



PREVENT RESIST SUPPORT

Episode 3: Kick Ass Resistance

with Deb Chard



University
of Windsor

Sexual Misconduct Response
and Prevention Office

Prevent Resist Support Podcast

Episode 3: Kick Ass Resistance with Deb Chard

Introduction (Anne Rudzinski): Hi everyone! I'm Anne Rudzinski, and you're listening to Prevent Resist Support, a podcast by the Sexual Misconduct Response & Prevention Office at the University of Windsor. This semester we're trying something new to reach students during COVID-19 - we've started a podcast!

In this episode, I get to chat with Deb Chard from Wen Do Women's Self Defense. Wen Do is an AMAZING women's self defense program that runs out of Toronto. Wen Do has offered courses around the globe. In our Flip the Script program, we use Wen Do self defense techniques, because they're easy and accessible to learn, and they work.

So let's talk a little bit about Deb Chard:

- Deb is a senior trainer and activist in Wen-Do Women's Self Defense.
- Deb teaches all levels of Wen-Do classes including the instructor training program
- Deb is also involved in the training of the facilitators for our Flip the Script (™) program - Deb works closely with our team to ensure that they are prepared to facilitate self defense for women on campus.
- Deb is also an incredibly inspiring woman! She creates a warm, supportive, and empowering space for women to discuss sexual

violence, women's oppression in our society, and to learn about effective strategies for resistance.

I am personally SO excited to have Deb on our podcast. Wen Do is offering courses online right now - so you can take a Wen Do course from home! Check out www.wendo.ca for more information on this awesome program and their upcoming courses.

Today we'll be discussing women's resistance to sexual violence. If you need support and you're a member of our UWindsor campus community, you can reach out to Dusty at svsupport@uwindsor.ca, or through our website www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault/

You can also access support through the Sexual Assault Crisis Centre here in Windsor, at their 24 hour call line - 519- 253- 9667. We also have a lot more resources on our website under the Resources tab. If you're not in Windsor, check out the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres. Their website is sexualassaultsupport.ca - and they have a list of support services across Ontario.

Now, let's hear from Deb Chard, from Wen Do Women's Self Defense!

Anne: Alright so we have Deb Chard with us today from Wen Do Women's Self Defense. Welcome, Deb!

Deb Chard: Thank you. I am happy to be here.

Anne: I am so excited to chat with you today about women's resistance. So to start off, in your own words, what is women's resistance and why is resistance education so important?

Deb: Well, I mean, let me start with Wen Do's self defense has been around now for 49 years. We started in 1972. Doing women's self defense and women's resistance unfortunately things have not changed in the last 5 decades. Girls and women are still being hurt in a variety of different ways. And as long as that's happening and the data is showing that one of the most dangerous places for us as women to be is in our homes, the data is showing that for us as women we are much more likely to be

sexually assaulted or physically assaulted or murdered by someone that we know. As long as that's happening, we actually think it's kind of a no brainer that we need to have strong women's self defense available.

Anne: I love that. And I think you have already told us a little bit about it, Wen Do's women self defense, but could you tell us some more about the programming? Who is it open to? What do you cover in the sessions? And maybe a little bit about how you are running it during COVID-19.

Deb: Absolutely. So we are the longest running women's self defense organization in Canada. We started back in Toronto in 1972. There was a family here by the name of Ned and Anne Paige. They were martial arts people in their own right. When they read the story about Kitty Genovese, who was an American woman in New York City who was murdered by someone she didn't know in 1964, when they read about the circumstances of her death they decided that they wanted something that was going to be easy to learn, easy to remember, something that doesn't require months or years of training in order to be effective, that would be available to girls and women in a practical 15 hour program. Just for the listeners, many may already know just because they have read or learned about Kitty Genovese in sociology classes, but it is very connected with the bystander work that lots of folks are doing right now. Kitty Genovese was murdered 2 am in front of her apartment building. She screamed for help as the man was attacking her with a weapon and no one called the police in good time. Thirty-six people later told the police when they were interviewed that they didn't get involved because she was making so much noise. They thought that everybody else would be calling the police or that they didn't get involved because they thought that was her boyfriend, or they didn't get involved because they thought that she was a sex worker. This is still relevant all these years later, we know that people are less likely to help us if we are being assaulted in public if they think the person who is hurting us is a stranger. And so that's a whole conversation that we have during our 15 hour course, so good for your listeners to be thinking about - What is the context really for women's self defense? That is part of it. So, back in 1972 the Paige family offered the very first Wen Do women's self defense course here in Toronto. They have something like 200 women in a school auditorium and they stood

