



Raymond A. Mason School of Business

WILLIAM & MARY

DIVERSITY GOES TO WORK PODCAST

EPISODE 25: LESLIE JINGLUSKI – WHEN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMES TO WORK

Leslie Jingluski

And the reality is you can bury your head in the sand if you want to, but it is, in fact, a workplace issue.

Phil Wagner

Hello from the halls of the Mason School of Business here at William & Mary. I'm Phil, and this is Diversity Goes to Work. Buckle up because we're getting ready to take a deep dive into the real, human-lived experiences that shape and guide our diversity work in the world of work. Should be fun. Welcome, listeners, to yet another episode of Diversity Goes to Work. Domestic Violence Awareness Month was launched nationwide in October of 1987, and in the last 30 some years, so much progress has been made. Yet domestic violence, sexual violence, violence against women, men, children, intimate partner violence all of those continue to exist. Today we're recording this special episode to kick off October Domestic Violence Awareness Month to ensure that our collective approach to supporting victims and survivors models current best practices. This is a diversity and inclusion issue. Now, just a warning, we won't provide traumatic details, but we will, of course, be talking about domestic violence and sexual violence over the next few minutes. So please take care of yourselves. Feel free to tune out and come back next time if these are trauma-inducing topics. We will, of course, also discuss resources for those of you who might be listening and navigating a similar life circumstance. Remember that you're not alone. Your story matters, and there's hope. I'm joined today by my friend and my colleague, Leslie Jingluski. Leslie has a vast background in victim and survivor advocacy. She's currently the Community Engagement Coordinator at the Avalon Center right here in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Phil Wagner

Leslie, thanks for taking time during this very busy season to come onto our podcast and to share with our listeners. It's such a pleasure to speak with you here.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, thank you, guys. I appreciate you having me. It's just such an honor to have conversations with you. It really is.

Phil Wagner

Thank you. We've partnered on a few things in the past. So I'm excited for a conversation today. Why don't you kick things off by telling our listeners a little bit more about who you are, what you do at Avalon, and maybe even how you found your way into this work?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, so I have been with Avalon for about five years. My title just changed, actually. So I am now Director of Community Engagement.

Phil Wagner

Congratulations. And so well deserved. So well.

Leslie Jingluski

I appreciate you. Yeah, Avalon is great. The honor is always on my side with Avalon. So my job is really to make sure the community kind of understands what services that Avalon offers. It's my job to do a lot of the public speaking events, local media, things like this. It's an effort to educate the community on domestic violence, sexual assault, all those things. And as far as how I got into it. So my husband and I have owned a restaurant for 20 years, right? And what we learned very early, working together, that our marriage, it wasn't sustainable for us to work together. Two bosses together. So I kind of took a backseat and did my thing. He kind of did the day-to-day operations. But one of the things that we observed really early was how prevalent domestic violence was in the industry. It's crazy. Like, aside from the emotional toll, we saw the economic impact on the community. I started kind of reading to educate myself because we were dealing with staff issues. Honestly, no amount of education at that time, and I'm dating myself, but we really didn't talk about it.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

And I'm sure I think you're a bit younger than me, but you kind of feel that a little bit, too, where this is a new topic of conversation.

Phil Wagner

Particularly in this space, right? Even as we talk about DEI work at large, I don't know that this is something we naturally funnel into that conversation, but as you and I have chatted, we absolutely should. We need to for these reasons. This is going to bubble up in your organization, likely, no matter what industry. It's not just hospitality. Right. This happens at work. We have great data to support that. And so I appreciate you being here today and sharing a little bit about that story. And you know what? You actually tee us up well for where I want to go first because you use language, and I use language, and we're putting all these terms out into the landscape. We're going to explore a variety of different concepts over the next little bit. Can you help us sort out language here? I mean, I'm curious. Do we say, victims?

