

# How Busy Philipps Turned 'You Know Me' Into #YouKnowMe

When the actress opened up about her abortion on TV, a friend saw an opportunity for a bigger conversation about reproductive rights.

On Tuesday, after the Alabama Senate voted to pass a bill that would ban almost all abortions in the state, the actress Busy Philipps felt compelled to take action. "Women deserve compassion and understanding in their personal health choices," Ms. Philipps, 39, said on Wednesday. "This is something a lot of people experience and go through in their lives, and it's a health care decision like many health care decisions."

Just a week earlier she had [opened up about her own abortion](#), at age 15, on her late-night show, "Busy Tonight," in a plea to protect women's reproductive rights. Ms. Philipps, who is known for her roles on the TV shows "Dawson's Creek" and "Freaks and Geeks," wrote about the abortion in [her memoir](#), "This Will Only Hurt a Little."

"The statistic is one in four women will have an abortion before age 45," she said last Tuesday on the show, referring to [a study](#) that was published in the American Journal of Public Health. "That statistic sometimes surprises people, and maybe you're sitting there thinking, 'I don't know a woman who would have an abortion.' Well, you know me."

Now, thousands of women have shared their own abortion stories online, many using the hashtag [#YouKnowMe](#). In a phone interview, Ms. Philipps discussed her motivations for speaking out, the response to her story and what comes next.

### **What led you to talk about abortion on your show?**

Part of what I think was so successful in getting people motivated and men on board with the #MeToo movement was hearing from women about their personal stories. Abortion has been, historically speaking, a very taboo subject that women have a hard time talking about publicly, because it's such a personal decision.

The anti-abortion people in this country are so vocal, and for all of those reasons I think women have remained silent. And I felt like, well, maybe there's actually value in sharing.

We need to be as loud as they are, but with the truth. That's the only thing we have. For me it includes people standing up and saying, "I am that one in four." It doesn't matter why, when, or how old you were.

"You know me, you like me, and I went through this." I think there's something super empowering about being able to shift the narrative and being able to have a ton of people say, "I've also gone through this thing."

Before I spoke on my own show, I had read a story about an [11-year-old rape victim in Ohio](#) who was going to be forced to carry a pregnancy. I have a daughter who is the same age. I

became physically ill thinking about the horror of that for that child. For those men in charge to decide that that collection of cells has more value than that child defies all logic.

**How did the comment you made on your show lead to your [tweet](#) on Tuesday calling for women to share their stories with the hashtag #YouKnowMe?**

I don't understand hashtags that much. I never hashtag.

Tina Fey, who doesn't have her own social media accounts and who's my executive producer, reached out to me. She said, "I think you hit on something, which is 'you know me.' It makes it very personal. I think you should think about starting that hashtag."

It was the day after I had done the show. I felt overwhelmed already by the responses to my show. I had to think about it.

Then, last night, I went to dinner with my girlfriends, and we were on our phones reading about [the Alabama law](#). I told them about the hashtag and they said, "Just do it right now. This is the right time to do it."

**How do you feel about some of the negative reactions people have had to the comments you made on your show and the hashtag?**

I had some of the trolls hit me up, and a lot of people were

like, "How could you be proud of this thing you have done?" I never said I was proud of it. It's a thing I experienced as a woman that many women in this country and around the world have experienced. I refuse to live in shame, and I refuse to hold on to something that I have no shame about.

I don't know one woman who's had an abortion who has been like, "I can't wait, I'm so excited about this."

I can't control that someone else feels that way about this. I believe they're wrong and, to be honest with you, it really has no effect on me at all. Not even for a second. In terms of followers on Instagram, if that's something you believe, and you believe a woman shouldn't decide with her doctor and herself what's right for her own body, you can go ahead and unfollow me. I don't need you.

### **How can men be allies?**

Men can be louder. I think they can be participatory and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with women, opposing these bills.

My husband and I talked about it before I talked about it on my show. We talked about the possible repercussions. He and I both decided that anything negative about me that could come my way would be completely minuscule in comparison to the possible good that it could do for other people.

### **What's your outlook on the future when it comes to reproductive rights?**

I do want everyone, myself included, to be hopeful that women will be able to have true equality in our society. I am hopeful of that, for our daughters. I am hopeful that we won't slide backwards, and that what we're seeing right now is the last dying grasp of old white men who are trying to uphold the patriarchy and hold on to their power in any way they can. I hope this is a real turning point, and from here on out, things will get better. It might get worse before gets better, but it's pretty bad right now. And I'm speaking from a place with so much privilege.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

(Source: [Nytime.com](https://www.nytimes.com))