A bystander is a person who witnesses a concerning situation, such as potential harm or a criminal event. These situations could include potential violence, injury, assault, alcohol overdose, or legal trouble. By choosing to take action, a bystander can positively influence the situation.

Have you ever had a feeling in your gut that something wasn’t right, or later wished you had done something about a situation you noticed? Even when a bystander wants to help, they may not know what to do. Following one of the 3 Ds can help a bystander intervene in a positive way.

Get educated: To bring bystander education to your group, visit UVa’s Not on Our Grounds website and request a presentation.

Talk it up: Improve the culture at UVa by exploring with your friends what it means to be a caring community.

Think about it: Consider concerning situations you are familiar with. If a situation were to occur again, how could you take action?

99% of UVa students believe it is their responsibility to stop a friend who has been drinking from harming others.*

90% of UVa students believe it is their responsibility to intervene when they notice a problem situation.*

Office of Health Promotion
Department of Student Health
University of Virginia

*2013 Health Survey of 654 UVa undergraduate students

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Stall Seat Journal

Be a Positive Bystander

What Is a Bystander?

A bystander is a person who witnesses a concerning situation, such as potential harm or a criminal event. These situations could include potential violence, injury, assault, alcohol overdose, or legal trouble. By choosing to take action, a bystander can positively influence the situation.

3 Ds

Direct

Distract

Delegate

Can I call a friend for you?
Do you want to keep talking to them?
Are you okay?

Can I walk you home?

Will you help me find my wallet?

I’m feeling sick, can you get me a glass of water?

Is that your car getting towed?

Break up an uncomfortable or potentially dangerous situation by shifting the focus.

Support from friends, emergency services, or others can make it easier to intervene.

Consider making direct suggestions to change the situation.

Will you help me find my wallet?

I’m feeling sick, can you get me a glass of water?

Is that your car getting towed?

Support from friends, emergency services, or others can make it easier to intervene.

With so many other people around, why doesn’t anyone else intervene?

There are many reasons a bystander may choose not to act:

• Believing someone else will intervene
• Afraid of embarrassment
• Not sure if the situation is dangerous, especially if others are not intervening
• Thinking it’s none of their business
• Concern for personal safety

Ordinary people can take small steps to influence concerning situations. Choose whichever strategy best matches your style and level of comfort at the time. If you think there is an emergency, call 911 immediately.

It’s never too early...or too late!

People are more likely to help if they see someone else helping, too. If you are unsure about whether to intervene, check in with others to see if they are also feeling uncomfortable. If so, you can intervene together.

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Want to prepare yourself and your community to intervene effectively?

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• Think about it: Consider concerning situations you are familiar with. If a situation were to occur again, how could you take action?

#hoosgotyourback

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Designed by Xi Han, Class of 2017