Do we say, survivors? Do we call this domestic and sexual violence? Do we call this intimate partner? Are there best practices on terminology that maybe we should be aware of?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, I think best practices is tough, but I think that there's a place for all of those terminology. I think there's a place for it, and I'm glad you brought it up because it's kind of something that I'm passionate about. And traditionally, the term domestic violence it's been used a lot. But I think as a society, we're kind of evolving. So while that's still perfectly acceptable term, I think we've kind of moved over to intimate partner violence. And that's because what we know is we know that this kind of violence doesn't discriminate. We see the aftermath. It doesn't discriminate with age or race or sexual orientation, or economic status. It doesn't matter. So I think we've kind of moved towards what used to be a picture of a husband and wife and move to more intimate partner because we know, gosh, you can go back to teen dating violence. It starts.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, of course.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. And then the victim-survivor.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. It's so complicated, right? I've been in this work for years. I've done some of this all the way back to my grad school days, and I don't know that I have a clear understanding of which I often use them together, so I cover them both. What do you do?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, so I think victim has its place in the conversation, but I think victim kind of goes more towards the legal part of it because if you're a victim, we frequently use that term in the courtroom. It kind of has its place in the legal terms. It's frequently used in court. It's usually described when someone who's been subject to a crime, and then it comes with rights under the law.

Phil Wagner

Okay.

Leslie Jingluski

Because if you're a victim, that kind of changes things a little bit. But I think when it comes to my world and what you world? I really like the term survivor. It's a term of empowerment. Right. If somebody looks at themselves as survivor rather than a victim, then that kind of means they've moved on the path to healing. And I think that's important. And that's an important mindset when you're healing.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I think in these context, this is such a dignity violation that plays out.

Leslie Jingluski

Yes.

Phil Wagner

So maybe it's about listening in the moment to the language that that person who has walked that experience uses. And I, too, I really like the survivor framework here if it feels appropriate, particularly for the person who has walked through it.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. Until you've walked through it, you can't know. And I think that's also that can be a whole other conversation, but I think you kind of have to put yourself in those shoes, and there's programs out there that can help with that.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. So as we kick off Domestic Violence Awareness Month, are you able to give us a snapshot on sort of where we and I use that very largely, like, collectively as a nation or a global community or whatever that makes sense to you, to sort of frame? Where are we on the sort of the prevalence rates of these acts, domestic and sexual violence? We've come so far in terms of gender equity, right? We've seen great strides and improvement in the landscape of gender equity. Have we made the same strides in violence against women? And again, there's another term that I use, and I often go back to, but of course, we know this goes beyond gender, too, but give us a snapshot on where we are currently.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. So that's really tough, too, because then you've got to evaluate the question. We know statistically, one in four women and one in seven men experience severe physical violence by an intimate partner in some time in their lifetime. Personally, I kind of think that number is higher, especially with men, because men aren't going to come out come forward.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, of course.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, exactly. But to answer your question, of course, we have made absolute strides, but I think, well, statistically, we're down 60%.

Phil Wagner

From when? From the last 30 years?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah.

Phil Wagner

Okay.

Leslie Jingluski

So let's talk about that because if we, as a society. What is intimate partner violence? So I think if you ask a lot of our survivors when they first walk into our doors or when they first make that phone call, are you a victim of domestic violence or have you experienced I would say a lot of them say, you know what, he's never hit me, so no. And I say he or she. So I think that we need to dive into that type of intimate partner violence. What does it include? We need to talk about financial and social isolation. We talked about mental abuse because how do you prove that? I mean, that's an argument in court that's been going on forever. How do you know?

Phil Wagner

Yeah, there's no bruise. Like, there's no physical bruise, right?

Leslie Jingluski

No.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

No. So how do you argue that and then secondary abuse when you're dealing with kids and that cycle and what they're seeing, they might not be a direct victim, but they're secondary. It's what they're seeing. It's what their brain is learning. And so I think that generational learned behavior is probably a conversation that we need to dive into. It's tough. I use this example a lot with people because I think it's relative, but I think we've all said at one point in time, I'm never going to say the things that my parents said. And it's even a commercial out, like, don't turn into your father, those kind of things. And I have three teenagers at home, and I can be perfectly honest when I say when they stress me out or when things get tense, my mother comes out of my mouth.

Phil Wagner

Oh, me too.

Leslie Jingluski

Oh my gosh. She comes out. It's like she's here and with me. It's nothing bad, but it's just those things that kind of you've known all your life, and the beginning of a relationship isn't stressful. Right? It's awesome. It's the butterflies. It's learning. And I don't think any abuser wakes up with intentional abuse plans.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

I think it's actually the opposite. So I think to answer your question, to kind of circle back to where we started from, I think, yes, we've made strides, but we have so far to go.

