

Episodic texts

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EPISODIC TEXTS

The following episodic texts have been collected during Power Plays memory workshops and are archived here to testify the wide range of experiences of workplace sexist harassment. The episodic texts are thus based on real life memories but revised to secure the confidentiality of the people and workplaces involved.

The backside of it all

Augusta expected a quick meeting with a regular patient during his own lunch hour. The patient came and together in Augustas office, they tried a new exercise for his neck. When they were finished, Augusta went to get a printout from another room and brought it to the patient who was standing by the door to her room, waiting for her before he left. Then the patient started telling Augusta that he had one more important thing to say. Augusta waited patiently for him and encouraged him to continue. The patient moved closer, looked her in the eyes and then said "I'm sorry but I have to tell you. You have a really nice ass". Augusta was stunned by this and was left speechless. In her mind there was a strong voice telling her that she should respond saying that it is not appropriate to say things like that, but since the situation was busy and the patient already passed her on his way to the door, she just showed him out. Augusta began to wonder if she had behaved in a way in her professional relationship with her patient that invited him to comment her bum. Augusta felt embarrassed and disgusted by that comment, as well as an unprofessional feeling that she didn't know how to act. Augusta has been avoiding meeting the patient since the meeting.

The limitless

A married woman in her 70s who has chronic hip pain asks a male physiotherapist whom she knows from the gym if he can help her out with her problems. The physiotherapist agrees and they decide on a treatment program. At the first treatment, he asks her if she can take off her trousers. She replies in a flirtatious and confident manner that she can take off all her clothes for him if he wants it. He answers no and she lays down at the bench with t-shirt and panties. He wants to cover her lap with a blanket, but she throws it away and snorts that its unnecessary. The physiotherapist is surprised by her behavior but insists firmly on coverage. She then suggests that, in conjunction with manual massage, he can perform vaginal stretching on her. Again, he is taken aback, surprised, but manage to remain straightforward in his demeanor and tone when he tells her no.

Friend request

Maria was 21 years old and worked at a housing for people with autism and intellectual disability, as well as challenging behavior in the form of verbal threats and physical violence. Maria only worked part time at the housing and was quite new to her job, but worked well but the residents, staff and the manager.

One day they brought in a new resident, who previously had convictions for sexual harassment and abuse. Maria worked well with the new resident but then he started to like her more than a professional or friendly way. This quickly turned into him only wanting to receive support from Maria, and he became very angry when others wanted to help. One evening, the resident asked if Maria wanted to join him for a cigarette. Maria said yes and they sat down at a bench and talked.

The resident wanted to say something but seemed shy. Maria sensed that he wanted to talk about his interest in Maria, therefore she tried to change the subject. The resident then picked up the phone and wrote "you are nice/ good-looking". Maria felt uncomfortable and tried to explain that she is a staff member. The resident looked like he understood and put on a sad face. Maria felt it was time to leave and told him she needed to attend someone else. While she started to walk back to the housing, she felt her phone buzzing a lot in her pocket. She picked it up and saw that the resident had looked her up on all her social media accounts and sent her friend requests. She felt more uncomfortable, looked back at the resident and saw him smiling.

The old woman and the substitute

Robin worked at an LSS accommodation as a part-time worker. One morning, Robin was given the task to support a resident with her shower. Robin received a report from his colleagues that she can handle everything but needs support in certain parts.. Once inside the resident's apartment, she asked Robin to wash her intimate parts. Robin immediately became uncomfortable as the woman had already done everything herself. So, he joked it off. Out with his colleagues, Robin tells them what had happened. The colleagues laughed it off and said, "she likes young guys".

The double D-cup

Lisa finished at 21 and would hand over/report to the person from the night patrol. It was Gert which she knew well. Gert was quite nice, about 15 years older than Lisa and very happy to talk and gossip. He told Lisa how he had explained to another colleague who she was and repeated what he had said. "You know she with the double D-cup?". And then the colleague knew exactly who Lisa was, which Gert happily told Lisa and thought he was being very funny.

When Lisa seemed surprised and a little "jokingly" questioned it, Gert thought she had already heard this "nickname" and she then understood from him that there were more people than he who called her that.

Lisa felt uneasy but tried not to show it. This was so unpleasant that she never told it to anyone. Instead, she felt guilty and ashamed. Lisa didn't talk to colleagues, nor her boss, not even to her husband she dared to say anything. To this day, she feels discomfort when she thinks or talks about the incident.

An unwanted kiss

A younger, female physiotherapist is replacing her colleague and must therefore have an older male patient in treatment whom she does not know beforehand. She has seen him in the house, but not heard any rumors about him. The physiotherapist is currently heavily pregnant and therefore walks around with a big belly. The treatment takes place in a closed room, where the patient receives his treatment on a bench. After the treatment, she asks him to get off the couch and get dressed. The patient gets dressed, the physiotherapist says thank you for today and is about to open the door when he looks intently at her and smiles. He approaches her with outstretched arm, and she thinks he wants to shake her hand. This was not the case, his hand rests on her pregnant belly and he comes very close to her, kisses her on the cheek and whispers 'thank you' into her ear. The physiotherapist is surprised and shocked by his behavior – she had not seen this coming at all. She feels confused and thinks how on earth could he think he was allowed to act like that? She is also embarrassed for not speaking up and setting a boundary.

The fucking exercise

At the physiotherapy clinic, a younger, female physiotherapist is training a male in his 70s. He comes to the clinic once a week due to a chronic, progressive illness. The patient has been coming to the clinic for many years and knows the place and the physiotherapists well. He is a cheerful type, lives alone, and it is clear that the consultations are also a social breather for him. At this training, the physiotherapist was going to show him a warm-up exercise for the hip and lower back. The patient and the physiotherapist stand alone in the gym, and the therapist shows the patient how to put his hands on his waist and 'draw' large circles with his hips. The patient starts laughing instead of doing the exercise. He looks at the physiotherapist and says that the exercise was called the 'fucking exercise' when he was in the military. The physiotherapist stops the exercise and looks at the patient. She is well aware that the patient can appear very joking and brash, but this comment really bothered her. She pulls herself together and says that comment was very frivolous. The patient continues to laugh, and the physiotherapist does not have the impression that he understood that she spoke up. She continues to guide the same exercise and maintains a serious tone while guiding. He does the exercise, and the training continues for 20 minutes. The physiotherapist has a feeling of not being taken seriously when the patient allows such a flat and inappropriate comment in the middle of training. She knows that she will meet the patient again at the same time next week.
