

**Report: by Celia Hodges**

on: The Active Bystander Intervention workshop

delivered by

Ree Boddé (PhD): Program Director for Think Prevent

**Ninjas Not Necessary**

**Try Chips .....**

....Or spilling your coffee, or tooting your horn, or.....

We **can** stop male violence to women.

Anywhere.....the train, park, church, shopping centre, café...

Dr Ree Boddé's Active Bystander Intervention workshop encouraged us to recognise our own power to safely interrupt abuse of women.

Almost everyone in the group had witnessed incidents of male contempt and mistreatment of women, reflecting its prevalence.

Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull noted, "But all violence against women begins with disrespecting women". He regards domestic violence as "a national disgrace" and has called for a "cultural shift".

Hence the question, 'What can you do to **prevent** violence to women?' appeals to the Good Samaritan in all of us.

Ree provided many examples of male condemnation and disruption of other men's physical and verbal abuse of women. Non-abusive males were implicitly affirmed as a potent part of the solution to male violence.

A Power and Control Wheel diagram included the coercion and emotional abuse that define the battered woman. Less apparent are economic abuse, isolation and male privilege.

In contrast, an Equality Wheel affirmed respectful, supportive relationships.

And what about the chips? In an amusing and resourceful intervention, on a train, a man slowly munched from his packet of chips as he sauntered between the bully and the victim. The bully was shown, without words or confrontation, that he was being watched.

Such thought provoking, concrete active bystander interventions sparked the group's discussions about both safety and other intervention options.

Ree stressed personal safety. Public places are best for some interventions. Strategies such as "bring it home" and "we're friends, right?" reprimand the bully. One attendee had "call[ed] out the harasser" when she confronted a manager berating an employee in a public place.

Consider the risks to the woman while "checking with the target" or being a "fake friend" to assist her, as the offender could renew his attacks.

Less direct disruptions were also suggested. Ring police or report the matter to a superior. "The distraction" enables a victim to leave. A "silent stare" shows the perpetrator that he is being watched.

thinkprevent.com displays imaginative interventions.

Next, while chuckling at our role playing skills, our own strategies emerged. The scenarios were from real life. Bystanders invited a sobbing elderly woman to discuss solutions. Onlookers detached a battered woman from a dismissive policeman to consider alternatives.

These interventions require knowledge about community resources.

The safe, "group intervention" was effective. Together, shoppers confronted a man berating a woman in the supermarket. Parishioners jointly challenged a woman-blaming priest for stating that it was God's will that she died, when it was really the will of the violent boyfriend.

Ree noted that sermons addressing domestic violence were scarce.

An ABC video of an undated episode of 'What would you do?' was less intense than a G rated movie. It featured the responses of male café patrons to the enacted scene of a male verbally abusing his bruised partner.

In general, the café males did 'man up'! When the offender was outside they enquired if the woman was ok and offered to drive her somewhere. They challenged the man, condemning his behaviour. Ninja-like, one disgusted individual invited the bully to "step outside" and fight him instead!

"Not all men are bad", chorused the group cheerfully.

It takes courage to tackle this confronting topic of domestic violence and, prevent it. Ree Boddé balanced caution and inspiration. We **can**. We must. The chips are down.

Celia Hodges