Phil Wagner

And so are you talking about then like a pattern? I'm thinking about because you mention kids. Are you thinking like, I'm not going to say the things my mother says, but they come out of me. And so from the perspective then of, like, children watch this play out, and so then they embody those violent behaviors to sort of normalize or normal reactions?

Leslie Jingluski

I think so, yes. And there's data to support that.

Phil Wagner

Sure, sure.

Leslie Jingluski

Not just my opinion, but statistically, what they've experienced. Most abusers have experienced that same type of violence. And in fact, my organization does not dive into abuser training and help, but there are places out there and what they will tell you, what an abuser will tell you, is, I never wanted to do this, but stress came in, and all of these things came in, not an excuse.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

But until how do you measure prevention? It's really tough measuring something that can't happen.

Phil Wagner

And we've got another episode releasing in tandem later this month on this theme as well with Natalie Hoskins, a Middle Tennessee State University who works with perpetrators of violence against women.

Leslie Jingluski

I went to Middle Tennessee. I love that!

Phil Wagner

Oh yeah, full circle. So I think that's an important point and caveat as well. Okay, so let's take this back into the world of work. Right. I think that many leaders and managers would say, look, I am so empathetic to this, and I'm so sorry this is happening, but there's a line between what happens at home and what happens at work. So can you, Leslie, tell us why this is a workplace issue? Like, this is something that we must necessarily think about in the context of organizations in the world of work. Right?

Leslie Jingluski

Right. And the reality is you can bury your head in the sand if you want to, but it is, in fact, a workplace issue. There's lots of ways that these intersect, but it boils down to productivity, employee morale. I mean, the list goes on and on. And I understand it from both perspectives. Right. My MBA is screaming productivity. We've got it. But then the other piece is, how do you achieve that productivity? And I think it's by the total package. The moral ramifications are huge, but the only expert in the survivor's life is really that survivor. So I think it's important for a company or an agency or wherever it is to remember that empowerment is key, and your investment in your employees is going to be the most important investment that you're going to make.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

There's arguments, of course, either way, but the employment issue, I feel very passionately about this, obviously, but I just feel like if somebody's in an abusive relationship, it is going to affect the workplace.

Phil Wagner

Absolutely.

Leslie Jingluski

It's just going to.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I agree with you. I think sometimes the workplace is the only place where people feel fully safe or comfortable seeking support. Coworkers can be allies. HR institutions, policies, and procedures can be good conduits for information on law, local support systems. Work can be a retreat where it can be empowering. And so I think the lines are not well drawn. I think that this certainly bleeds over. Your employees who are in an abusive situation do not have the luxury of clocking in nine to five, and all of a sudden, we forget right that this follows into the workplace.

Leslie Jingliski

Yeah, it absolutely does. And I think how you handle it as an employer is tough because there are so many variables, and they don't all look the same. They just don't. But I think the policy on that, I believe, needs to be a case-by-case basis.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. Well, you say they don't all look the same. Let's talk a little bit. Our audience is laser-focused in on diversity issues at work. What does domestic violence look like when it shows up for work? We've already talked to it sometimes. Of course, we have those mental models, those visual images of the battered woman trope, right? But this goes beyond that. What does it look like? How does it manifest? How would we know it when we see it to even intervene?

Leslie Jingliski

Yeah. So we have hundreds of years of instinct, first of all, that I think we as a society love to just close down sometimes, but Hollywood will have you believe that it's sunglasses and hats and bruises, and that's not what it looks like. And the reality is abuse looks really different. Coping responses for people are different. I spoke to a survivor one time, and she said, kind of as I went through the healing process, I learned so much. I learned a lot of things that I considered personality flaws were actually coping strategies that I had developed over time. And I found that so interesting because you look at the rate of absenteeism, and I think that you brought this point up, you look at worker fatigue, and most of the time, I think abuse is actually disguised very well. Some people in the workforce, and I'm sure you've come across these people who, are just fantastic at understanding an emotional response. And a lot of times, they end up in sales. Right. Because they can kind of cater, and you can respond to a colleague with these emotions, the emotional response, that will kind of get you on the same level. And I had someone give me a really interesting perspective one time on that, and he said, have you ever met somebody that could read the mood of everyone in the room as soon as they entered? And I said, Gosh. Yes. I love people because they're so easy to talk to. And he said It can actually be persuasive. It can be almost manipulative, right? And he said, have you ever thought about the fact that those traits and a lot of people describe them as empaths, but those traits have actually been survival strategies in the past? It really made me think because I was like, well, if you are as a child or as a spouse or as a girlfriend or boyfriend, have to constantly read the room and as a survival mechanism, be able to understand the mood in order to respond with the least amount of confrontation. That's just a very small example of how sometimes, now is, everybody that's good at that a victim of abuse. No, of course not. That's silly. But I think it opens your mind into the way that you think abuse looks.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, and the cognitive burden. Can you imagine processing all of those details, constantly going through that safety evaluative cycle, every single opportunity? Am I safe here? Am I safe here? Am I safe here? And I'm glad you teed up to some of those things. I think talk therapy. Cognitive behavior therapy would tell us that a lot of the quirks that we observe in ourselves, those personality characteristics oftentimes not all the time, but many times can be mapped

