# Why **Bystander** Intervention **Matters**

Preventing sexual harassment is everybody's responsibility. An engaged bystander is someone who lives up to that responsibility by intervening before, during, or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that threaten, harass, or otherwise encourage sexual violence.

The behaviors that make up sexual violence exist on a spectrum. While some behaviors – such as sexist jokes, inappropriate sexual comments, innuendos, catcalling, or vulgar gestures - aren't illegal, this does not make them any less threatening or harmful to the person experiencing them. These situations also take place across a range of locations and settings – often in public spaces, workplaces, schools, communities, and online. All of us must embrace our voices to demonstrate that these behaviors will not be tolerated.

> We all play a role in **Sexual Assault Prevention**

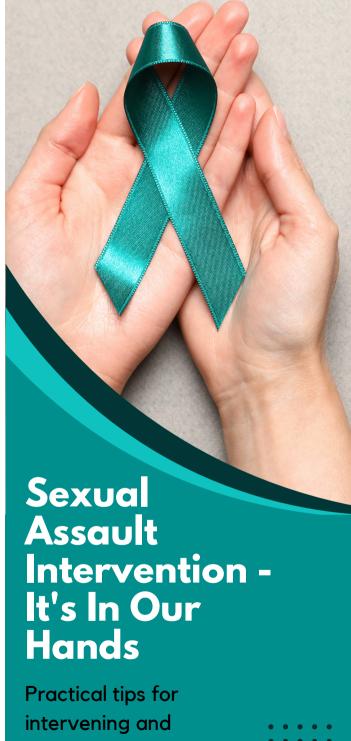


If you or a loved one has been sexually assaulted, call our 24/7, confidential Hotline at 252-473-3366



100 East Dunn Street Nags Head, NC 27959





empowering yourself and others.

## How to be a Good Bystander

It may not be safe or effective to directly confront the harasser in every case, but there are a range of ways bystanders can be involved before, during, or after a situation when they see or hear behaviors that promote sexual violence.

#### • Disrupt the situation

• Every situation is different, and there is no one way to respond. When you witness a person being harassed, threatened, or followed by someone, you can try to distract the harasser or insert yourself into their interaction to help the targeted person get out of the situation. For example, if you see someone on the street being verbally harassed, you can interrupt the harasser and ask them for directions. You can also intervene by pretending to know the person being harassed and starting a conversation with them as an opportunity to come between them and the harasser.

#### Don't act alone

 Get support from people around you by calling on others to help. The more people who come together to interrupt a situation, the more you reinforce the idea that the behavior is not acceptable in your community. If you do not feel safe, you may consider contacting the police.

## Set the expectation to speak up and step in

- Talk openly and respond directly to inappropriate behaviors. It shows you recognize the comment or behavior is unacceptable and shows others it will not be tolerated. For example, if you are in a group setting and you hear someone make inappropriate comments, you can say:
  - Are you hearing what I am hearing?
  - I can't be the only one who thinks this is not OK.

#### Take action online

- Everyone can help address an online culture that tolerates rape and sexual violence. Online comments that blame victims contribute to a broader climate in which sexual violence is tolerated and not taken seriously
- Focus on the needs of the victim and ensure they receive support
  - Let them know that what has happened to them isn't their fault.
  - Affirm that they didn't do anything wrong.
  - Express your support for the individual.

## Be proactive

 Practice with friends and family what you would say and how you would say it if you're ever put in the situation where you need to confront a harasser. Think of how you would like others to take action on your behalf, or reflect on a situation where you wish you had acted differently.

### To Decrease Your Risk

- Make a safety plan with a friend to look out for each other. When you go out as a group make sure to check in with each other. Go together and leave together.
- Have a back-up plan for getting home safely. Keep cash and the phone number for a taxi or rideshare service available in case you need it.
- Watch your drink. Do not take drinks from strangers or leave your drink unattended. Be wary of anyone who appears to be trying to get you to drink too much alcohol.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a situation, leave at the safest opportunity.
- Use code words with a friend to let them know how you are feeling without letting the person making you uncomfortable know.
- Lie. Come up with an excuse to leave.
- Be aware of your surroundings, how you feel, and how much you have to drink.

Remember, sexual assault is never the victim's fault.