on stage and they taught wrist releases and choke releases, hits and kicks, and all of that kind of stuff. We have really changed over the last 49 years. Pre-pandemic, we have been running 15 hour in person classes as well as smaller workshops for girls as young as 10 years old. For women of all abilities, including women who use mobility devices, women who are blind, women of all ages take our classes. The oldest woman to complete her 15 hour basic course was 93 years old. She was my student and she rocked and she broke all the stereotypes about who we are supposed to be when we are [older adults]. But then some of those 10 year old girls who come to our classes, they break all the stereotypes. In fact, all of us break stereotypes every time we walk into a Wen Do women's self defense class. And that stereotype in part is that nice women don't fight back, nice women don't get angry, nice women put other people's feelings first and aren't necessarily going to take care of ourselves. So, now that we are in the pandemic we are teaching only virtual classes. We are not teaching any in-person classes, although some of us are open depending on where you live and what's going on. Some of us are open if you did have your own private space and you have a group of mums and daughters who were all in each other's bubbles, for example. Some of us are prepared to mask up and take appropriate safety precautions and follow protocols and work with smaller groups in person. Our classes are pretty much online.

Anne: I love that. And there's some differences with your online classes. It is in some different formats. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Deb: So we are not teaching 15 hour courses yet. Right now we are offering 6 hour workshops, so three evenings of 2 hour workshops each where women and girls are really going to have an opportunity to work together. It's for pairs, so you and one other girl or woman in your bubble can share a screen and then you'll have somebody to practice those wrist releases and choke releases and hits into yoga mats, that kind of stuff. But primarily what we have been doing are 3 hour one time workshops and we have all kinds - We are doing lots of private classes for colleges, universities, and other organizations, plus open to the public classes.

Anne: I love that. I know my mom loves when Wen Do now because I have gotten her to take a class so maybe we will be in one of those paired classes soon

Deb: That's exciting! And it is great for women who have completed their 15 hour course, this is such a great opportunity for review.

Anne: Yeah I love getting those little refreshers in and updates on the content, remembering all of the moves. I think it is so excellent. So I would love to talk a little bit about the heart of Wen Do. I know that that was a question you wanted to answer and I am so excited to hear what you have to say about what is the heart of your program.

Deb: Thank you for asking that. I think that there's such a distinction between us and martial arts schools and classes, which rock, they rock and it's awesome if your listeners are already involved in that, but because we are coming from a feminist, anti-oppression, anti-racist basis of understanding and hopefully being informed in all of our conversations. So many women who take our classes say that the talking part, the discussion in our classes, are truly transformative. And so we talk about violence against women, sexual assault, about all forms of harassment, we talk about what if.. What if I am being followed down the street, what if my car breaks down, what if I am on a date and it's going badly, what if this is my parent or my adult child who is trying to hurt me. We talk about what makes for healthy body image, what makes for healthy relationships. We do so much talking along with the physical techniques because the heart of Wen Do Women's Self Defense is constantly reminding ourselves and each other that we are worth fighting for. We have the right to be treated with respect and with dignity. Not just by strangers, but by co-workers, by family members, and by acquaintances and friends. So, the heart of Wen Do in my view, and I have been teaching now for over 3 decades, and for me if I thought for a moment that women were going to leave my classes remembering all the knife defenses, all the grab in bed self defense, all the releases and the blocks and the hits and the kicks, I would say that would be realistic and I probably would have stopped teaching a long time ago. What I am trusting is that women leave my classes and Wen Do Women's Self Defense classes in general with that messaging that

sometimes we just don't hear a lot. And I know for you, Anne, it's the part you love. Let's trust our gut. Let's trust our gut. We are smarter, we are stronger than the world wants us to believe and we are worth fighting for. And that is the essence of who we are. You know, the majority of women on this planet who have successfully defended themselves in dangerous situations haven't had classes. They haven't taken training anywhere, right? I think it is important for us to debunk the stereotypes and the myths that are out there about how we all have to be training in our local dojo for years in order to be effective. When in fact, giving ourselves permission to embrace our ferocity is something that is a huge social thing. Our socialization teaches us that that's not a cool thing to do.