back to like a trauma response. Right. So this trauma-informed intervention, I think, cannot be overstated, particularly as it applies to our DEI strategy.

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely, 100%.

Phil Wagner

So I want to be very cautious here because I know that you cannot give legal advice, and I do not want to paint the picture that every single situation looks the same. We know that it doesn't. That's very clear. But to be helpful, I'm wondering if you might be able to do a little bit of a back and forth with me on just sort of what do you do if. What do you do if you're in the world of work and you see this playing out? We know. I think it's says about 65% of employers don't have any plan at all in place for how to respond to domestic violence. So I'm wondering if we can do some high-level insights from your perspective on what do you do if you're a victim and survivor, what do you do if you're an employer, and what do you do if you're a colleague. So let's just see where this takes us. And again, this is not legal advice. I want to clarify that. But just

Leslie Jingluski

Thank you.

Phil Wagner

In general, I know we have to be mindful, but I think some people just have you don't know what you don't know. And so what are some first steps in primary thinking? So let's go first with the survivor here. Victim, survivor, someone who is experiencing this. What do you do if you are experiencing violence, intimate partner violence, something in this space, and you're afraid of getting fired, right? I mean, is it possible to get fired? Are there protections in place that you know of for victims or survivors in the workplace?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, so it's tough, specifically in Virginia, right? We're an at-will state to answer your question. I don't have a definitive answer for that question because let's be real honest. As an employer, I can come up with any reason that I want to; To dismiss an employee. And so you can argue health-related issues, you can argue whatever those things are and depending on the size of the company. So I always kind of say as a first line of defense, communication is so important.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I want to talk about that too. But yeah, I agree with you.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. I just feel like communicating with your manager, communicating with the owner, depending on the size of the company, just having that open conversation, which that can be so tough, right?

Phil Wagner

So vulnerable.

Leslie Jingluski

Oh my gosh, you are. And that's one of the biggest things. That's one of the biggest things. So I would encourage somebody who is dealing with that to get a hold of your local agency. And there's a lot of agencies out there, Avalon being one of them, in the Williamsburg and Middle Peninsula area, but the majority of them have legal advocates who can kind of talk you through this process and just get a game plan. And I can speak for Avalon, and the majority of these agencies are 100% confidential. So that vulnerability that you're going to feel is kind of the burden is a little less because you can talk to somebody that you know the conversation is going to stay right there and kind of develop a plan.

Phil Wagner

And this can happen at any point in time, right? I know that there are shelter services that come along in many scenarios, but you don't have to wait until you need shelter services to get connected to your local agency.

Leslie Jingluski

Oh, my gosh, no. And I will tell you that it takes an average of seven times to leave for good. And I think that's really important. I think that's important for people to understand. And I think it's important you may not be ready to leave. And you know what? Let's talk about that, too, just real quick. Leaving can be very dangerous.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. So the things we don't say when we are a colleague, which we'll talk about a little bit, go back to that. Why don't you just leave and we'll talk about that a little bit. I want to be sensitive. Again, we want to be very clear that we know one in four women, right? We cite that statistic. This overwhelmingly impacts women. But I want to be sensitive to trans folks and also to male victims here as well. What if you're in a local community and your community has resources, but they're only for women? What do you do if you're a male victim in that scenario?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, it's really tough. Fortunately, at Avalon, we do service both men and women. And I think that that's becoming a smaller and smaller concern across the board.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, I would agree with you.

Leslie Jingluski

But there is a national hotline. I don't have that number, but I'm sure.

