

OCC BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

(Adapted from the University of Wyoming)

Who Are Bystanders?

Bystanders are people who witness or see a specific action or event but aren't the direct actors in that event.

You are a potential bystander. Everyone is a potential bystander. This includes your friends, your classmates, your family, RAs, acquaintances, onlookers, random passersby, your great aunt Mildred, the captain of the volleyball team, and pretty much everyone else in the world.

There are different types of bystanders. A bystander may choose to ignore the situation (i.e., passive bystanders), engage in the situation in a way that stops it (i.e., active bystanders), or engage in the situation in a way that exacerbates the situation (i.e., participants). *(Adapted from the PreventConnect Wiki.)*

What Is Bystander Intervention?

Bystander intervention, or **being an active bystander**, is part of being a member of the Ozark community. We all have an important role in preventing physical or sexual violence when we are confronted with problematic situations. Being an active bystander can include:

- Speaking out against statements, attitudes, or behavior that may perpetuate a culture endorsing violence as acceptable or inevitable
- Naming and stopping situations that could lead to violence or a sexual assault
- Stepping in during a high-risk incident, whether by disruption, distraction, speaking up, or even calling for help so others can step in
- Supporting and believing others when they feel uncomfortable or hurt
- Helping others respond to problematic situations

The goals of bystander intervention are manifold. While bystanders must ultimately be equipped with skills to be effective and supportive allies before a sexual assault ever takes place, bystanders must also be taught when to intervene and why. As members of the Ozark community, we all have a responsibility to derail and interrupt violence and violence-condoning attitudes on campus. Research shows that bystander intervention is a promising practice to help prevent the national public health problem of sexual assault on college campuses.

A typical bystander goes through five stages when determining whether or not to act:

1. **Notice** the situation.
2. **Interpret** the situation as requiring intervention.
3. **Assume responsibility** for intervening.
4. **Know how** to effectively help. (Decide how best to help.)
5. **Actually intervene** in the situation.

Being an active bystander **does not mean** that you should risk your personal safety or that you need to become a vigilante. There are a range of actions that are appropriate, depending on you and the risky situation at hand. Remember, if you are ever worried for the immediate safety of yourself or others, you can decide to leave the situation and seek outside help. **That's still bystander intervention!**

The Ideal Bystander...

- approaches everyone as a friend
- is honest and direct whenever possible

- tries to de-escalate the situation before it is a crisis
- avoids using violence as a means of intervention
- refrains from antagonizing or accusatory actions when possible
- asks for help from others present when needed
- knows when to call for professional assistance (EMTs, Police, Security, RAs)

Practical Intervention 101

You should decide how to best intervene based on your own feelings of personal safety. Check out the general strategies (below left) to see which feels right to you. Read some ideas of actual intervention moves (below right). You could prevent a sexual assault with just a few words.

General Strategies	Specific Actions
Separate them.	
Let them know you're concerned about what's going on. Make sure each person makes it home safely by engaging another friend or group of friends ensure everyone's safe.	<p>"You don't look too great." "I'm concerned about what's happening here." "I'm concerned for you."</p>
Provide a distraction.	
Use something to draw attention away from the problematic behavior and focus on something else. Change the topic or start a conversation.	<p>"Hey, we need to talk for a minute." "I hate this scene. Let's go." "I think your car is getting towed."</p>
Delay the situation.	
Spill something or otherwise provide a visible distraction that needs to be attended to if nothing else seems to be working. This can buy you time.	<p><i>(Spills food or drink.)</i> "My bad! That shirt looks expensive!" "Hey, buddy, is your nose bleeding." "There's something weird on your back. It looks like paint."</p>
Directly intervene.	
Say that what is happening is not okay or is not appropriate.	<p>"This is Ozark. We don't do that." "I know you are better than that." "I'm seeing _____, and I'm uncomfortable."</p>
Group Intervention	
Recruit people to help you out. Get friends of the person you're concerned could be harmed and friends of the person whose behavior you think could be problematic.	<p>"What do you think we should do?" "I'm noticing _____ is needing help. Let's help him/her out." "Everyone's going home alone tonight. You can call him/her tomorrow."</p>
Make a scene.	
This acts as both a distraction and could delay the situation from escalating. Additionally, other bystanders will hopefully take notice of what is happening, and you can recruit help to intervene more effectively.	<p>"Get away from my sister/brother!" "That's my girlfriend/boyfriend, what are you doing?" "Hey, that person just stole my wallet!"</p>
Call in the professionals.	
Not every situation can be handled simply. You do not have to intervene alone. Call 911 or the Ozark Security Department. Ozark takes all reports of violence seriously and responds to dangerous situations seriously and quickly.	<p>Emergency Services: 911 Ozark Security: 417.626.1200</p>

