

Bystander Intervention Resource Sheet

Office of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism
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Bystanding VS Upstanding:

When harassment or situations of potential violence occur, the behaviour of individuals within close proximity to the incident can positively or negatively contribute to the violence (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Bystanding occurs when a witness to the incident makes an active decision not to intervene, and in some cases, even going as far as to directly enable discriminatory violence. Through direct action or inaction, a bystander condones or reinforces the perpetrator's behaviour and aggression, adding to the alienation of the individual experiencing harm (American Psychological Association, 2022).

On the other hand, upstanding is when someone recognizes that the act of violence is unjust and interferes by using bystander intervention techniques. Upstanders work to support and protect their communities and people experiencing harm (American Psychological Association, 2022).

The Bystander Effect:

First proposed by John M. Darley and Bibb Latané in 1968, following the murder of Kitty Genovese four years prior, the Bystander Effect has become an incredibly crucial phenomenon that is ingrained in so many social interactions. The Bystander Effect states that individuals are less likely to offer help to someone experiencing violence while in the presence of other people (Darley & Latané, 1968). According to the University of Waterloo (2022), the Bystander Effect occurs for two main reasons:

1. **Diffusion of Responsibility:** bystanders believe that because there are others present, other individuals will assume responsibility to step in.
2. **Social Influence:** bystanders monitor others' reactions to determine whether it is necessary or acceptable to intervene, leading to collective ignorance.

The same factors that contribute to the bystander effect can also increase altruistic behaviours. It is more likely that individuals will intervene when they feel as though the responsibility to intervene is theirs, and/or when they witness another person's upstanding actions.

Bystander Roles:

Within the label of 'bystander,' there are different roles that each person plays to enable violence and discrimination. It is crucial to understand each of these roles so that we may combat bystanding behaviours and move towards becoming upstanders (Salmivalli, 2014).

- Outsiders: witness the situation but do not get involved.
- Reinforcers: support the harm by laughing, encouraging, or cheering for the perpetrator.
- Assistants: directly join in on the violence and support the perpetrator.

Opportunities where you could be a bystander or upstander: *(Please note, some of this information might be triggering to some folks. Please engage in self- or community care as needed)*

To help you gauge some common instances of discriminatory incidents where you can choose to be an upstander, here is a non-comprehensive list:

- Instances of bullying, whether virtually or in-person.
- A Black, racialized, or Indigenous individual is being wrongfully accused of criminality by a White individual.



- A transgender or nonbinary student is being harassed and repeatedly misgendered by a transphobic student.
- Someone is making inappropriate and unsolicited sexual comments or innuendos towards another person.
- A student with an invisible disability who is seeking accommodations is being maliciously interrogated by an ableist faculty member.

Promoters and Barriers to Upstanding:

Promoters refer to concepts needed to motivate and educate bystanders, thereby giving individuals the courage and tools to become upstanders. However, barriers might cause a bystander to refrain from becoming an upstander (American Psychological Association, 2022). It is important to become aware of these promoters and barriers so that we can support one another in becoming upstanders.

Promoters to Upstanding

- Knowledge of discrimination and the potential for harm (Nelson et al., 2011)
- Increased confidence in one's ability to successfully intervene in cases of discrimination (Parrott et al., 2020; Muja et al., 2021)
- Affective empathy, the ability to understand the emotions and feelings of others (Menolascino & Jenkins, 2018)
- Members of dominant groups confronting perpetrators of discrimination (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Assertiveness (Jenkins & Nickerson, 2019)
- Social norms that do not tolerate discrimination (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Bystander intervention training and education.
 - For additional information on bystander intervention in cases of sexual violence, visit the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office's custom-made infographic: [bystander-intervention-strategies-5ds.pdf \(uwaterloo.ca\)](https://www.uwaterloo.ca/bystander-intervention-strategies-5ds.pdf)
- Desire to educate perpetrators (American Psychological Association, 2022)

Barriers to Upstanding

- Social and economic costs following failure of upstanding behaviour (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Upstanders from marginalized groups are viewed as 'overly sensitive' (Kawakami et al., 2019; Gulker et al., 2013)
- Lack of awareness that a situation is discriminatory (Kawakami et al., 2019)
- Fear of consequences (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Lack of relationships with survivors of discrimination or prejudice (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Status or perceived power of perpetrator (American Psychological Association, 2022)
- Social conventions that normalize discrimination (Nelson et al., 2011)
- Conflict-aversion (Nelson et al., 2011)
- Lack of confidence in one's ability and knowledge to intervene (Nelson et al., 2011)



Why is bystander intervention important?

The only way to effectively combat violence and discrimination is for individuals to stand in solidarity and create communities that are intolerant of oppressive behaviours. When people come together, fewer bigoted actions occur. Bystander intervention training and awareness empowers individuals, providing the skills necessary to recognize violence and intervene. While taking action during an incident is important, proactively learning how to use bystander intervention tools allows people to challenge dominant oppressive systems. Upstanding behaviours further show survivors of this violence that they are not alone.