Phil Wagner

We can link it in the show notes. We'll link it in the show notes.

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely. But there is a hotline out there that you can call, and it's 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365. And I think that's a good place to start because, especially in the smaller communities, even if it's a woman and you're dealing with that when you're in a small community and somebody who lives in a very small community, you drive up to a place called Avalon, the rumor mill is real. It's tough. Unfortunately, you're dealing with the sheriff who may answer the call because everybody's like, Why don't you just leave? Well, that sheriff that answered the call. It's very possible went to high school with you guys.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

It just makes it tough.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

So pulling in that outside agency oftentimes is really helpful.

Phil Wagner

No, I appreciate that. Okay, so another scenario. What do you do if you find yourself in an abusive scenario relationship, and you need to take time off of work to deal with family issues, go to court, deal with this situation, but face obstacles? You mentioned communication with your employer. Sometimes those aren't always easy conversations when you're trying to negotiate time off to tend to these issues. Any advice to victims or survivors on how to go about having those conversations?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. Again, it is one thing that I want a survivor to know, no matter what. And especially, again, we're back to the small community makes it tough. The way that you feel is valid, and I think that you need to remember that. There's a lot of shame involved. It shouldn't be, but there is. There's a lot of shame involved in these conversations. And I know I wish I had a solid answer for you because if we're being honest, I don't, because human personality is involved, and that makes it different, that makes it difficult. Your boss or your manager, supervisor, owner, whoever, I think many times will react in a trauma in a traumatic way. So I

get that you need to be careful on how you're wording it. And that's why I always say with these things, talk to an advocate, get somebody on the phone before you have these conversations. Come up with a game plan. Sort it out in your head.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

Sort the conversation out in your head before you have it because nine times out of ten, I have to believe that your employer is going to work with you. I really do. And is that naive? Maybe a little bit, if we're being honest. But if that communication door is open and it's done in the correct way, you need to have those conversations.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. And I love the advice of getting an advocate, a local advocate, involved because there may be partnerships that exist between your organization and that advocacy source that you may not even be fully aware. Maybe they're not well-advertised, but they might be able to help you navigate that a little bit. I think that's a safe bet always to always work with your local folks. For sure.

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely. That's why we're here. That's why we have trained so many hours and hours of training to be able to help you navigate the system because it's tough.

Phil Wagner

It's a tough system. All right, so one more for victim-survivors here. What if you need to quit your job because you have ongoing issues with abuse? You fear that the perpetrator is going to enter your workplace and cause violence to other people or just some other reason because this is complicated. If that happens to you, are you eligible for unemployment? How do you seek out support? What do you do in that scenario?

Leslie Jingluski

Yes. Well, I think people will be very surprised to learn the resources available to domestic violence survivors. I think that again, and I feel like we're beating a dead horse on this, but going back to your local agency, whether it be Middlesex County, Williamsburg, James City, all of those places, they work with the Department of Social Services. Now, you are, again, not legal advice. You are always, always encouraged in a situation like that to file for unemployment. It is up to a case-by-case basis. They're going to go through these things. It's going to depend on what your employer does. So the outcome of those cases, you can always file. Absolutely file, and you'll either be accepted or denied. But I think what is important to learn here is that there are a lot more resources available in your jurisdiction than you know. And so working with somebody who can get you access to those. At Avalon, we have situations where we'll cover your rent if you qualify for those things. It's huge. It's huge. And everybody

thinks communal shelter, but there are other options. There are so many other options, and that's our job to let you know what they are.

Phil Wagner

Now, you mentioned confidentiality, and when I call into a service like Avalon, I can bet most of the time, it's going to be 100% confidential. Should I assume the same thing when I'm talking to my employer?

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely not. And I'm being very honest. I think we would hope that.

Phil Wagner

We would hope it.

Leslie Jingluski

I think we would all hope that. But I think that is a concern. It should always be a concern. Your safety and coming from a business side, we can't ignore the business side of it. We can't ignore the disruption and the economic impact of domestic violence. It just is. So I think it's which is why, you know, I circle back to prevention. We've got to. We've got to get in there. We've got to stop.