How Can You Make A Difference?

- **Recognize** that sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking are real problems experienced by many college students. About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 33 men will survive sexual assault during their time at college.
- **Recognize** the warning signs of violence or the precursors to someone being taken advantage of. If you notice something or someone tells you about their experience, take it seriously and believe them.
- **Recognize** the importance of consent and how we respect others with our actions as root causes of violence and abuse.

- **Don't minimize it.** Stalking is not just a case of “unrequited love” or “excessive affection.” Encourage a friend who is worried they are being harassed to seek help.
- **Don't brush it off.** If something or someone makes you uncomfortable, say or do something.
- **Watch out for each other.** If you see someone who looks like they're in trouble, ask if they're okay.
- **Speak up and get involved** if you see something offensive or abusive. If you hear jokes about sexual assault or that degrade other people, don't laugh. Say you don't think it's funny to hurt others. Encourage respect.

Why Don't People Intervene More Often?

Adapted from the Respect Program at Emory University

Many factors influence people's willingness to help, including ambiguity, perceived cost, diffusion of responsibility, similarity, mood, gender, attributions of the causes of need, and social norms.

- **Situational ambiguity.** In ambiguous situations (i.e., it is unclear that there is an emergency), people are much less likely to offer assistance than in situations involving a clear-cut emergency (Shotland & Heinold, 1985). They are also less likely to help in unfamiliar environments than in familiar ones (e.g., when they are in strange cities rather than in their hometowns).
- **Perceived cost.** The likelihood of helping increases as the perceived cost to ourselves declines (Simmons, 1991). We are more likely to lend our class notes to someone whom we believe will return them than to a person who doesn't appear trustworthy.
- **Diffusion of responsibility.** The presence of others may diffuse the sense of individual responsibility. It follows that if you suddenly felt faint and were about to pass out on the street, you would be more likely to receive help if there are only a few passersby present than if the street is crowded with pedestrians. With fewer people present, it becomes more difficult to point to the “other guy” as the one responsible for taking action. If everyone believes the other person will act, then no one acts.
- **Similarity.** People are more willing to help others whom they perceive to be similar to themselves—people who share a common background and beliefs. They are even more likely to help others who dress like they do than those in different attire (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). People also tend to be more willing to help their relatives than to help non-relatives (Gaulin & McBurney, 2001).
- **Mood.** People are generally more willing to help others when they are in a good mood (Berkowitz, 1987).
- **Gender.** Despite changes in traditional gender roles, women in need are more likely than men in need to receive assistance from strangers (Benson, Karabenick, & Lerner, 1976).
- **Attributions of the cause of need.** People are much more likely to help others they judge to be innocent victims than those they believe have brought their problems on themselves (Batson, 1998). Thus, they may fail to lend assistance to homeless people and drug addicts whom they feel “deserve what they get.”
- **Social norms.** Commonly held attitudes and beliefs prescribe what behaviors are expected of people in social situations (Batson, 1998). The social norm of “doing your part” in helping a worthy cause places a demand on people to help, especially in situations where their behavior is observed by others (Gaulin & McBurney, 2001). For example, people are more likely to make a charitable donation when they are asked to do so by a coworker in full view of others than when they receive an appeal in the mail in the privacy of their own home.