The 5 D's of Bystander Intervention:

This acronym is a tool that you can use to support someone who is being harmed (The Centre for Anti-Violence Education):

1. Direct

If it feels safe to do so, directly intervene in the situation and speak up or express disapproval about the harm being caused. It is important to note that some individuals may not feel safe intervening due to their social location and privilege. It is okay to use some of the other indirect intervention methods (University of Waterloo, 2022).

2. Delegate

Scan the situation to assess the risk and determine the best way to intervene. Get help from and assign tasks to those around you. There is comfort, safety, and strength in numbers (University of Waterloo, 2022). For instance, one person might support the target of harm by removing them from the situation, while another might de-escalate the situation by distracting the perpetrator.

3. Delay

Invalidation of the survivor's trauma can cause additional harm. Check in with the individual experiencing harm after the incident; this shows them that they are valued and cared for. It is also crucial to educate ourselves and others on systems of oppression so that we can work towards eradicating violence (The Centre for Anti-Violence Education).

4. Distract

An indirect approach which involves directing attention away from the perpetrator, the person experiencing harm, and the situation (The Centre for Anti-Violence Education). The aim of this method is to subtly derail and de-escalate the situation, breaking the flow of potential harm. For instance, you might change the subject of conversation (University of Waterloo, 2022).

5. Document

If there is already an upstander helping the person in crisis, documenting the situation by recording or writing notes can help with reporting the violence afterwards. Always ask the person who experienced harm for how to proceed with the documentation. **NEVER post or share video footage without consent of the survivor**, as it can cause harassment, doxing, or involvement of law enforcement (The Centre for Anti-Violence Education; University of Waterloo, 2022).

Another 'D' that is not included but is equally as important is **Debrief**. No matter who you were in the incident (an upstander, a survivor, or a perpetrator), it is important to talk through the situation with someone. This can be a friend, trustworthy adult, or counsellor. Talking about what occurred aids in deciding how to respond to similar situations in the future and provides a space to acknowledge and talk through overwhelming feelings (University of Waterloo, 2022).



What if you're the one experiencing harm?

If you are stuck in a situation where there are either no or some unhelpful bystanders around, it is possible to employ bystander intervention tools on your own behalf. Here is a non-exhaustive list of tactics you can take if you are the person being harmed (University of Waterloo, 2022):

- Trust your instincts
- Delegate: ask those around you for help
- Document: pretend to be on your phone and take a video, it will come in handy if you choose to report the incident
- Call a friend: you are creating your own witnesses to the violence
- Set boundaries
- Reclaim your space
- Debrief: talk to a trusted individual after the incident

What are some tangible actions you can take to be an effective upstander?

There are many actions you can take before, during, and after a situation of violence occurs to help mitigate the effects. Proactive behaviour at different levels is crucial to being an upstander (American Psychological Association, 2022):

- Interpersonal
 - Use the 5 D's to Bystander Intervention whenever possible.
 - With the consent of the person experiencing harm, get in touch with UWaterloo campus or community resources for support or to report the violence.
 - [Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office](#)
 - [EDI-R Office Intake Form](#)
 - If you were the one causing harm, acknowledge and take accountability for the impact.
 - Hold others accountable, whether they are strangers or people close to you.
 - Model upstanding behaviours to disrupt bystander social norms (VicHealth, 2010).
- Communal
 - Organize public awareness campaigns that discuss marginalization and promote upstanding (American Psychological Association, 2022).
 - Have community leaders teach others about bystander intervention techniques (VicHealth, 2010).
 - Educate community members about biases that contribute to harm (VicHealth, 2010) and bystander and upstander action (American Psychological Association, 2022).
 - Highlight the importance of impact over intent (Brown et al., 2021).
- Institutional
 - Prepare leaders and authority figures to intervene in instances of harm (American Psychological Association, 2022).
 - Offer training that educates employees on creating inclusive, non-discriminatory work and learning environments (American Psychological Association, 2022).
 - Foster a community climate that upholds values of respect, integrity, and compassion (Haynes-Baratz et al., 2021).



Further Learning

- [Bystander Effect](#): An article by Britannica that offers more information on the Bystander Effect and its history.
- [Bystander Intervention Strategies](#): The Government of Canada dedicates a page on their website to educating about the 5 D's of bystander intervention with examples of intervention strategies
- [Ethical Bystander Intervention](#): The University of Colorado Denver's Equity Office has a page which promotes awareness of the Bystander Effect, effective bystander intervention strategies, and further explains the promoters and barriers to upstanding behaviours.
- [Harassment in the Workplace](#): A guide for fostering a warm, inclusive workplace environment put together by the Government of Canada. Included are also methods to navigate situations of harassment and harm.
- [Bystander Intervention Tips](#): The National Sexual Violence Resource Centre developed a resource emphasizing bystander intervention in cases of sexual violence.
- [Stop Sexual Violence](#): a sexual violence bystander intervention toolkit created by the New York State Department of Health.
- [Bystanders are Essential to Bullying Prevention and Intervention](#): A fact sheet designed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services that focuses on bystander prevention and intervention surrounding bullying.
- [Be an Upstander](#): A brief video developed by the Canadian Museum for Human Rights sheds light on the positive impact every individual can make by becoming an upstander.
- [Upstander Engagement](#): University of British Columbia's Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office within the Faculty of Medicine released a brief page about the importance and impact of being an upstander.



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