Anne: Ya I love that so much because I think you touched on it a bit earlier. But that idea about being a "nice girl" and that nice girls or nice women don't fight back or say something. And I think we also really teach women to doubt themselves when they feel like somebody is creepy. There's a lot of "well, maybe he didn't mean it that way", "maybe he likes you" - there's a lot of excuses we give for the person making somebody else feel uncomfortable.

Deb: Precisely. And, we get told in a million different ways that it's our fault. It's our fault if somebody is harassing us on the side of the street. It's our fault if we are on a date and they're not taking no for an answer. It's our fault if our partner is freaking out at us or hurting us in some way. We get told that either we are too nice or we are not nice enough. We get told that it is our clothing, it's the time of day or night, it's that new shade of lipstick we are wearing. And so it's an active force in our society. Victim blaming is not a passive force - It is active. We are being asked to believe that if we get hurt, it must be our fault. And I would suggest that we are damned if we do and damned if we don't - Lots of women come to Wen Do and when we talk about, well "what are your ifs?" women will say "what if I am on the bus in the city and someone is staring at me because in the past I have gotten up and I have moved away from the person who's staring at me, but then they followed me... so I guess I am too passive, I guess I should be more assertive, I guess I have been told that I really need stand up for myself differently." And on the other hand, women come to Wen Do and say "Well I was on the bus

and this person was staring at me and making sounds at me and I looked right at them and right in the eye and told them you need to leave me alone. And they didn't. They escalated. So I guess I am too angry, because you know I get told I get too angry." We are damned if we do and damned if we don't, which is why you love "trust your gut." And know that we don't have the kind of control that can dictate for sure what somebody else's response is going to be, but we can read the situation to the best of our ability. Verbal self defense is a very strong component of everything we do in Wen Do Women's Self Defense.

Anne: I love that. And as you were talking about that it reminds me of the idea that I think people have this misconception that when you take a self defense class we talk about ways to limit your freedom, "you have to do this, you have to do that." and I think "trust your gut" and that whole energy of that is so much about expanding our freedom.

Deb: That's a big important point. Because often, I think this very connected to other people who work in violence against women agencies who rightly are concerned that any self defense class for women is going to be problematic because it is going to be a list of do's and don'ts, it's going to be a list of rules which enhances and feeds victim blaming mentality. And I would say that there are other self defense organizations in the world that do tend to put out a list of rules, and that is something that we are vigilant around because we know that the rules and the do's and the don'ts are counterproductive. You and I are different from each other. We will make different choices in different situations and I certainly can say for myself, on one day in a situation I might respond in one way, the next day it might feel different. The more we talk, in Wen Do we talk lots about the tools in our toolbox. Those include verbal strategies. We talk to girls and women about the different ways we can use our words to de-escalate or confront in situations. So, we embrace rage, we embrace the verbal strategies that are all about telling somebody to "Fuck right off!" Embrace that, celebrate that every time a girl or a woman feels like that's the place she is going to go to, dance joy. What we will equally embrace is the part where a woman perhaps looks at somebody who is harassing her and says "I know your mother, and she would not be proud of you at this moment." And that has worked for so many of my

students as well. So there's different verbal strategies and different physical strategies and we want to throw all those tools into our toolbox.

Anne: I feel like every time you speak and I go to respond I just want to say "I love that", because I love all of the things that you're saying. So to switch gears a little bit, I think one of the really cool things about the Wen Do classes, at least the ones I have been to in person, is that women have such different emotional reactions to the class. Some women are really moved to tears at some points, and some women are fired up and that can change across the time they spend together or the classes they take. I know one time I took Wen Do and I was like on the verge of tears the whole time and then the other time I was laughing and having a super fun and funny time. So I think one of the coolest things is the way you folks handle navigate women's emotional reactions in these spaces. Can you talk a little bit about your approach to that?

Deb: Sure. And good that you've tasted both. I am just interested, I know you're interviewing me, but I am interested in what came first for you. The tears or the woo ha?

