Who is a Bystander?
Bystanders are individuals who observe or witness the conditions that perpetuate violence. They are not directly involved but have the choice to intervene, speak up, or do something about it.

What is Bystander Intervention?
Bystander intervention is the act of feeling empowered and equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively assist in the prevention of sexual violence. Bystander intervention doesn’t have to jeopardize the safety of the bystander. Bystander intervention teaches potential witnesses safe and positive ways that they can act to prevent or intervene when there is a risk for sexual violence. This approach gives community members specific roles that they can use in preventing sexual violence, including naming and stopping situations that could lead to sexual violence before it happens, stepping in during an incident, and speaking out against ideas and behaviors that support sexual violence.

Bystander intervention can be something as small as a young adult telling his/her friend that his/her sexist language is offensive or as great as a college student calling the police if she/he witnesses an act of sexual violence from a dorm window. Regardless of the level of intervention, there are safe ways to help prevent sexual violence.

Why Get Involved?
Many young people experience sexual violence. In a recent survey of more than 1,400 seventh graders, 49% of respondents had been sexually harassed either physically or verbally in the past six months. Research has shown that young women ages 16-24 experience the highest rates of physical and sexual violence. The problem is pervasive on college campuses. An estimated 25% of female college students have been raped or have experienced attempted rape in their lifetime. These statistics reveal that sexual violence is a prevalent issue in the United States which must be addressed by our society.

Bystander intervention has been shown to be an effective and important prevention strategy to decrease rape myths, increase pro-social bystander behavior and increase self-efficacy.
**Steps to Action**

**Pay Attention**
Be alert to things that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Signs of sexual pressure, unwanted attention, or disrespect?
- Someone who is way too drunk?
- Worried looks? Anyone who seems scared or confused? Keep an eye on anything that’s worrying. Don’t ignore the ‘little’ stuff.

**Decide**
Should someone intervene?
- Is the situation heading in a bad direction?
- Does someone need help? If you can, check in with whomever you are aiming to help but if you can’t, trust your instincts.

**Make a Plan**
Fit your intervention to the situation.
- Who’s in the best position to act? Call on friends, allies, hosts, authority figures—or do something yourself.
- When’s the best moment? Now? Later? Do you need time to plan or to organize others?
- Be creative and strategic.

**Make It Happen**
Stay calm. Follow your plan. Be ready to get help if you need it.
- Look for allies. Be alert for others trying to help, too.
- Start by using the lightest touch you can.
- Act even if you feel awkward or nervous.

**Techniques to Try**

**Think small.**
Small interventions can be the most effective. Use humor and creativity. Act early. Act often.

**Offer help.**
Signal your concern and willingness to act. It’s okay if you are turned down at first or altogether. Simply offering to help changes the dynamics.

**De-Escalate.**
Be calm, respectful. Shift the focus away from the problem.

**Think big.**
Most interventions are small. But some problems are so deeply entrenched that they require sustained action. Find allies and make plans.

**Disrupt the situation.**

**Make space.**
Separate the person at risk from the source of danger. Set some alternative plan in motion, or create a diversion.

**Name the problem.**
Acknowledging that things aren’t right can go a long way.

**Slow things down.**
Give people time to extricate themselves, if that’s what they want.

**Be safe.**
If you think you are in danger, step back and get help.

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**What is Title IX?**
The Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law that (1) protects people from discrimination based on sex regardless of gender identity or orientation in educational programs or activities receiving financial assistance, and (2) covers sexual harassment/sexual assault as forms of sex and gender discrimination.

**Why does this work so well?**
Sexual violence often operates through “scripts”—patterns that are surprisingly coercive for those cast in the central roles. As a bystander, you’re an extra, standing by as the plot unfolds. Simply by stepping into the action, you break the script. You’re like that kid in 3rd grade who walked onstage at the wrong cue and messed everything up. This time, that’s exactly what you’re after!