

How to be an active bystander

We all have the power to be active bystanders.

Witnessing a situation or event that is inappropriate, problematic, or harmful, can be scary. Although we may want to step in, we often feel helpless, powerless, and unsure of what action to take in these situations.

There are direct and indirect ways that we can intervene safely to stop harmful behaviour. **The best way to remember these tools is C.A.R.E:**

CREATE A DISTRACTION

Do what you can to interrupt the situation. A distraction can give the person at-risk a chance to get to a safe place. Here are some easy-to-use ways to create a distraction:

- **Cut off the conversation with a diversion** like, “Let’s get pizza, I’m starving,” or “This party is lame, let’s try somewhere else.”
- **Bring out fresh food or drinks** and offer them to everyone at the party, including the people you are concerned about.
- **Start an activity that grabs people’s attention** and draws them in, like a game.

ASK DIRECTLY

Check in with the person who might be in trouble. Approach them and ask questions like “Are you okay?”, “Who did you come here with?”, or “Would you like me to stay with you?”.

REFER TO AN AUTHORITY

Sometimes the safest way to intervene is to refer to a neutral party with the authority to change the situation, like a teacher, or law enforcement. Here are some helpful resources you can refer to:

- If you are in a public space like a mall or a club, **talk to a security guard, supervisor, or another employee** about your concerns. It’s their responsibility to ensure that their patrons are safe.
- If you are in a private space, like a party, you can **call a parent, older sibling, or other trusted adults** to let them know what is going on or ask for advice. It’s also a good idea to have an agreed-upon word which you can use with your trusted adult in case you find yourself in trouble but are not able to say so directly.
- Don’t hesitate to **call 911 if you are concerned for someone else’s safety.**

ENLIST OTHERS

It can be intimidating to approach a situation alone. **Enlist others, like your friends,** to support you and approach the situation together.