

Bystander Actions



As a bystander, you may choose to intervene directly in a situation if you feel safe and comfortable.

Here are some direct and indirect actions you can take:

Direct actions include:

- Naming the issue. This identifies the behaviour and focuses on its impact rather than criticising the person. Use “I” statements to share your feelings, name the behaviour and state how you want the person to respond.
 - For example, “When you make jokes about women like that, I feel offended and disrespected. Could you please avoid saying such things in the workplace.”
- Interrupting the behaviour. You can change the topic of conversation to interrupt the behaviour. This allows space for the affected person to move away and also encourages other people to intervene.
 - For example, if you overhear an inappropriate joke at work, try interjecting to ask for help on a project.
- Use of body language to show disapproval which communicates that the behaviour is unacceptable.
 - For example, sometimes a disapproving look can be easier and more effective than words.

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More direct actions:

- Using humour, with care. This can reduce the tension of an intervention and help your message land. But avoid devaluing what you say with too much humour.
 - For example, reference a funny and appropriate anecdote about a pet or show you've watched recently.
- Offering support. Support the person who is being targeted as well as the person who is actively intervening. You could say: "Are you ok?" or "I'm sorry that happened". Listen to them and offer to refer them to your organisation's internal supports.

If you don't feel safe or comfortable intervening directly, you can still create change through indirect action.

Examples of indirect actions:

- Seek help. Utilise the supports and resources around you to seek help. Ask friends to intervene, contact security or call police.
- Support the person privately. Follow up with the person and check to see how they are. Offer further support as needed.
- Report or follow up with the person using inappropriate behaviour. This could be formally via a complaint or make time to address their behaviours separately.



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