**Bystander Intervention for Witnesses to Bullying - What Can I Do?**Bullying can exist only in environments and cultures that tolerate it. If you see it, say something. Remember: preventing and stopping workplace bullying starts with each of us. As bystanders, we might think “it’s not my responsibility” to intervene, especially if no one else does. We can also decide that regardless of anyone else’s actions, it is our responsibility to act. You decide how and to what extent you intervene. Where possible, enlist assistance from other bystanders.

**Pay attention**

* We all need to be active bystanders.
* Make a conscious effort to watch for inappropriate behavior.
* If you are in a group, you may be less likely to notice when intervention is needed
* Don’t assume “someone else” will notice and intervene.

**Determine how to respond**

* Determine if it requires intervention:
  + Judge for yourself whether this is a situation that requires intervention.
  + Do not base your decision on the actions or reactions of those around you.
  + Make sure you are not projecting your own biases.
* If the target of bullying needs help:
  + Determine if you are in an appropriate position to intervene.
  + If you are not, seek out someone who is.
  + Be aware that alleged perpetrators may not recognize the impact of their behavior.
  + Simply acknowledging or calling attention to the issue can stop the behavior.

**Learn the skills**

Attend and participate in training opportunities. Awareness training and skills building helps to translate policies and procedures into everyday workplace behaviors.

* “Cognitive rehearsal” training is a simple and effective process:
  + Learn not to react immediately
  + Take a moment to distance yourself emotionally
  + Process the situation before responding
  + Internally rehearse appropriate responses
  + Respond in a non-judgmental, non-argumentative tone

**Intervene safely**

* There are situations where public intervention might be counter-productive.
  + In such situations, try to make eye-contact with the target to communicate your support.
  + If possible, speak to the perpetrator later in a more appropriate setting.

**Techniques for Intervening**

* Distract
  + Ask the bully a question.
  + Call the bully over to an area away from the target.
* Delegate
  + Finding someone who can address the situation more effectively is also a form of intervening.
* Dialogue
  + Exercising empathy can be safe and effective.
  + Intervene by asking the bully what they are experiencing.
  + Tell the bully you are uncomfortable with their behavior and it is not acceptable.
  + Be aware that direct intervention can be dangerous, especially if alcohol or drugs are involved.
* Diffuse
  + Remove the target from the situation.
* Document  
  Use documentation to report the incident to a supervisor, with the permission of the target.
  + Take a cell phone picture.
  + Take notes of what you see happening.
  + Take notes about other potential witnesses.
* Debrief
  + The effects of bullying aren’t limited to the target. If you intervened you may want to seek support for yourself.
  + Continuing the conversation around bullying in the workplace with colleagues and supervisors can help discourage unacceptable behavior.