Phil Wagner

Absolutely. Yeah. So I think maybe some of the lessons learned are to know your organization's policies and procedures. Sometimes it can be something as simple as an ombuds person that might exist as a neutral source of support to help you navigate. Working with human resources. Again, not always 100% confidential, but because of the nature of other accommodations that are made on the job, maybe a source there. But read the room. Make sure that you carefully work with your advocate locally before proceeding, just so that you have as many protections in place as possible.

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely. And it's tough, and it's okay to be scared. I think a lot of times we paint this picture of, along with being a survivor, there's this expectation that everything just bounces off and you're tough, and you're running through, but it's okay also to be vulnerable. It's okay to need help. This is not your fault. It is circumstantial, and it's the way that it is. And so sometimes that first phone call just to be able to an advocate, to be able to just kind of narrow the field, so it's so much less overwhelming. And making that phone call doesn't mean I have to leave.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, absolutely.

Leslie Jingluski

It doesn't.

Phil Wagner

Absolutely. Okay, so let's switch. Let's move into the lens of the employer, the manager, the leader. What do you do if you're that person and an employee comes to you and reveals there in a situation of intimate partner violence or domestic violence? Do you have any recommendations on best practices for how they should respond? Maybe things that we should or I just absolutely should not do?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah, so I think when you're dealing with domestic violence is a control issue, right? At home or wherever they're experiencing the violence, that person is in control, whether it be mentally, financially. Sometimes there's children involved. Sometimes, there's pets involved. Right. So these are all situations that you need to be actively thinking about. And I think the first thing is to establish a trust with that person. Always have those resources. I think good policy is to have these resources to know where your agency is. Many times they will come in there. I'll come in and talk to staff free of charge at any time. Love to do it. I feel like having those but also validate that survivor's feelings. It is so very important to validate and let them know how you're feeling is okay because intention is important. So trust them. Never ever lead. Never ever judge. Never ever. Well, why don't you just leave? Yeah, that's a whole conversation. But leave her or him in control.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

They need that control. They need that space. They need that empowerment to navigate this process on their own terms. So I think it's important to remember that power and control.

Phil Wagner

I know you partner with survivors on strategizing with local employers on what employers might call upon to be able to best support. Are there things you can share what might be helpful, like things like flexible work arrangements or, like, time off? Can you call upon FMLA, like any policy or procedure frameworks, that employers might look to support survivors?

Leslie Jingluski

I think so. I think, in my opinion, policy don't write policy to have policy. Right. Leave yourself some room for every different situation.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. Case by case.

Leslie Jingluski

Yes, absolutely. Because it is different, every situation is different. And I think that's very, very important. Leave policy. I just feel like when you say human resources, it's kind of like a case manager, right? How are we going to deal with this? How are we going to move forward? And what do you need from me to make this happen, to make you a productive employee, to keep you safe? What do you need from me? And let's start there. Let's start the conversation with what can I do for you.

Phil Wagner

Yeah, that's powerful. Okay, so one more. I want to talk from the lens of a colleague. You come into my classes regularly, and you work with very advocacy-minded, diversity, equity, and inclusion-oriented leaders and colleagues. And you ask them in that scenario like, well, what would you do in this situation? And so many of them are like. I got to go right to HR, right? Like, somebody tells me they're in a violent situation, I got to help them fix this. And we see where that comes from. But I'm wondering if you can walk us back from maybe that gut instinct. What do you do if you're at work, a colleague comes to you and reveals in a moment of trust and vulnerability that they're in a situation of intimate partner violence or domestic violence? What are some of the best practices and things we should maybe watch out for or not do in that scenario?

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. So again, and I hammer this nail constantly, you need to leave is a big no-no, right? You need to leave. Why are you going to tolerate that? You're better than that. The reality is that survivor knows that, but it's more complex than that. If an abuser was abusive all the time, it wouldn't work. It would not work. And we can follow back that. And I think it's important for you to understand that. Understand that he might have been abusive yesterday. Today, when he says he's sorry, he means it.

Phil Wagner

Yeah. There's flowers on the table this morning.

Leslie Jingluski

Absolutely. And it's genuine. Don't get me wrong. It's not an excuse, but it is absolutely genuine. So in a fit of everything falling apart, that abuser is in desperation, doing everything that he or she can do to pull it back together because whether it's admitted or not, that abuser knows they messed up. They know it was inappropriate, and it wasn't intentional.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

So we discount love a lot, and I don't think we should. So validating the way that they're feeling, but also validating the fact that I'm not going to leave. There's too much at stake here. I've got kids involved. I have all of these things involved, and I think do not violate that person's trust. They came to you. They're trusting you. And understanding how difficult it is to make that admission to somebody is really important. Believe them. You have to. And I think, as a society, sometimes it's real quick to run to the water cooler, and with an eye roll, I just heard from so and so. You wouldn't believe this. It's toxic.

