Bystander Intervention

Being part of the solution

Every campus has a population of bystanders who support sexual violence. They may not mean to do so, yet by not intervening when they see something happening, not reporting actions or dismissing certain behaviors, they are essentially sending a message to perpetrators that their actions are okay.

“What we can do is change community norms so that the perpetrator’s behavior is no longer acceptable,” Jane Stapleton, co-director of Prevention Innovations Research and Practices for Ending Violence Against Women at the University of New Hampshire (UNH), told Campus Safety magazine (3/6/12).

Reactive and Proactive Bystander Strategies

As a reactive bystander…

• Get police or other authorities involved
• Tell someone else

Get help

• Ask a friend in a potentially dangerous situation if he/she wants to leave
• Make sure he/she gets home safely
• Ask a victim if he/she is okay
• Provide options and a listening ear
• Call the campus or local crisis center for support and options

As a proactive bystander…

• Believe violence is unacceptable and say it out loud
• Treat people with respect
• Speak up when you hear people making statements that blame victims
• Talk with male friends about confronting violence against women
• Encourage friends to trust their instincts
• Be a knowledgeable resource for victims
• Don’t laugh at sexist jokes or comments
• Look out for friends at parties and bars
• Educate yourself and your friends
• Use campus resources
• Attend an awareness event
• Empower victims to tell their stories


The Bystander Effect

This occurs “when the presence of others hinders an individual from intervening in an emergency situation,” according to Psychology Today. Basically, the more bystanders there are, the less likely it is that any of them will help.

Social psychologists Bibb Latane and John Darley attributed the bystander effect to:

• The diffusion of responsibility – “I’m more likely to intervene if there are few or no witnesses.”

• Social influence – “I’m taking my cues on how to act from those in this group – I’m less likely to help if none of them are.”

Bystander behaviors can apply to various situations, from assaults to other emergencies.

Consider this when determining your actions as a bystander.

Source: www.psychologytoday.com/basics/bystander-effect