Anne: Oh my gosh. It was definitely the sad emotionality of it because the first time I took the class it was just the sinking in of all the concepts and really thinking about that. And then the second time I took it, or maybe it wasn't actually the second time but the time I was giddy and laughing I was taking it again for my Flip the Script training with one of our co-facilitators on our team and the two of us knew each other and we were just super pumped to spend, I think it was an intermediate class, we were really pumped to be there and we were feeding off each other's energy and laughing a lot and just having a super fine time. So I think it was going in and having the expectation about the content and just being really pumped about it that made it fun and light the second time. But ya there was definitely that emotional experience the first time we had those experiences and witnessing the ways the other women reacted and the things they shared. It was very moving.

Deb: Absolutely, well said. And so you are, I would say, a part of the majority of women. The waves of emotion when we are talking about violence against women and children, of course we are going to have an

emotional response. For some of us, that response might be to shut down. For some of us, it might be to be engaged completely in all kinds of ways. For any woman who has ever taken a course with me, she has always heard me say this: Sometimes in this class you may experience waves. You might experience waves of grief, waves of sorrow, waves of joy, or waves of hilarity, waves of bad ass taking my power back dance of joy. We are entitled to all of our emotional experience. You've also heard me say: You'll never be too much for me in a class. We'll hold steady for all women who are experiencing any or all of those feelings. And sometimes it can really feel like a rollercoaster. It's like wow! I love this stuff! This is awesome! And all of a sudden we get catapulted by another feeling and it takes our breath away sometimes. I think it's a human response to violence and to the discussions of violence. For many women their written feedback, both by the way from the 3 hour virtual classes as well as the in person classes, often its along the lines of "I've never been in space where violence against women is talked about in this way." We have that balance of our discussions and we have the balance of physical techniques. And I will tell you, and I know you know this for yourself, what often is so moving is hearing other women's stories, hearing other girl's stories, and often those stories are very much about their stories of survival. One of the things I think about when I think about the heart of Wen Do I think it's the part that we talk about where if we were hurt in the past, if we froze up in the past, if we didn't freeze and we fought back in the past but it didn't work, we still got really hurt, the invitation that we are offering women in Wen Do is to embrace the success of being alive. If you were alive today, you are a success story. And when we talk like that, of course that's emotional. Because what we are really doing is embracing each other and ourselves, and that's no small thing.

Anne: Yeah I just think that it is so authentic to have space where you can sit and you can be totally content and knitting while listening to the conversations or you can sit and cry through the discussions and its not this expectation that you have to leave the space if you are having this emotional response. It is welcomed and supported.

Deb: Well, exactly. And we make room for tears. And we make room for laughter. And we absolutely make room for knitting as well.

Anne: One of my favourite women that I met at an intermediate course I went to knits in her classes, and so I always think about her knitting.

Deb: Absolutely. And it's an engaging conversation. It is not a lecture. It is not something you are sitting and listening to all the time. You are being invited and welcomed to share your perspectives, thoughts, ideas, and experiences if you want to. I would also say that that's the thing about women-only space that so many women come to Wen Do saying that they have never ever sat in a circle of women and just talked. There's a shared experience of misogyny, which is in part why we are after almost 50 years women and girls only.

Anne: Yes. And I am not sure if we covered this earlier so I just want to add it in really quick. Trans women are absolutely included in Wen Do.

Deb: Absolutely.

Anne: Yes, lovely. Just wanted to make sure that was on our recording in case we have any trans women listening.

Deb: For girls and women only, including trans women!

Anne: Love it. Ok to shift gears a little bit, and I was talking about this with you when we prepped for this session, but I have been watching Cobra Kai recently, which is this continuing show of the karate kid and it's been making me think a lot about Wen Do and it has been making me miss Wen Do. The things that it has been making me think about are the ways that women's resistance is portrayed in pop culture and how that doesn't really reflect programs like Wen Do. So in this show, these kids become these karate experts over the course of a couple of weeks and they are getting into all of these fights with each other across the show. And it just really makes me think about the differences between a show like that and between the space Wen Do has. And I love when you say the phrase "Not your local dojo", so can you tell me a little bit about what's different between Wen Do and the kinds of self defense you would see on TV.

