I've had to learn to do is to let go of control a little bit, that the fact that I want to talk about something doesn't mean that the other people at the table want to talk about it, and so, you know, I'm not in charge, I'm not



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the one at the front of the room. And, you know, this is, Eli, I was reminded of that when you were talking about the using oppressive tactics, right that in so many ways, the educational strategies that we use are based on an oppressive model. And so finding ways to step back from that and choose a different path is an ongoing challenge both at in the poker room and everywhere I go.

**Eli Cox** 37:49

I really like that, thinking about that time for a conversation and building consent into that that practice, and tying that into picking their spots too. Because especially you know, where it may be most effective to let someone know, Hey, this is not alright, but then also finding that opportunity to really have it be internalized and taken in and have a conversation about it. Yeah.

Reminds me one time, playing the game pig or horse in basketball, in some of my classes, we played consent, you know, so warming up the ball up, you know, paper balls. I've had a couple classes where all the students you know, want to talk about is basketball. And so, you know, we're gonna warm up today by playing consent, you know, and so they're like, we've got some pair of balls, they got trash cans and they go around the room and they can have other different groups, but they have to spell out the word consent and then from there building in those conversations to it. But then it you know, got me thinking one time we did that activity, and then we had, you know, conversations about when it shows up to interrupt violence and language we're playing basketball or something and then someone on the team said, well, do we have to get someone's consent to start talking about it, to find out to make sure this is the time that... they were being a little facetious. I don't know if that's the right word. But, you know, it made me laugh and also, when we had a conversation, that is a good thing to talk about that even though and those points are brought up, and then dive deep in the consent, so yeah, I think that's really cool you brought that up Patrick. It really is that there's so many different ways to incorporate prevention, into just daily conversations and daily things. And even I think for a lot of PE teachers, if you're doing a basketball unit, you could play consent as regards to having them play horse or pig and then take three minutes at the beginning of their lesson and talk about Hey, does anyone know what does consent mean? and break down that word. And that's, there's so many different ways that we can build these conversations into what we're doing and that doesn't always have to happen within that classroom environment.

**Meg Foster** 40:07

Oh, with that in mind, and one of the things that I'm wondering is what are some of the other places in your lives you've thought about or you've tried to incorporate like these conversations or like intentionally bring this in? Any thoughts?

**Eli Cox** 40:24

A lot of thoughts, so many places. I think you know, even sometimes especially the concept of consent and making sure you know, hey, I'm really checking in with what is okay with someone rather than assuming I know what the right answer is. This is a pretty silly example but it's what comes to my mind since I'm looking at my cat right now. There's a time in place when you know, my cats don't want to be

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picked up right now. Right? They're hissing at me, they're mad, this is not the time to play with someone. So obviously this is a pretty jokey thing, but I thought the other day is, Oh yeah, I got to treat them the same way where it's like, this could be potentially frustrating if you're my cat so I think my cat and my relationship is really improved.

I think there's so many moments in time just even amongst friends there too. As I've been looking at what's going on within our society, I'm building in a lot of conversations. [about] what's going on in our society, what's been prevalent, what's been happening, and violence has been experienced everywhere. Just as I've been having these conversations with friends, finding those moments and times and spaces where folks are wanting to talk about things and have the conversation sometimes maybe I proceed though, they're not gonna want to talk about this. They're not gonna want to be my friend if I bring up this conversation. But once it has started I found that actually to be very much the opposite, where it strengthens our relationship, but also then we start having conversations about how we can do things to make make our communities better for everyone that lives in it. I've been trying to shed some of that fear that's, you know, built up around, someone's not gonna want to talk with you.

### **Patrick Lemmon** 42:20

Where I went with your question, Meg is I am an uncle to a whole bunch of people. I have 14 nieces and nephews on my side of the family and six on my partner's side of the family. So we have lots of kids around and some of them are adult now, which is pretty freaky in its own right. But I remember playing video games with my nieces and nephews and that I would whenever possible, choose a female looking character, just because I knew that it would generate some conversation and some confusion, especially among my nephews. And, you know, then talking about things like in some of the games, you had to pay more or pay, like, actually pay something as opposed to getting a game for free in order to have a female character, right, the default was the white man. And you could get other characters, if you really look for them, or if you were willing to pay more money or do all of these different things. And I feel like that's led to some really powerful conversations and some of my, some of my nephews, who are now adults, talk to me still about I remember, you know, 15 years ago when we were playing, I can't remember the names of any of the games off the top of my head and that's what they remember about it is the conversation after, because like Eli was saying, right? It's about giving people an opportunity to engage in a conversation and to think about something in a different way. So, that's been a lot of fun.

### **Meg Foster** 44:03

I appreciate that. It reminds me the prevention team at SATF was talking last week and Nicole Cunningham, our Abuse Prevention Coordinator, brought up baking and healthy relationships and strategies to tie those together more intentionally and like actually bake something together or cook something together. We talked about like art projects, like what does an abstract representation of consent look like? All those really cool strategies. I for one love camping and hiking and being in the outdoors and the work you do always makes me think about how to center that in the things that I love to do as well.

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**Eli Cox** 44:46

Even now, as we've been having this conversation, I've got so many more ideas for mixing it into basketball and bringing it back to basketball or something else, like baking. And I think that is the exciting thing about prevention, where sometimes it's not always an accessible model or people feel like it doesn't have to be this very stringent laid out practice, but in reality, just the way we treat others, and we go about what we're doing and what we build into our daily life, we've got so many options for prevention. So this is really exciting to me.

**Patrick Lemmon** 45:22

Awesome. You know, I'm thinking about, you talked about the shoes that you were wearing. We often talk about wearing different hats when we're in different roles, and I think that's a really limiting concept, right? That if we only think about having our prevention hat on, or that we're only doing prevention when we have our prevention hat on, then we just miss so many opportunities, so many different ways of engaging and stuff. So I think that we're always wearing all of our hats or all of our shoes. And I just I think that's amazing. It's so much fun. And as always, anytime I get a chance to have a conversation with the two of you, I feel like I learn a lot and have fun. So thank you so much.

**Meg Foster** 46:11

Thank you both. Please check out our other recordings to hear more prevention strategies that you might find interesting. And if you have any desire to play basketball with Eli or get in a poker match with Patrick, please feel free to reach out. Thanks so much, all.

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