

# BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

STEP UP TO STOP SEXUAL VIOLENCE



## WHAT IS BYSTANDER INTERVENTION?

A big part of stopping sexual violence is recognizing it before it happens. Part of this prevention is teaching people to notice situations that could escalate. This is where bystander intervention comes into play. It's an approach used to address the behaviours of others, with the goal of creating safer communities and preventing sexual violence.

Bystander intervention is when a person sees a situation and voices an opinion about someone else's language and/or behaviour that is inappropriate, hurtful, abusive or dangerous.

## WHEN SHOULD A BYSTANDER INTERVENE?

The first step is to notice when a situation could lead to sexual violence; it could be an interaction that looks relatively minor but has the potential to escalate.

Let's take a look at how different behaviours exist on a continuum. On one end, you have healthy, mutually respectful and safe behaviours. On the opposite end, you have sexually abusive and violent behaviours. There are many points along the continuum in which we can intervene before someone is harmed by sexual violence.

Bystanders are encouraged to intervene before behaviours escalate to sexual assault, such as when a person is:

- behaving in a way that feels inappropriate, coercive or harassing;
- making offensive jokes or comments;
- displaying possessiveness, extreme jealousy, and/or aggression;
- saying or doing something that just doesn't feel right.

A situation also requires action if it is dangerous, appears to be escalating or if the behaviour doesn't seem like it is going to stop on its own.

## HOW CAN A BYSTANDER INTERVENE?

Knowing how to intervene safely and comfortably makes it more likely that a bystander will take action. Whenever possible, it's important to check in with the person targeted to make sure s/he is comfortable with an intervention and that a bystander taking action will not put the targeted person in more danger. Here are a few ways a bystander can intervene :

**Distract:** Create a distraction or redirect the focus of either party to ensure s/he can get out of the situation. If it is appropriate, use humour or an excuse to divert the attention of the perpetrator; this creates an opportunity for the target of the behaviour to exit the situation.

# HELPFUL RESOURCES

## ON CAMPUS

**Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)**  
SGW H 645, 514-848-2424 ext. 3353

**Counselling & Psychological Services**  
SGW H-440, 514-848-2424 ext. 3545  
LOY AD-103, 514-848-2424 ext. 3555

**Health Services**  
SGW GM-200, 514-848-2424 ext. 3565  
LOY AD 131, 514-848-2424 ext. 3575

**Office of Rights and Responsibilities**  
SGW GM-1120, 514- 848-2424 ext. 8659

**Centre for Gender Advocacy**  
2110 Mackay St., 514-848-2424 ext. 7431

## OFF CAMPUS

**Montreal Sexual Assault Centre** (designated centre)  
(8 a.m. - 5 p.m.) 514-934-0354

**Montreal General Hospital** (designated centre)  
(5 p.m. onwards) 514-934-8090

**Sexual Assault Centres**  
(CALACS) 514-529-5252

**Crime victim's assistance centres**  
(CAVAC) 514-277-9860

**Help and information centre on sexual harassment  
in the workplace** (GAIHST) 514-526-0789

**Sexual Assault Provincial Helpline (24/7)**  
1-888-933-9007 or 514-933-9007 in Montreal

Distraction works well in situations of street harassment, for example asking the perpetrator for the time or for directions.

**Direct:** Confront the harmful behaviour directly, so the target of the behaviour is empowered to leave the situation or the perpetrator can make the choice to stop. This can include stepping in to separate the individuals and using assertive language. Direct intervention can also take the form of asking the targeted person, "Are you ok, do you need help?" or challenging inappropriate jokes and language by stating your discomfort or disapproval.

**Delegate:** Ask others to get involved to help take charge of the situation, for example friends, a supervisor, bouncer or police.

However you decide to intervene make sure that you do so safely.

## WANT MORE INFORMATION, OR A WORKSHOP ON BYSTANDER INTERVENTION?

Concordia's Sexual Assault Resource Centre  
514-848-2424, ext. 3353  
Email: [sarc@concordia.ca](mailto:sarc@concordia.ca)

Information for this flyer was adapted from the following sources:

- National Sexual Violence Resource Centre, (2009), Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention.
- Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW), (2014), Bystander Intervention Workshop Manual.
- White Ribbon Campaign [www.whiteribbon.ca](http://www.whiteribbon.ca)
- University of Arizona, (2014), The Step UP! Program: Strategies for Effective Helping.

**LEARN MORE AT: [concordia.ca/sarc](http://concordia.ca/sarc)**

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