Deb: You know, I think you actually captured something that is really important and it was that last part you said about “and now that kids are getting into a bunch of fights”, so we’re not a dojo. We are not a martial art. We have our base way back like 5 decades in traditional martial arts and women that are martial arts experts recognize that some of the physical techniques we do. But that’s where the similarity ends. We are very much about avoiding situations if it is at all possible, we are very much about self-trust. But as soon as you said “the kids are getting into all of these fights” it makes think about the years of work I have done at high schools, different boards of education particularly throughout Ontario, and so many times when I have come in to work with young women at the high schools I have heard that there was resistance to the resistance. I’ve heard that there is resistance on the part of the teachers about some of their young women taking the classes because they are quote on quote already too violent, they are already getting into fights, so taking Wen Do women’s self defense is clearly going to be problematic. And when I have talked to the administration at schools, I have been really prepared to talk to them about sending me all of your girls who are being identified or labeled as problematic in their behaviour. Send me the young women who you consider to be violent. Leave them with me for a couple of days, let’s see what happens. And every time what happens is those young women at some level have started to get a glimpse that they are worth something in this world. They are worth being treated with respect. We are not bullies because we feel great about ourselves. When we are being, as women, when we are mean to other women and we, as girls, are mean to other girls, it is from an internalized experience of misogyny. We understand that girls and women are contemptuous. All you have to do is watch mainstream media and go into any mainstream high school or university and you will see examples and see examples of misogyny everywhere. And of course, like other forms of oppression, as women we internalize that and we are wicked with each other. We are so mean sometimes with each other. When we take Wen Do, we talk about the impact of internalized women hate and how we don’t feel good about ourselves, and so what can I do to feel better? I know, I’m going to make another girl feel like crap. So if we can politicize the experience of young women who have been labeled as violent, if we can look just a little bit closer, we might actually start to change the world. I am not saying that

there are sensays and dojos who don't have this language, I believe and I have met some that do, but we are exclusively focused in Wen Do about the experience, both of what it is like to internalize that contempt, as well as to experience it in microaggressions and bigger on a pretty regular basis.

Anne: Amazing. So, we're going to again switch gears a little bit because I would love to hear the story of how you go into your work with Wen Do teaching self defense, and I feel like our listeners would want to know how they can get involved if they are interested in taking the classes or maybe if they are really gung ho after hearing this and want to get involved in maybe teaching someday.

Deb: This is my anniversary of taking my basic course today on February 1st. So, I took my basic course, which was a two day program here where I live in Toronto, because a friend of mine wanted to go and she didn't want to go along. And I thought Wen Do sounded like Judo and it turned out that Wen Do simply means "Women's Way", and because I was a good friend I went. But I honestly thought I am going to get picked up and get thrown across the room. My first day of Wen Do I honestly will just never forget the shock of that first day. It was revolutionary for me personally and I understood that the program was revolutionary, period, in a much bigger way. I finished my two day basic course on February 1st in 1988 and I got seriously, profoundly hooked. I really thought that this feels coming home to me. I threw myself into what you referred to, which is our intermediate classes, which is the next level that we offer after basic. I applied for and I got accepted for the instructor training that summer and I was a full time instructor by the end of 1988. And it's been a full time gig for me, I have been doing this up until the pandemic. I have been doing this full time. I think, wow, you know to do work that one has passion, deep passion, for is such a gift. So if there are women that are listening to this and are like wow this speaks to me, I want to know more, I would say go to our website wendo.ca, send us an email or send me an email and we will send you a package of information about what is involved with becoming a Wen Do Women's Self Defense Instructor. All that information is based on in person classes during the pandemic, as we said at the beginning of this interview, there are no in person classes

running. But that doesn't mean that myself or another senior instructor isn't prepared to have a phone conversation with you and talk to you about what to realistically expect in your training, know that it is time demanding, its heart demanding, it can take between one and three years before you are teaching on your own. But I would say start with gathering the information and know that I personally am so happy to have a chat with any woman who is listening that really wants to know more.

