

TALKING WITH ATHLETES ABOUT BYSTANDER INTERVENTION



You can use the points below to explain basics of bystander intervention. The scenarios on the next page can help your athletes develop the ability to respond to peers in situations of inappropriate, hurtful, or abusive behavior, and can be tailored toward your own sport or team context.

WHAT IS BYSTANDER INTERVENTION?

Bystander intervention occurs when a person does something to stop inappropriate, hurtful, or abusive behavior when they see it. They do not ignore the situation or hope someone else will act.

No one can do everything, but everyone can do something.

THE FIVE BYSTANDER INTERVENTION PROCESS STEPS¹

1. Notice a concerning or harmful event is happening (or may happen).
 - » Is there anything in this situation that concerns me?
2. Decide whether action is needed in the situation.
 - » This is a gut-check moment. Does something need to be done?
3. Assume responsibility for acting or delegating.
 - » Is it my responsibility to do something? If I don't, who will?
4. Figure out your options for intervening and identify risks and barriers to acting.
 - » What actions can I take comfortably? What might make it difficult to act? What kind of power do I have in this situation?
5. Understand how to carry out the action safely.
 - » How will I keep myself safe while taking this action? What might help the person being harmed feel safer in this situation?

(1) Darley, J. M., & Latane, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8, 377-383.

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION OPTIONS

There is no one best way to intervene in a situation. You may intervene differently than someone else, and that is okay.

In deciding how to respond, it can be helpful to think of 5 D's:

- **BE DIRECT**
Say something in the moment, such as telling someone to stop their harmful behavior or that their inappropriate joke is not funny, or asking someone being harmed if they want to leave.
- **DISTRACT**
Create a diversion, like asking participants what time it is, changing the subject, or asking one of them to help you with a task.
- **DELEGATE**
Get someone else to address the concern, such as a parent, teacher, or coach, or ask a friend or party host if they can intervene.
- **DELAY**
Buy time until it is safer to intervene or wait until you can have a private conversation with the individual acting inappropriately about your concerns.
- **DOCUMENT**
Record the date, time, location, information about people involved, and a summary of what happened; give the information to someone with more power to act.

BYSTANDER INTERVENTION SCENARIOS

How would you respond to the following scenarios? Think about realistic responses and choose an action you would feel comfortable taking in real life. You can choose one or a combination of options, or make up your own.

1. Two of your teammates are dating. While hanging out one day, your teammate begins berating their partner for not returning text messages and accuses the partner of cheating with another teammate.
 - » **BE DIRECT:** Tell your teammate to stop and, when you and your teammate are alone, that you are concerned they are being abusive and hurtful to their partner.
 - » **DISTRACT:** Interrupt the couple or ask your friend to come help you with something.
 - » **DELEGATE:** Talk to your coach or parent about your teammate's behavior and ask for help addressing the situation.
2. You have noticed that one of your coaches often insults and taunts one of your teammates, who is gay.
 - » **BE DIRECT:** Ask your teammate if they are okay and tell them you think the coach is harassing them because they are gay.
 - » **DISTRACT:** Ask your teammate to come help you with something whenever you see your teammate alone with the coach.
 - » **DELEGATE:** Talk to another coach or a parent about your concerns and ask for help.
3. Your friends post mean and harassing comments online when another athlete's report of misconduct goes public—saying that the athlete is lying, ruining the sport for everyone, and should be kicked out of the sport.
 - » **BE DIRECT:** Tell your friends to stop insulting the athlete because public comments like that may make other athletes afraid to report abuse they experienced.
 - » **DISTRACT:** Try to change the conversation to a different topic so your friends stop talking about the athlete.
 - » **DELEGATE:** Ask a coach or parent for help with the situation.