

# **Bystander Intervention – FAQs**

## **What is bystander intervention?**

Bystander intervention simply means that when you see something that you do not think is right, you say something, do something and/or get others' attention to help. With the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses, especially against women aged 18-24, you may have the opportunity to prevent an assault from happening to a friend, acquaintance, or stranger.

## **What do these situations look like?**

It is important to look for clues signaling a lack of consent. These could seem minor, such as body language that indicates intoxication of the target, or his/her indifference to the perpetrator's advances; or as obvious as someone crying or asking for help. If you stay engaged and follow the suggestions given below, you may be the difference between a traumatic and life-changing event and just a normal day for a potential victim/target.

## **What should I do if I witness something I am not comfortable with?**

Act right away! If you witness something illegal or something that may become a crime, call the police. If you feel safe enough to intervene, you may use any of the strategies listed below. If you personally know either party, offer support and resources. For example, direct the target/victim to **NOVA Sexual Assault Services' (SAS)** 24-hour phone number (**703-338-0834**), or talk to the harasser to see what happened and if he/she needs to self-report to the police or the college conduct office. Keep in mind that acts that are not illegal may still be against college policy (see the NOVA Student Handbook and the Title IX Policy on Sexual Violence, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking). If you see something, you can also say something by submitting a report to NOVACares (<http://www.nvcc.edu/novacares/>). Reporting through NOVACares is easy. You may choose to disclose your identity or remain anonymous. Regardless of what you choose to do, just act right away!

## **If I do decide to do something, what are some ways I can intervene?<sup>1</sup>**

- Check in with the target, confront and/or distract the harasser, stand up for your friends and those around you! Say: "Hey knock it off!" or "Get away from him/her!"
- Tell the person you will call the cops or that you saw the cops nearby.
- Ask the target if there is anything you can do to help: "Are you ok?"
- Go stand next to the person being targeted so that he or she knows they are not alone.
- Ask the target, "Are they bothering you?"
- Take a picture with your phone.
- Tell the target that the harassing behavior wasn't ok and you are sorry it happened.
- Distract the harasser by asking for directions.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from [www.ihollaback.org](http://www.ihollaback.org)

- Act like you know the target and say “I’ve been looking everywhere for you – we have to hurry to meet our other friends.”

### **More bystander intervention strategies<sup>2</sup>**

#### **“I” statements**

- Three parts: 1. State your feelings, 2. Name the behavior, 3. State how you want the person to respond. This focuses on your feelings rather than criticizing the other person.
  - Example: “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when you \_\_\_\_\_. Please don’t do that anymore.”

#### **Silent Stare**

- Remember, you don’t have to speak to communicate. Sometimes a disapproving look can be far more powerful than words.

#### **Humor**

- Reduces the tension of an intervention and makes it easier for the person to hear you.
- Do not undermine what you say with too much humor. Funny doesn’t mean unimportant.

#### **Group Intervention**

- There is safety and power in numbers, ask “What should WE do to help?”
- Best used with someone who has a clear pattern of inappropriate behavior where many examples can be presented as evidence of his problem.

#### **Bring it Home**

- Prevents someone from distancing himself from the impact of his actions.
  - Example: “I hope no one ever talks about you like that.”
- Prevents someone from dehumanizing his targets.
  - Example: What if someone said your girlfriend deserved to be raped or called your mother a whore?”

#### **We’re friends, right....?**

- Reframe the intervention as caring and non-critical.
  - Example: “Hey Chad...as your friend I’ve gotta tell you that getting a girl drunk to have sex with her isn’t cool, and could get you in a lot of trouble. Don’t do it.”

#### **Distraction**

- Snaps someone out of their “sexist comfort zone.”
  - Example: Ask a man harassing a woman on the street for directions or the time.
- Allows a potential target to move away and/or to have other friends intervene.
  - Example: Spill your drink on the person or interrupt and start a conversation with the person.

**For more information, contact NOVA Sexual Assault Services (SAS) at**

**703-338-0834 (24 hrs) or [nova.sas@nvcc.edu](mailto:nova.sas@nvcc.edu).**

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from [www.mencanstoprape.org](http://www.mencanstoprape.org)