



Issue 84

Taylor Swift Case Used to Teach BrainWise

BrainWise students from Denver's CEC Early College High School recently attended the Rotary International Zones 26 and 27 Institute in San Diego, where Rotary leaders from 30 Rotary Districts and 1700 clubs in the Western United States and Canada had gathered to obtain training, resources, and tools to implement and enhance projects in their clubs and districts.

The female students participated in a BrainWise keynote presentation to demonstrate how the [10 Wise Ways](#) can be used to promote mental health, as well as to empower young girls. These topics are the initiatives of Rotary International President Gordon McNally, who has challenged Rotary to be a "safe place" for people who need such help.



BrainWise Presenters at Rotary International Zone Institute
Xitlali Ferrel, Bryanna Rodriquez, Dr. Pat, Adriana Aleman, Debra Flick, Gabriella O'Clair

Debra Flick, Rotarian and BrainWise Board Member, worked with the students on their presentation. While Rotarians may not be Taylor Swift's typical fan base, they have daughters and granddaughters who are, and Swift's personal handling of an unwanted sexual touching incident sent a powerful message to individuals of all ages, genders, and races. Her story is an example of how those who teach or are interested

in teaching BrainWise, can use celebrities' problems as teaching tools for the 10 Wise Ways, as well as reinforcing the first lesson that BrainWise teaches—Everyone Has Problems.

Taylor Swift's Assault Case

Taylor Swift's fans know she puts them first and shares her joys and sorrows with them. At concerts and in interviews, Taylor has told them about her emotional damage following unwanted sexual touching by a man during a public Meet and Greet event in Denver.

During a subsequent trial involving her claim of battery and assault, she testified that her initial surprise and shock at the assault prevented her from reacting immediately, but she was visibly upset afterwards when she told her mother, her tour manager, and members of her security team of the incident. Security confronted the man, who denied the accusation, and quickly escorted him out of the venue. Her mother and management team did not report the incident to police at the time "because the publicity and endless memes and gifs created by internet trolls would make Taylor relive the awful moment over and over again."

However, Swift recognized that her staff, wealth, and fame did not protect her from an unwanted and calculated sexual touching that only she knew had happened. It was her word against her assailant's. She also knew few girls and women report sexual assault because of the emotional toll and high risk of no, or minimal, consequences to a perpetrator. Taylor decided it was important for her to pursue her case, as most girls and women do not have her advantages.

She attended the trial and gave her testimony. She experienced firsthand the fear of not being believed as her assailant vehemently denied her accusation. She was relieved when the jury believed her testimony and ruled that she had been assaulted. Swift said that the verdict sent a message "that women will decide what will be tolerated with their body."



Taylor Swift and Her Mother at the Trial

In August 2018 Taylor performed in Florida and told her 80,000 fans, “A year ago on this date I was in a courtroom in Denver.” She was visibly moved when she said, “This was the day that the jury sided in my favor and said they believed me.” She said she thinks about the people who are afraid to speak up because they won’t be believed and said, “I don’t know what turn my life would have taken if people didn’t believe me when I said that something had happened to me.” She thanked her fans for being there for her “during what was really, really a horrible part of my life.”

Assessing Taylor Swift’s Use of the 10 Wise Ways

To prepare for their Rotary presentation, the Interactors chose different situations related to the assault and trial, and asked Rotarians questions about the situations and the Wizard Brain thinking (prefrontal brain), or Lizard Brain reacting (limbic brain), that were used in these situations.



These are the Wise Ways that fit examples that were used from Taylor’s trial:

Taylor tells her mom about the assault: Wizard Brain, Constellation of Support, Red Flags (Mother sees Taylor is visibly upset), Emotions Elevator, Identify Choices, Consequences Now, Later, and Affecting Others, Set Goals, and Communicate Effectively.

Taylor recognizes she can help other assault victims: Wizard Brain, Constellation of Support, Consequences Affecting Others, and Communicate Effectively (taking other peoples’ point of view).

Taylor files the assault charge: Wizard Brain, Constellation of Support, Red Flags, Set Goal, and Communicate Effectively (being assertive).

Taylor understands it is her word against his: Wizard Brain, Fact vs. Opinion, Ask Questions, Identify Choices, Emotions Elevator (lower her elevator), Communicate Effectively (assertive statements, verbal and nonverbal behavior), and Constellation of Support.

The jury rules in Swift’s favor: Wizard Brain, Constellation of Support, Emotions Elevator, Fact vs. Opinion, Identify Choices, Consequences of Choices, Set Goals, and Communicate Effectively.

Taylor’s assault occurred ten years ago, but it still resonates with her. She has been a

generous advocate for women and been praised globally for setting an example that empowers girls and women.

The teens fielded answers from Rotarians and explained how the Wise Ways applied to the different actions. The Rotarians learned how stories like Taylor's are teachable moments and can help people understand why Wizard Brain thinking prevents and solves problems.

Taylor Swift continues to use her fame and wealth to advocate for girls and others who are victims. Still, it remains difficult for them to overcome the fear of negative consequences and other reasons that prevent them from reporting such incidents.

This is why learning the 10 Wise Ways helps. The Wise Ways are teaching tools that give children, youth, and adults words to understand and explain complex behaviors and emotions. The skills that help them recognize when they need support and how to identify the best resources to use. Help lines like "988" 24-hour Lifeline number and contact organizations like Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) and its hotline (800-656-HOPE) or website <http://www.rainn.org> are of no value if victims do not use them.

Knowledge of thinking skills helps victims recognize how they can be overwhelmed by fear, sadness, depression, and mistrust. Knowing how to exit their Emotions Elevator helps them not only stop and think about who and what are the best resources available, but why they must use them.

Even Taylor has said she does not know what she would have done if she was not believed. This fear, and the fear of backlash, leads to the high incidence of under-reported assaults.

This newsletter goes to BrainWise instructors and advocates throughout the world. Thank you for teaching these important skills and customizing examples that help your clients, students, families, and friends use them to prevent and manage their problems.



My best,

Dr. Pat

On a Serious Note

Taylor Swift Talks about Her Assault

Taylor was assaulted in 2013 and the case involving her accusation of battery and assault went to trial in 2017. The jury ruled in her favor and found her assailant had indeed assaulted her.

A year later, on August 14, she tells the 80,000 fans attending her concert in Tampa, Florida, that "a year ago" she was in a courtroom in Denver. The following YouTube video shows her talking in Tampa about the assault and trial.

Taylor Swift continues to donate generously to organizations that help women who have been victimized.



BrainWise | 6450 S. Quebec St., Suite 558, Centennial, CO 80111-4681

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