

# Bystander Intervention



## Why is the Role of Bystanders Important?

Bystanders have the potential to intervene and assist during a crisis including sexual violence, hazing rituals, bullying, or suicide prevention. Bystander intervention is an effective, proactive strategy in the prevention and de-escalation of crises. Bystanders can improve the organization's climate by increasing job satisfaction and unit morale.

## Who is a Bystander?

A bystander is anyone who witnesses or becomes aware of behavior that warrants comment or action. Bystanders can provide favorable feedback or praise in response to positive acts and redirect or de-escalate negative acts.

## Bystander Effect

The *bystander effect* is a psychological phenomenon where persons are less likely to intervene in a situation that warrants comment or action when others are present than when they are alone. On the contrary, diffusion of responsibility tends to occur in groups where responsibility is not explicitly assigned and consequently, events are allowed to occur that otherwise may have been de-escalated or stopped if bystanders were alone.

## Reasons Bystanders Remain Passive

There are many reasons bystanders may remain passive, including: (a) if no one else is acting, it is hard to go against the crowd, (b) risk of embarrassment, (c) the belief that others are more qualified to help, (d) the belief that the situation does not call for help since no one else is doing anything, (e) fear of reprisal, (f) fear of losing friendships, (g) fear of embarrassing work group or unit, or (h) belief that nothing will come from speaking up.

## Bystander Approach

Bystander intervention is assessing a situation to determine what kind of intervention, if any, might be appropriate. The Bystander Approach:

- Shifts responsibility to community
- Encourages Service Member involvement
- Discourages victim blaming
- Is an opportunity to change the culture and social norms of the U.S. military

**For more information, please contact (321) 494-3617**