Anne: That is so wonderful to hear. And I know that one of the other things women can get involved in on our campus is our Flip the Script program. So, Flip the Script is a program that was developed on our campus by Dr. Charlene Senn and is sometimes also called the EAAA Enhanced Assess Acknowledge and Act Program. The Flip the Script title is the way we market it on our campus because it is a bit shorter. But Wen Do Women's Self Defense has a relationship with Flip the Script and through that you have trained some of our facilitators. So can you tell our listeners a little bit about Wen Do's relationship with Flip the Script.

Deb: Of course. And can I just say, you know, I believe in Wen Do Women's Self Defense. I think we are changing the world one woman and one girl at a time. But can I tell you how happy I am that EAAA/Flip the Script is happening in Windsor and so many universities because your ability to reach women is so massive and so I am grateful that you're around. Dr. Senn contacted me back in 2006/2007 to tell me about the study and the grant and all of that stuff and she wanted to talk to me about teaching her facilitators, the women she was training to deliver flip the script, she wanted to know if I would be able to teach them the physical techniques. So they would be teaching Wen Do Women's Self Defense without calling themselves Wen Do Instructors. And when she told me how much time I would have to work with those women I was very clear with Dr. Senn, I said no, it can't happen. But as you know, I bet some of your listeners know Charlene Senn is a nothing if anything persuasive woman and I am so glad I hung in and negotiated and collaborated with the Flip the Script/EAAA Program because it is some of the most rewarding work that I do. Doing the train the trainer in a short period of time, I definitely had my doubts about what the

outcomes would be, but now we have been going so many years and really, you are wonderful. As facilitators, you work hard, you pay attention to detail. Any women who are learning physical techniques from you, Anne, or from other facilitators, you are actually having a strong and profound experience with it. So it's just my honour to be involved with EAAA and I can't wait until we can teach in person again.

Anne: Oh my gosh, I know. I have been in touch with all our facilitators and we've just been sharing how sad we are that we can't take our Wen Do training this year and to not be able to have those really wonderful moments with the women who take Flip the Script with us. And so I know they all really love taking the training every year, even though it is the full training every year for them to re-up it is such a great experience and they love returning to it and we always have such great conversations about how it has impacted them.

Deb: Amazing!

Anne: Yeah! So, to kind of move into talking about Flip the Script on campus and teaching women's resistance on our campus, we see a lot of push back to the idea of resistance and it's almost like there's resistance to the concept of resistance. And so, why do you think that is?

Deb: So there are a couple of things and I know this feels new, but you know, you are talking to somebody who has been around for a long time and the idea of women-only spaces has always been challenged. Always. Here in Toronto we got a grant and launched a program that was a 20 hour basic training for any woman who uses a wheelchair, a scooter, or walks with assisted devices, and it rocked. It was a groundbreaking program and I will never forget this event that happened. So part of our funding came from the city of Toronto and they partnered with us to offer just regular, free courses through community centres back in the day. And there was a man who worked in the same office as one of my contacts at city hall and he was a man who uses a wheelchair. And he said to my contact it was not right that Wen Do was doing this work for women who use wheelchairs, this is discriminatory, and he was going to do everything, he said, in his power to shut us down because we didn't offer self defense classes to men who live with disabilities. At no

point did he ever pick up the phone and call me or anyone else to say “hey, I understand that you folks are doing really good work with women who use wheelchairs. I’m a guy who uses a wheelchair and I’d like to get something going for men.” Instead, all his energy went to “we are going to shut it down.” Back in the mid-eighties, we got taken by a martial arts man who is part of a men’s group called In Search of Justice, they are still around today in Ontario, who publicly proclaimed that the majority of women who say that they have been raped are lying. He took us to the Human Rights Commission, that group took us there. We were in front of the Human Rights Commission of Ontario for seven years and we had pro bono legal representation from an organization called LEAF, the Women’s Legal Education Action Front, and the complaint was thrown out by the early nineties. It was the Ontario Human Rights Commission that called that complaint harassing. Sometimes the more things change, the more they stay the same. Everything that you and I have just talked about in this last part of the interview talk about the need for women only space. The data show that women and girls experience violence differently than guys. Should there be self defense for men and boys and anybody else that does not identify as a woman? Of course there should be! Everybody has a right to learn and hear that they are worth defending. Everybody does. But, that does not mean at the cost of women only space. So I think that’s the first part around resistance is that there’s a sense of you’re not letting us in, we are going to shut you down without a closer examination about what are the politics behind women only space. The other aspect I think of is the resistance that you might have experienced at your university is something that I referred to earlier is where some women who are working in violence against women agencies may have what I consider to be valid concerns about victim blaming. Tendencies in some women’s self defense classes that are not Wen Do. They have a right to their concern and what I would say is everything you publish, everything that we promote in social media needs to be clear our work is to debunk victim blaming attitudes and culture. And I would also say to any woman that is feeling concerned about women taking a Wen Do course and then feel like they should have done it differently, they could’ve done something else, they feel bad about themselves, I would day to the women that are working at agencies, pick up the phone and call us. Let’s talk it out. And if you still