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

And I think in any action that you make, you need to look at the situation and say, what is going to be an outcome of my action here?

Phil Wagner

Yeah.

Leslie Jingluski

And if it's not productive, we don't do it.

Phil Wagner

But, Leslie, I work with a woman who is impacted. Don't I have to report? Am I not legally obligated to report? Help me here. What do I do?

Leslie Jingluski

No, you are not. And even as a mandated reporter, if it's not of imminent danger or imminent danger to a child, no, it doesn't. Understand how dangerous that can be. Understand the response, especially if you're dealing with someone who may be fearful of law enforcement as it is.

Phil Wagner

Oh, yeah. I mean, we could unpack that for some time, right? There are multiple. Okay. Yeah, I buy it.

Leslie Jingluski

Yeah. So I think it's tough, but I think if you go against what that person needs, and clearly if they have spoken to you, they need it, then all you have done is pushed them back into a corner where they've lost control again. And it's not productive. It's not moving them forward. It's not empowering them to do things that they need to do. So I think trust and establishing a relationship, that's trust, and then understand that tomorrow she or he may come in love again, and everything is roses and flowers and wonderful. And then next week, there may be

another issue. In my opinion, the most important thing that you need to do is to trust that they can still come to talk to you. Because if every time they come to talk to you about these situations and unpack the way that they're feeling, your responses I told you last week, why are you still with them? Why are you still doing this? If you're doing that, eventually, they're going to stop talking to you, and eventually, they're going to cover up more because of the shame. So I think trust and validation are so very important and power. Let them have the power.

Phil Wagner

Let them have the power. Yeah, I think that's such good advice. And again, we've seen this play out with students and how that's a different type of thinking. It requires a different frame of reference than what we might see play out in media or what might be gut instinct. But I think it goes back to support and empowering and giving that power and control back. I have one final question for you today, as a final question. We're at the height of a month of remembrance, of reckoning, of holding space, and I'm wondering if you and your capacity might just simply speak to those who are listening, who have experienced or know of those experiencing domestic violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence in the season of their life. Can you offer them any words of encouragement or advice, or support?

Leslie Jingluski

You know, I think one of the best things is that you're not alone. I think you need to remember that and understand again that everything you're feeling is valid and things that you know, it's hard to tell somebody when they're having a conversation about something that happened, and then you start talking it out and you think, well, it really wasn't that bad. But that's not the case because if you're feeling that way, that's a valid feeling. We have hundreds of years of instinct that are there to protect us and to keep us safe, and we don't need to argue that. But you're not alone. There are people out there calling a hotline is not the first step to leaving, and I think people need to understand that and understand that at Avalon and I can speak for Avalon alone, but if you leave and you go back to your abuser, are we sad? A little bit, yes. But I understand, also. I'm not in control of this. You are. So it's okay. And maybe you call me, or maybe we do a remote counseling session, and we talk about safety planning, and we talk about what you need to get through this, what you need to survive this. And if it's not leaving, then it's not leaving. That's your decision. Nobody else's.

Phil Wagner

So powerful. I so appreciate you and the work that you do. It holds a very special place in my heart. It is so meaningful. I know that it's incredibly difficult to do, and you're so passionate about raising awareness for this issue. We know that prevention is a very critically important part of this, too. So thank you for bringing some of that prevention framework here on our podcast. To those listening, I hope that you'll begin, if you haven't already, to factor these issues under the umbrella of diversity, equity, and inclusion work. This impacts organizations. This impacts organizational culture. This impacts employees because it impacts people. So thank you, Leslie, for coming to share with us today.

Leslie Jingluski

Take care.

Phil Wagner

Thanks for taking a second to listen to Diversity Goes to Work. If you like what you heard, share the show with a friend, leave us a review on Apple podcast or wherever you listen to podcasts, and reach out because we're always looking for new friends. And if you'd like to learn more about any of our programs or initiatives is here in the business school at William & Mary, be sure to visit us at mason.wm.edu. Until next time.