

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION SKILLS

INTERVENING WHEN SEXUAL VIOLENCE OCCURS



Every bystander faces the same choice:

"Do I get involved and try to make things better? Or do I ignore the situation?"

And the Bystander Effect makes this a difficult choice:

- The increased presence of witnesses or "bystanders" during an urgent situation decreases the likelihood that someone specific will intervene. That's because many of us assume that someone else will respond, or someone else is "better suited" to respond - causing our hesitancy to act.
- Many of us also, understandably, worry about, and need time to assess, how intervening might impact our safety, the safety of those we're with, and the safety of the person being targeted.

Sometimes we think that it "doesn't matter if we intervene, or not". But, interrupting sexual violence in all its forms (harassment, online, assaults, jokes etc.) challenges the ongoing normalization of sexual violence and acceptance of rape culture in our communities. This includes when we're with our friends and family, and when we see and hear acts of sexual violence in public.

WHY INTERVENTION MATTERS

1

NOTICE THE BEHAVIOUR

First, we must notice that a behaviour is not okay - we need to begin to name and notice sexual violence.

2

IDENTIFY IT AS A PROBLEM

Then, we must interpret what's happening as a problem; rather than believing it's *just the way things are*.

3

FEEL RESPONSIBLE TO ACT

We need to feel motivated and responsible to act. We must feel like we can create change and have the power to act, otherwise we won't think we have any role to play.

4

POSSESS THE NECESSARY SKILLS

And then we need to have ideas of what we can do in the moment to help alleviate freezing or the "bystander effect". Here are 4 types of interventions we can take:

DIRECT

Interacting with those involved:
"Are you okay?"

interacting with those causing harm:
"That's not okay"

DISTRACT

Diverting the attention of those involved:
"Can you take my picture?"

DELEGATE

Getting help to intervene:
"Something's wrong. I need your help."

DOCUMENT

Making a record or keeping your eye on what's happening

5

ACTING AND INTERVENING SAFELY

You can ask yourself the following questions before you decide how you want to intervene:

Check in with yourself:

- Am I safe?
- Am I the target?
- Who else can help?

Assess if the person causing harm is receptive:

- Yes
- No
- Maybe?

Based on your assessment, think about next steps:

- What goals do I have?
- What tactics can I use?

We have the power to interrupt sexual violence and challenge rape culture

