

11 Tips to be a Good Bystander



2023 AFSC Action Hour Resources



Make your presence as a witness known. If possible, make eye contact with the person being harassed and ask them if they want support. If you feel safe doing so, create distance or a barrier between the person being harassed and the harasser.

Take cues from the person being harassed. Are they engaging with the harasser or not? You can make suggestions like "Would you like to walk with me over here?" and follow their lead. Notice if the person being harassed is resisting in their own way, and honor that.



Keep both of you safe. Assess your surroundings—are there others nearby you can pull in to support? Working in a team is a good idea if it is possible. Can you and the person being harassed move to a safer space or place?

Don't call the police. For many communities experiencing harassment right now (including Arab and Muslim communities, Black people, queer and trans folks, and immigrants), the police could cause a greater danger than the harasser.



De-escalate the situation as best you can. The goal is to get the person being harassed to safety, not to incite further violence from the harasser. Follow up with the person being harassed after the incident is over, see if they need anything else.

Take the initiative to intervene. Silence is dangerous—it signals approval and leaves the person being harassed alone. If you are nervous or afraid to speak out, move closer to the person being harassed to communicate your support with your body.



Use distraction as a subtle and creative way to intervene. Distract either the harasser or the person being harassed with conversation unrelated to the harassment to derail and de-escalate the situation.

Bring in other people around you to help de-escalate. Make eye contact with witnesses and encourage them to intervene.



If you feel it is safe to do so, respond directly to the harasser by communicating that you will not tolerate harassment of others. Be confident, assertive, and calm.

If you cannot intervene in the moment, check in with the person who was harassed afterwards to see if you can do anything to support them, illustrating that they are not alone.



Share these tips with your friends and family so that we can all collectively keep each other safe.