

Bethany Lutheran College
Sexual Assault Resources in Brief
Bystander Intervention

For Bystanders

You can actively help prevent incidents of sexual assault before they occur and play a critical role in helping to keep your friends safe.

People often don't intervene in a situation because they may assume that there really isn't a problem, or feel it is none of their business. They may assume that someone else will do something, or believe that other people weren't bothered by the problem. In some cases, a person might feel their personal safety is at risk. When people do intervene in a situation, they often say that it was the right thing to do, and that they would want someone to intervene on their behalf if the roles were reversed.

There are many ways to prevent sexual assault, ranging from ensuring doors are not propped open, watching out for your friends, and speaking up when you witness a questionable interaction.

Determining whether there is a problem

Not knowing when to intervene is one of the main barriers to bystanders stepping up. Cues that a situation is concerning or becoming dangerous might be very obvious or can be quite subtle. Some signs to look for include:

- Aggressive behavior
- Attempts to get someone drunk in order to "hook up"
- Attempts to physically separate a person from others to get them alone
- Intimately touching someone in public, especially if they've just met or the other person is drunk

Tips for intervening if there is a problem

Here are some general bystander intervention tips:

- **Be friendly.** Being friendly will decrease any awkwardness you might feel; think of it as checking in, not confronting.
- **Do not be antagonistic.** Antagonism generates more antagonism. Avoid violence and keep yourself safe.
- **Recruit help.** More people means more diffusion of the situation.
- **Be as intrusive as necessary.** You're making sure both people are safe. (If the building were burning down, you wouldn't hesitate to break up the conversation or knock on the door.)
- **Police:** If things get too serious/dangerous, contact police (911) or Campus Security (x888)

Some intervention strategies

Distract. Take one person aside and talk to him or her about anything in order to redirect their focus elsewhere. Your presence will help diffuse and remove them from the situation.

Recruit Help. Find a friend of one of the two people and talk about your concerns. Get a friend to step in with one person while you step in with the other.

Defensive Split. Step in and separate two people. Let them know your concerns and reasons for intervening. Be a friend and let them know that you are acting in their best interest.

Interrupt. Knock on the door or just walk in. It's better to interrupt a scene than stand around while someone is assaulted. Do anything to change the mood.

Don't Leave them Alone. If you feel that someone's judgment may be impaired or that they could be assaulted if left alone, don't leave them alone. Make sure each person makes it home safely.