



Bystander Intervention for Witnesses to Bullying

What can I do?

Bullying exists in environments and cultures that tolerate it. As bystanders we might not identify any responsibility to intervene, especially if no one else takes action. Remember: preventing and stopping workplace bullying starts with each of us. If you witness bullying behaviors, here are five actions you can choose from to safely intervene:

Distract – Take an indirect approach to diffuse the situation

- Ask the bully a question
- Call the bully over to an area away from the person directly impacted
- Start a conversation with the person directly impacted
- Create an excuse to remove the person directly impacted from the situation

Delegate – You don't have to do this alone

- Identify others who can more effectively intervene
- Identify others who can help you intervene
- Look to bystanders, colleagues, supervisors, or management

Delay – It may not be possible for you to intervene at the time

- Check in afterwards with the person directly impacted
- Let them know you saw what happened
- Ask if you can support them in any way

Direct – If safe, address the disrespectful behavior when it's happening

- Tell the bully you are uncomfortable with their behavior and it is not acceptable
- Speak in a non-judgmental, non-argumentative tone
- Exercise empathy – it can be effective
- Be aware that direct intervention can be dangerous, especially if alcohol or drugs are involved

Document – Keep a record of the situation

- Take cell phone pictures
- Take notes of what you see happening and witnesses
- Make a list of potential witnesses

The 5Ds of Bystander Intervention are based on Right To Be's Bystander Intervention training presented by Behind the Scenes.