

**Living Bridges Project Transcript**  
**To Be Brave - Part 2: Responsive Community**

[Music]

VOICEOVER: The following audio is part of the Living Bridges Project, an anonymous story-collecting project documenting responses to child sexual abuse. For more, please visit [LivingBridgesProject.com](http://LivingBridgesProject.com).

[Music]

STORYTELLER: The second story is about how because I was able to process being assaulted when I was little, when I was assaulted as an adult; it made it much easier to know what to do. I was in college, my senior year, and I was doing research on the St. Croix River—doing scuba diving stuff. I was a biology major and it was really great and really fun. Unfortunately, on the drive back from the St. Croix, I was sitting next to my boss' son who was 12 and I was sleeping because I was exhausted from being on the river all day and the sun and working. And when I was sleeping, he just assaulted me in the back of the car and I woke up a little—luckily, pretty soon in. Probably like a minute. And I was like, oh my god, what is happening? And I froze and then I pretended to wake up and it stopped.

I think we were close to my college at that time, so probably 10 minutes passed where I pretended to be awake, in my mind thinking, what the heck just happened? What am I gonna do about this? And he's sitting next to me, he's 12, pretending like nothing is happening. And he doesn't necessarily know that I know.

So we unload the van, unload all the equipment, and as we're wheeling the equipment down to the basement, I tell my peers. I'm like, "you guys, I woke up and this was happening to me," and they *laughed*, which is horrible. [Sigh] And I remember being surprised that they—I mean, I think that they laughed because he's a kid, he's like a dorky kid, it's almost unbelievable, except for patriarchy and all of that, but it's like yes... [Sigh]

So, I went home and I was like, "ugh," just feeling really gross. [Sigh] I showered. I texted my girlfriend at the time and started getting some support that way. And then I emailed my boss—or my boss' coworker, I had a few bosses. So, I emailed my professor, who had set up the research internship and all that. I told him what happened. Thankfully he was great and was like, "I'm so sorry that this happened. If you want to meet with me tomorrow, let's do that. If you want to talk with my wife." [laughter] He's like, "if you don't want to talk to me because I'm a man, if you want to talk to my wife, she'll talk with you." It was super supportive from him. I didn't necessarily want to talk with him or his wife about it, but I wanted to get something going.

**Living Bridges Project Transcript**  
**To Be Brave - Part 2: Responsive Community**

So, he told my other boss. He told Forest's dad, who was my boss. Forest's dad sent me an email—I think the next morning I woke up and read it—and was just totally super upset, very apologetic, very like, “oh my god, I can't believe my son did this. We'll have to talk with him. We are so mortified that this happened.”

And I felt really detached from it. I think I was exhausted you know, I'm like, another kid. Except, this time, I'm a grown woman and... Yeah, boys still think that they have a right to my body, which is exhausting. [Sigh] But here I have access to his parents who are open, unlike Jordan, who was totally unresponsive, I'm having a responsive community at this point. Where I'm like, “well he can learn, Forest can learn. I can learn what Forest was thinking. Maybe I can have some closure on this one.”

I told Forest's parents that I would talk with him. I would like to talk with him. I'd like to tell him how it makes me feel that he did that. And that's really what I wanted to do. That's what I felt like I could do.

So they said yes, I don't know how receptive—I'm sure Forest was totally scared and felt scared about it. But his parents were taking him to therapy anyways since this had happened and they had been seeing a family therapists together for other issues I guess. So they invited me to come to their next session.

[Music]

So I came to their next session. I sat down; both their parents were there, Forest was there. I was really nervous leading up to it, but I knew it was important. I was like, “just do it,” you know? So I arrived. And it was uncomfortable, but I said what I needed to say. I told him that well, one, this has happened to me before; two, Forest, I understand that you're learning about sexuality and about body boundaries and desire and I understand that that's really confusing and you can *never* do this to someone without asking, without them wanting it. Thinking that someone is sleeping, you can never do that. And he kind of mumbled his way through. I do think he was sorry. I do think that he didn't know boundaries. I blame that on society for not teaching kids about how to express care and love and attraction in healthy ways. So it ended with that therapy process right there.

And the way I feel now is that I'm really uncomfortable around young men and I don't have the freedom that a lot of people feel around young teen men, even boys who are under 10; I don't feel free with them. [Sigh] Yeah, and I don't think I ever will until we change as a society. But I am really glad that I said something, both in college and I'm really glad that I started that process with Jordan when I interrupted that and I

**Living Bridges Project Transcript**  
**To Be Brave - Part 2: Responsive Community**

started—when I did that with Jordan and the Facebook message and said, “this is what happened to me. This is how it makes me feel.” I have no expectations about how they’re gonna respond, but this is for me. I’m saying this because I need to know that I said something. And that’s still my approach to responding to all sorts of violence: I need to say something for me and for other people too if I’m scared.

[Music]

VOICEOVER: This audio is part of the Living Bridges Project, an anonymous story-collecting project documenting responses to child sexual abuse. For more, please visit [LivingBridgesProject.com](http://LivingBridgesProject.com).