have the same concerns, afterwards, fair enough, but hear what I am saying. Every instructor in Wen Do, our primary focus is it does not matter what the circumstances were, it doesn't matter how much you had to drink, it doesn't matter how many times you consensually had sex with that person, if something has happened, that resulted in you feeling intimidated, hurt, scared, wounded, it was not your fault. And if you take a Wen Do course you will hear about that on a regular basis.

Anne: Yes, I can back that up. I have heard it so many times in Wen Do. And I think one of my favourite phrases you use "Survival is Resistance"

Deb: I do. I tend to say "Survival is Success" and I am sure you have heard other instructors say "Resistance" and you know, it is the same. We talk about success stories, we talk about the girls and women who have used verbal strategies, who have used third party strategies where they have gotten someone else involved, or where they have physically defended themselves. And we talk about that as success stories, which can leave some of us in a place of "I don't have a success story. I have a failure story. I have the time when I was raped, I was beaten, I was humiliated, I was degraded", and so we need, as women, as a movement of women we need to embrace a bigger sense of the word success. If I am alive today, if I am listening to this podcast, if I am going to Flip the Script, if I am going to take a Wen Do class, that is fighting back. That's success.

Anne: Amazing. So our very last question to round off our session is what is one thing you would like all of the women listening to this podcast to hear today?

Deb: Can I tell a story?

Anne: Yes. I love the stories. Probably one of my favourite parts.

Deb: So you know that we tell stories that have come to us from women and girls who have taken our classes and because I have been teaching Wen Do now for over 30 years, I have a share of stories of adult women who come into my classes and say, "hey, remember me? I did a class with you when I was", and in this case it was a 24 year old woman who

said, "I did a class with you when I was 14 years old." so it was only 10 years back. She told this story, she said "her foster mom had taken her to a two day basic course in Peel Region, just west of Toronto, she said that happened in August and then off she went to a new high school in September. And she had the nervousness that lots of girls have in grade 9, new school, don't know a lot of people. She said that she and a girl friend were standing outside the school one September afternoon when two grade 12 guys said hey you look new to the school, welcome to this school, it is so nice to see new faces, how are you finding it? Let us tell you about some cool teachers and programs. My student said they were so nice. They were so friendly and there was no read of anything other than these guys are good guys. At one point one of the guys said to these two young women "I live around the corner and we are having some friends over. It is a good way to meet new people at school, want to come? We are going to have some food, play some video games." It was 3:30 in the afternoon and the girls looked at each other with that silent communication that sometimes we have, and said ya safety in numbers, so they went and my student was talking to the guy who did not live in the house. He had his bike with him. They had walked up the driveway and they were just standing in the driveway of the house, chatting, she said her friend went into the house with the guy who lived there at his request. He said "Come on in, help me get some food out of the fridge." My student said she was standing in the driveway no more than two minutes talking to this guy and suddenly, and remember it is a warm September afternoon so windows are open, suddenly she hears her friend screaming at the top of her lungs, screaming her name, screaming help, screaming this to this guy "get your hands off of me." My student responded immediately, she said what the hell, she started to run in the house when the young man, who would have been 17, picked up his bike and he body slammed her with the bike right across the chest, knocking her backwards. She understood immediately, as I am sure our listeners do, that this was a planned rape. What we need to remind each other now is that planned rapes happen far more often that we are led to believe. My student stumbled backwards but did not lose her balance entirely, she tried to get around this guy again, and again he swung the bike at her. Now she's telling me this story as a 24 year old woman, and she said, "you know, Deb? I just went into my body" and she showed me how she

