

Some Bystander Intervention Strategies

ASK THE QUESTION

If you see someone who looks like they are in trouble, ask if they are ok.

DON'T LEAVE THEM ALONE

Ensure that friends who are incapacitated don't leave without you or go to secluded places with someone.

If a person is trying to get you to leave so that they can take advantage of someone, refuse to leave the area or call the police.

"I" STATEMENTS

Three parts: 1) State your feelings, 2) Name the behaviour, 3) State how you want the person to respond.

Focuses on your feelings rather than criticising the other person. Example: I feel _____ when you _____. Please don't do that any more.

SILENT STARE/ BODY LANGUAGE

Remember, you don't have to speak to communicate.

Sometimes a disapproving look can be far more powerful than words.

HUMOUR

Reduces the tension of an intervention and makes it easier for the person to hear you.

Do not undermine what you say with too much humour. Funny doesn't mean unimportant.

GROUP INTERVENTION

There is safety and power in numbers.

Best used with someone who has a clear pattern of inappropriate behaviour where many examples can be presented as evidence of their problem.

"BRING IT HOME" (EMPATHY)

Prevents someone from distancing themselves from the impact of their actions.

EXAMPLE: "I hope no one ever talks about you like that."

Prevents them from dehumanizing their targets as well.

EXAMPLE: "What if someone said your girlfriend deserved to be raped, or called your mother a slut?"

"WE'RE FRIENDS, RIGHT..."

Reframes the intervention as caring and non-critical.

EXAMPLE: "Hey, Dave. As your friend, I've got to tell you that your teeshirt isn't doing you any favours, it's killing your rep with the ladies. Do yourself a favour and don't wear it again – chuck it out."

DISTRACTION/INTERRUPTION

Most effective for street harassment.

Snaps someone out of their "sexist comfort zone."

EXAMPLE: Ask a man harassing women on the street for directions or the time.

PROVIDING INDIVIDUALISED NORMATIVE FEEDBACK (i.e. “most people our age don’t think it’s ok to…)

Remember:

Approach everyone as a friend.

Be a good listener and give respectful attention.

Do not be antagonistic.

Avoid using violence.

Be honest and direct whenever possible.

Recruit help if necessary.

Keep yourself safe.

If things get out of hand or become too serious, contact the police.

[Acknowledgement: much of this material was drawn with thanks from “Bystander Intervention” published by the Stanford University Office of sexual assault and relationship abuse education and response:
<https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/sara/SARA%20Office%20Bystander%20Intervention.pdf>]

Whatever response you choose, remember the following:

- Consider frequency, duration and intensity/severity when evaluating a situation.
- Determine the barrier for the person if possible — motivation, ability or environment.
- Know your limits as a helper — engage others as necessary.
- Be sensitive, understanding and non-judgmental.
- Challenge misperceptions – Express your true feelings/beliefs.
- Identify the red flags; Anticipate problems.
- Determine the priority goal; Formulate a plan; Prepare/practice what you want to say.
- Interrupt/distract/delay a situation you think might be problematic — before it becomes an emergency!
- Set boundaries — do not make excuses for the person or otherwise enable them.
- Conduct conversations in a safe environment. **Maintain mutual respect and mutual purpose.**
- **Remember the Law of Delivery** — *Who* (person/s), *What* (content), *When* (timing), *Where* (location/privacy), *Why* (reasons) and *How* (tone).

[Acknowledgement: this is taken, with thanks, from the Step Up! Program,
<http://stepupprogram.org/facilitators/strategies-effective-helping/>]