



# HOW TO SAFELY INTERVENE TO STOP SEXUAL ASSAULT

USE THIS RESOURCE TO

LEAD A GROUP DISCUSSION  
OF WAYS TO USE BYSTANDER  
INTERVENTION FROM DAY TO  
DAY ON YOUR CAMPUS

## BYSTANDER STRATEGIES FOR SAFE INTERVENTION

Gather a group of students to discuss ways to use the following list of intervention strategies to step in and help a community member that may be in a risky situation. Provide examples as a group of ways to realistically use these strategies in your day to day life.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO INTERVENE?

Sexual violence has severe negative effects on an institution's campus culture. The negative effects of this violence does not only affect a victim, but it can also affect the number of students who graduate, it can decrease the feeling of safety on or off campus, and it can decrease the willingness of victims seeking services from the school or local community. An estimated 40% of rape victims suffer from severe emotional distress (requiring mental health treatment), 34.1% of students who have experienced sexual assault drop out, higher than the overall dropout rate, and an estimated 20–25% of undergraduate women are victims/survivors of sexual violence, but 90% or more do not report the violence.

We can all play a role in changing the culture on our campuses. By stepping in - both directly as well as indirectly - to situations to help our peers, we can make our campuses safer places to be and increase trust in the student body.

## SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

### Use Humor!

- **What is this?** Using humor means making a joke to distract someone who may be creating a risky situation so the person who is at risk has an opportunity to leave.
- **Example:** Person 1 is talking to Person 2 and it looks like Person 2 feels stuck in a corner and unable to regain their personal space. Person 3 (active bystander) walks up and says, "Oh my gosh I forgot my glasses today and totally thought you were my friend, [insert any name]! Sorry if I looked silly waving at you from the other side of the room!"

### Calling for help/authorities

- **What is this?** If a situation looks like it is escalating and may be risky but you do not feel 100% sure it is safe for you or another person to intervene, call the police.
- **Example:** Person 1 is walking out of a party with Person 2 looking very unwilling. Person 1 is not listening to anyone asking them to leave Person 2 alone and they seem to be getting angry and aggressive.

### Causing a distraction

- **What is this?** If you witness a risky situation occurring, causing the aggressor to focus on something else, even for a small amount of time, can help the person at risk find an opportunity to exit the situation.
- **Example:** Person 1 is talking to Person 2 and it looks like Person 2 feels stuck in a corner and unable to regain their personal space. Person 3 (active bystander) walks over and tells Person 1 you think his car might be getting towed.



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## MORE IDEAS TO CONSIDER

### Getting other people involved with you to intervene

- **What is this?** It can be hard to intervene alone in certain situations. If you do not feel comfortable intervening for any reason, find another person who might be able to or that can come with you to intervene together.
- **Example:** Person 1 is talking to Person 2 and it looks like Person 2 feels stuck in a corner and unable to regain their personal space. Person 3 and Person 4 (active bystanders) walk over to Person 1 and 2 to de-escalate the situation together.

### Code words

- **What is this?** Code words can be anything. They can be used to alert someone you feel uncomfortable and they can also be used to help someone who may be at risk.
- **Example:** Person 1 and Person 2 go to a party and make a plan that if either of them feels uncomfortable, they can use a code word to ask the other person for help.

### Make it personal (this can be problematic, but if it's effective, that's what's important)

- **What is this?** If you feel it is safe to do so, tell someone they should walk away or head home because their behavior is making others feel uncomfortable.
- **Example:** Person 1 is talking to Person 2 and it looks like Person 2 feels stuck in a corner and unable to regain their personal space. Person 3 walks up to Person 1, asks to speak with them, and advises them to leave the event, party, or situation.

### Shift focus to yourself

- **What is this?** If you see a risky situation but are not sure how to approach them, shift the focus of the party to yourself to distract the person creating the risky situation and allow the other person to get out of the situation.
- **Example:** Person 1 (active bystander) is at a party or event and sees Person 2 making Person 3 feel uncomfortable, so Person 1 makes an announcement that they are starting a party-wide game of charades.

### Show support

- **What is this?** If you see someone telling another person they do not want to do something with them or go somewhere with them, go up to them and support the person saying no by standing with them and reiterating what they've said until the other person leaves.
- **Example:** Person 1 (active bystander) is at a party or event and sees Person 2 making Person 3 feel uncomfortable, so Person 1 goes up to them and says, "they said they do not feel like taking another shot with you."