folded once and she folded her knuckles again and she wrapped her thumb around the outside of her fist and then she said she smashed that fist right down through what she already knew from her Wen Do course was an incredibly vulnerable target on his body. She smashed down through his clavicle or collarbone. She knew that there would be a mechanical failure when she broke his collarbone and surely there was. She broke his collarbone, the bike dropped, his arm dropped, he fell onto the ground because balance is impacted when a collarbone break happens on some people. So she broke his collarbone and his arm dropped, his bike dropped, he fell onto the ground. She said she ran into the house, and she said using her quote on quote Wen Do voice, which sounded like this "AHHHH " she said that guy got his hand off her girl friend immediately, she grabbed her girl friend by the wrist, her girl friend was OK. Clothes were still on. She grabbed her girl friend by the wrist and they ran like the wind. Two 14 year old girls who absolutely showed amazing self defense strategies. The young woman in the house made noise, got attention, kept yelling, which kept her breathing. We know that if we yell we will not freeze. That's important to hang on to. My student knew to yell as she ran in, not just for the element of surprise, but to keep her breathing to give her more power, and they knew to run as soon as they possibly could. That's the kind of story you and I should be reading about everywhere. We should know about 14 year old girls who step in with ferocity who break rapist's collarbones and save their friends. But of course, here's why I am really telling you on this podcast this story, because you said to me, what do I want women listening to this to hang on to and it's this: Those girls didn't tell a soul for 10 years, my student never told anyone about that experience. She did not tell her mom, she did not tell an aunt, she did not tell her best friend. They did not go to a teacher, principal, or guidance counselor, or the police. She said she hasn't even told her boyfriend about this. That in a Wen Do class, when you think about the power of women-only space, think about this. The first time that she felt free enough to actually talk about this, safe enough to talk about this, was in a circle of women that she didn't know. This was her new, as a 24 year old, kind of class. I asked her to talk about why at 14 they didn't tell a teacher or a parent. And she said all the things that your listeners are probably thinking. She was scared she would get in trouble for going to his house at 3:30 in the afternoon. She was scared that his

friends might come after her. She was scared that she might get in trouble for actually breaking his collarbone in self defense. She felt that she might not be believed. She felt like it might be her fault. I am asking everybody who is listening to this podcast to remember the power of getting support. And so I know for you, Anne, you're making available all those numbers and sites, that there's a million reasons why we don't reach out and talk to somebody when we have been hurt or confused or embarrassed or intimidated or attacked. There's all kinds of reasons. And that fighting back, taking care of ourselves, actually means knowing you have a right to have somebody say to you "Thank you for telling me this. It is not your fault. I believe you. Let's talk about what you need." That's what I want women that are listening to this to really take away.

Anne: Deb, I have to tell you that is probably the 5th or 6th time I've heard that story and it gives me chills every time I hear it.

Deb: Me too.

Anne: That reaction does not go away over time. It is such a powerful story. It is one of my favourite stories that you tell. It is so excellent. And I just want you to know how much I have enjoyed having you here today and how wonderful this has been. I am so excited to get this episode out to the folks that will be listening.

Deb: Me too. I love talking to you, Anne. Anytime, I am so happy to work with you. It has been a pleasure. And I would say that as always, whenever we do media, if this changes one person's life, well, how worth it is that.

Anne: Love that. Thanks so much, Deb.

Deb: All the best.

Anne: It's always so amazing to chat with Deb. I always get such a boost of that feminist, empowering Wen Do energy. We also had Deb visit our Facebook live for our Resistance Week earlier in February - you can view the video on our facebook page: Flip the Script UWindsor.

Again, if you'd like to learn more about Wen Do, check out wendo.ca.
If you'd like to learn more about our office, you can find us at
www.uwindsor.ca/sexual-assault/

We also have a huge list of resources on our site.

You can also follow us on social media! We're on Instagram as @wecareatuw, facebook as Flip the Script UWindsor, and we just started a TikTok - preventresistsupport.

If you enjoyed our episode today, please like & subscribe! And check out next week's episode on Intimacy work in the dramatic arts.

Take care folks!