

# Bystander Intervention

## Be a Good Bystander

The University of Louisiana at Lafayette encourages all community members to educate themselves about interpersonal violence and share this info with friends. Confront friends who make excuses for other peoples abusive behavior, speak up against racist, sexist, and homophobic jokes or remarks. A good is bystander someone who models pro-social behaviors and intervenes when a potentially dangerous situation occurs.

To combat sexual assault on campus, the most powerful tool is your conveying your concern. The best way bystanders can assist in creating an empowering climate free of interpersonal violence is to diffuse the problem behaviors before they escalate.

Often people don't intervene because they may assume the situation isn't a problem, or feel it is none of their business. They may assume that someone else will do something, or believe that other people weren't bothered by the problem. In some cases, a person might feel their personal safety is at risk.

When people do intervene in a situation, they often say that it was the right thing to do, and that they would want someone to intervene if the roles were reversed.

## Bystander Intervention Keys

- **Notice the Incident.** Bystanders first must notice the incident taking place. Obviously, if they don't take note of the situation there is no reason to help.
- **Interpret Incident as Emergency.** Bystanders also need to evaluate the situation and determine whether it is an emergency, or at least one in which someone needs assistance. Again, if people do not interpret a situation as one in which someone needs assistance, then there is no need to provide help
- **Assume Responsibility.** Another decision bystanders make is whether they should assume responsibility for giving help. One repeated finding in research studies on helping is that a bystander is less likely to help if there are other bystanders present. When other bystanders are present responsibility for helping is diffused. If a lone bystander is present he or she is more likely to assume responsibility.
- **Attempt to Help.** Whether this is to help the person leave the situation, confront a behavior, diffuse a situation, or call for other support/security.

## How to Recognize Sexual Assault:

### What is Consent?

Consent is:

**Voluntary (freely given):** Consent must be voluntary; it cannot be obtained by coercion or force. Even if someone did not physically resist an attacker, that doesn't mean they gave consent. Some survivors don't resist for fear physical resistance might make their attackers more violent. Research also indicates that some rape victims may experience "tonic immobility" during the rape. In other words, they are literally paralyzed by fear.

**Only Active (not passive):** Consent must be active. If someone were unconscious, asleep, incapacitated or incoherent by drugs or alcohol, then they couldn't consent. Indeed, even if someone did not remember being sexually assaulted, it doesn't mean it didn't happen.

**Informed:** If someone consented to one intimate act, it does not imply that they have consented to others. Consent must be informed, which means you and your partner know what you are consenting to beforehand. Always ask before increasing the level of intimacy.

**Clear:** If someone didn't say no, it doesn't mean they consented. Remember, consent must be active and involve clear words or actions. Always get clear affirmation. Never assume consent.

**Engaged Permission:** Just because you have consented to something in the past, doesn't imply that you consent to it in the future. Similarly, being in a relationship with someone doesn't mean you or your partner have consented to sexual activity. Always ask for permission to engage in mutually agreed upon sexual activity.

Additional Sources:

<https://www.rainn.org/>, "Was I Raped?" and "Acquaintance Rape." RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

The National Sexual Assault Hotline: **1.800.656.HOPE**.

<https://www.campusclarity.com>

## Tips for Intervening

In a situation potentially involving sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking:

- Approach everyone as a friend
- Do not be antagonistic
- Avoid using violence
- Be honest and direct whenever possible
- Keep yourself safe
- Keep your phone handy, call for help or document when you can safely do so.
- If things get out of hand or become too serious, contact the Police.

## The Bystander Intervention Playbook

The College of William and Mary put together a playbook of advice for bystander intervention. These tips may be useful.

- **Defensive Split** Step in and separate two people. Let them know your concerns and reasons for intervening. Be a friend and let them know you are acting in their best interest. Make sure each person makes it home safely
- **Pick and Roll** Use a distraction to redirect the focus somewhere else: “Hey, I need to talk to you.” or “Hey, this party is lame. Let’s go somewhere else.”
- **The Option** Evaluate the situation and people involved to determine your best move. You could directly intervene yourself, or alert friends of each person to come in and help. If the person reacts badly, try a different approach.
- **Full Court Press** Recruit the help of friends of both people to step in as a group.
- **Fumblerooski** Divert the attention of one person away from the other person. Have someone standing by to redirect the other person’s focus (see Pick and Roll). Commit a party foul (i.e. spilling your drink) if you need to.

## Active Bystander Intervention takes a number of forms:

- Talking to a friend to ensure he or she is doing okay, Ask directly, “Do you need a ride?”
- Have a buddy system, and let your friends know if you’re worried about them
- Making up an excuse to help the friend get away from someone
- Calling the police (911)
- Recommending to a bartender or party host that someone has had too much to drink
- Pointing out someone's disrespectful behavior in a safe and respectful manner that tends to de-escalate the situation
- Removing a friend from a risky situation quickly

**Things to Think About**

What are reasons someone might NOT intervene in a situation?

What can we do on campus to overcome these barriers to intervention and create a more supportive campus climate?

**One Student's Take on Bystander Intervention**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ycYPmzisfk>

**Bystander intervention UW Madison lesson on how to intervene in acquaintance rape**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBAzL5Sf1ss>

Other resources:

<http://www.myduty.mil/index.php/prevention/active-bystander>

**Please remember... If you see something, say something.**