

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ACTIVE BYSTANDER?

A bystander is someone who is a witness to an event but is not directly involved. An ACTIVE BYSTANDER is a witness to behavior that is violent or unfair and speaks up against it. Being an active bystander means you are making a commitment to speak out against violence and make a difference.

TOOLS FOR BEING AN ACTIVE BYSTANDER: (Adapted from Alan Berkowitz)

**See violence for what it is.* A lot of times, we don't want to admit that violence is happening. We often choose to ignore the situation, look away, or call it something else. It is important to remember that no one has the right to be violent, even if two people are dating. Examples of violence are grabbing someone, hitting, pushing, yelling, or calling names.

**Violence doesn't stop violence – use words!* If someone is being abusive, threatening or trying to fight the abusive person is only going to make the situation worse. Instead, ask questions like “*Is everything okay?*” while looking at both people. It's a way to interrupt the fight without causing more drama.

**Don't silence or ignore the victim.* Be sure that you don't put all the focus on the abuser. The victim's voice should be heard and respected. Ignoring victims makes it seem like their feelings – and voice – don't matter.

Learn from the situation.* What could have been different? Did you respect the victim's rights? Did you avoid violence? Talk to your peers and get their perspective on the situation. **Remember, violence doesn't end after one action.

What Bystanders Can Do:

*Don't spread rumors. Don't gossip.

*Refuse to join in when someone is being bullied or harassed.

*Create a distraction to draw the bully or abuser away.

*Identify others that you trust to ask for help.

Get adult assistance during a bullying incident. Don't be embarrassed to do this.

*Speak up when they see someone being bullied: “*Stop. No more of that behavior is needed here.*”

*Take A Stand!

- Don't pass on hurtful notes, emails, texts
- Say 'hi' to a new student or someone you don't know very well.
- Include someone new in your activities.
- Ask someone new to join you at lunch.
- Ask your friends to help stop the bullying behavior.
- Join up with someone who is being bothered and take him or her out of the situation.



Crisis Connection

**Sexual & Domestic Violence
24-Hour Hotline**

1-800-245-4580

www.crisisconnectioninc.org



- Worry that if someone sees you helping out someone outside of your friend group that you will lose social status.

***Common Concerns To Overcome:**

- Fear of being ostracized or made fun of by friend for including someone new.
- Worries about getting involved in something that is 'not your business'.
- Fear that the person you reach out to might expect you to be friends.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE REASONS WE DON'T INTERRUPT VIOLENCE?

"It isn't my problem." - Violence is EVERYONE's problem. We are all affected by violence in our community.

"It isn't going to change anything." - Your action is going to help others see that they can take a stand against violence. It also shows the victim she or he is not alone.

"It may make things worse, or the abuser might turn on me." - The point of being an active bystander is to help the situation calm down, not create more violence.

"Maybe I'm making a big deal out of nothing." - Any kind of violence IS a big deal, even grabbing someone's arm or yelling in their face; even calling someone names. If it seems wrong, it probably is.

"It's normal for people to fight." - While it's normal for people to disagree, violence is NOT normal and is NOT okay.

"She might have started it or deserved it." - No one chooses to be abused, and no one ever deserves to be abused.

"I'm not a 'rat'." - Being an active bystander does not mean you're being a 'rat' or that you're weak. It means you want peace.

"No one else cares that this is happening." - Many people want to see an end to violence, but are unsure of how or when to speak up.

Resources to Check Out:

www.crisisconnectioninc.org

www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov

<http://kidsareworthit.com/>

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*Thank you to Rape Crisis Center of Central New Mexico (www.rapecrisiscnm.org)

BE AN ACTIVE BYSTANDER -

Don't Just Stand There!