

Being a positive bystander



When to be a positive bystander?

There are many situations we might come across that make us feel like we want to intervene or take some kind of action, for example:

- When we see someone being bullied, harassed or abused
- When we hear something that concerns us, e.g. an argument, shouting or screaming

What is bullying and harassment?

Harm or hurt directed towards an individual or group of people, who usually have less power, are perceived as weak or are vulnerable

They may be vulnerable due to a protected characteristic: age, disability, race, sex, pregnancy/maternity, marriage/civil partnership, gender reassignment, religion or belief, sexual orientation

There may be other factors, for example weight, class, income, accent, level of perceived intelligence or knowledge about a subject

Our response to the situation will likely depend on our perceptions of the people involved, combined with personal factors, such as our age, race, gender identify, mental health etc. That will influence who we perceive as being a 'victim', who we perceive as being a 'perpetrator' and how able/safe we feel to intervene



What is a positive bystander?

Being a positive bystander IS:

- Recognising situations where someone is at risk
- Taking action to prevent a situation from escalating or from happening in the first place
- Looking out for others, putting the victim or potential victim first
- Letting the someone know that their behaviour is not ok (where possible/safe)
- Taking steps to ensure safety

Being a positive bystander IS NOT

- Being a hero, trying to take control of the situation or trying to hold people to account
- Always knowing what to do and how to resolve the situation



What if I can't take action?

There are many reasons why you might not be able to intervene, e.g. safety, physical proximity, freezing in the moment, the perpetrator being an authority figure. Consider if there is someone you can tell, for example staff, security, or calling 101 to make a non-emergency report, or talking to the perpetrator or victim directly, if you know them or have the opportunity.

How to be a positive bystander

1. Identify

It is important to recognise situations when they occur, e.g. identifying offensive or derogatory language, seeing someone at risk of harm, hearing something that concerns you.

Consider:

Do I think there is a problem?
Do I think that someone might need help?

2. Assume personal responsibility

Even if there are other people around doesn't mean that someone else will handle it. Taking the decision to step in can make a difference

Consider:

What are the benefits and risks of taking action?
Who else can help?
Am I part of the solution?

3. Determine how to help while considering safety

Create a distraction

Interrupt and ask for the time, for a piece of information, or simply say hello. This can be a way to lead a direct intervention. Stand nearby in line of sight and check your phone while assessing the situation.

Consider:

How do I keep myself safe?
What are the options? Is there anyone around to help me?

Directly confront

Talk to the assumed victim- ask, are you ok? Do you need help? Or, simply say hello. You can make eye contact and gesture first. You can also wait for the situation to be over and then check they are ok. Talk to the assumed perpetrator - remain non-judgemental and calm. If the situation doesn't seem right just ask - is everything ok. Remember your safety comes first.

Delegate the intervention

Is there someone more appropriate to intervene, e.g. member of staff, security or a person known to the victim or perpetrator. Can you report it to someone after the fact, e.g. telling a manager, a member of staff, reporting to TFL etc.. If there is immediate danger, call 999.

4. Intervene

Carry out your plan. Once the situation is ok, check with the person who needed help and ensure they feel safe.

Consider:

Have I told the necessary people?
Do I need to do anything to make sure the situation stays safe?

Remember—your safety comes first!

solace training



solacewomensaid.org/get-informed



training@solacewomensaid.org