

The Backbone Zone

Bystander Scenarios

Activity Type:	Discussion-based activity
Intended Length:	Time varies, depending upon the size of the group and how many scenarios used
Materials Needed:	Flip chart and markers, handouts of scenarios
Source:	National Sexual Violence Resource Center (http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/Publications_NSVRC_Booklets_Engaging-Bystanders-in-Sexual-Violence-Prevention.pdf)

Activity Objective:

Participants will explore and share ideas about how different people in a particular situation can act. The following scenarios provide an opportunity to practice ways to get involved in a situation. If you want to use the scenarios in a training session, then the overview below offers some guidelines about engaging an audience in these issues.

Suggested Use:

This activity should be used by small groups of 4-6. Multiple groups can use a single scenario and then discuss their ideas in the larger venue.

Activity Instructions:

Hand out the following scenario to each small group. Review the five steps that Latane and Daley outlined in their original article:

Five Steps Toward Taking Action

1. Notice the event along a continuum of actions
2. Consider whether the situation demands your action
3. Decide if you have a responsibility to act
4. Choose what form of assistance to use
5. Understand how to implement the choice safely

Explain the scenario and then let each small group discuss their ideas independently. When bringing each group back to a larger discussion, emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers and that it is good to have multiple options in any given situation.

Notice the event: What did you see or hear that concerns you?

Consider whether the situation demands action: How does the situation affect you? How does it affect someone else?

Decide if you have a responsibility to act: What are the risks for taking action? Are there others in a better position to act?

Choose the form of assistance: What can you do? What can you encourage in others?

Understand how to implement action: Do you know how to implement your choice? Do you have the resources you need?

Discussion Points:

Focus the discussion on two points: Who could say or do something? What can be done?

Because it is a written scenario most will assume that it is a situation that needs intervention. However, if the participants have different backgrounds, professional experience, or personal experience, the discussion about “who” should act and “what” should be done can often be quite engaging. The two questions above are rich for discussion purposes.

Discussion points for each scenario:

Scenario One: Movie Nights

Consider when to intervene: Since the “perpetrator” is a friend of yours, you have the chance to intervene immediately, later in the evening, or even the next day. The situation does not seem to impose an immediate danger. If your friend is drunk you may not be able to reach him effectively unless you wait until he is sober.

Acknowledge the situation: If you decide to wait to talk with your friend, you can still acknowledge the impact on the woman. Have someone in your group steer your friend away while another apologizes to the woman for the harm caused. You can also let her know that the behavior will be addressed at a later time.

Have the conversation: Think about the best person(s) in your group to talk with the friend. It should be someone who cares about him and understands the impact of his actions. Begin by telling your friend you care about him. Then let him know that because you care, you are talking about the impact of his behaviors. Then describe his specific behaviors and how those behaviors make you feel. Lastly, point out how it might feel if they were directed at someone he loves.

Scenario Two: Designated Dancer

Find out what she wants: The first step is to make eye contact with your friend to see if she wants help. If she does, find ways to pull her out of the situation (e.g., you can walk up to your friend with a concerned look and ask if she will come to the bathroom). If you are not sure what is needed, you can ask her directly or even text message her to ask how she’s feeling.

Add an ounce of prevention: Before going out, groups of friends may talk about how to look out for each other in the bar. Some may talk about strategies to intervene safely without

escalating the situation. Others may talk about how to do a “dance block,” to dance away the friend in need. It may be possible to have a “designated dancer” who will interrupt a dance if someone wants to get out of a situation quickly.

Scenario Three: Adults are Talking

Acknowledge what went well: Your friend has done a lot of right and should be complemented. She has a relationship with her daughter in which the daughter will talk with her. She asked gentle questions about what happened. She let her know that she is not alone and will be available whenever her daughter needs her. She also gave her daughter some clear messages about what to say.

Monitor behaviors: The children in this situation are young and may need help in changing their dynamic and behaviors. Some simple ideas are to ask the children to play in sight of an adult and make a clear rule that closed doors are not allowed. While they are playing, take the time to come into the room to pick up a laundry basket, deliver snacks, or in other ways look in to see what is happening.

Discuss adult responsibilities: Your friend asked what else can be done. She has advised her daughter to talk with the little boy. You friend can also talk with the other mother, father, or guardian. Their discussion does not need to be an argument, but rather a connected conversation between concerned parents. Suggest that they talk about how they set boundaries in each of their families and how to send a consistent message to their children about appropriate touching.

Scenario Four: You Don't Know My Life

Leave the decision to those involved. It may feel good to you to yell at the man, but you don't know the impact it will have on the woman. It is better to find a way to quietly ask her what she needs or to offer her a ride or some other way to leave the situation. Depending upon the circumstance, it may also be possible to interrupt the situation for a moment with humor or other distraction, so they have a prompt to interrupt their own escalation. (e.g., Gently say “Excuse me sire, can you please pass the bar to separate the groceries?”)

Talk about her options: If she takes the ride or another option, ask her more about her situation, about any friends or relatives who can support her, about any available resources in the community, and what she may want to do.

Scenario One: Movie Nights

It is Friday night and you are walking by the local movie theatre with a group of friends. A male friend of yours spots a beautiful woman. He makes some loud comments about her body and starts to hassle her.

Scenario Two: Designated Dancer

You are dancing in a bar with a group of friends. A young man joins your circle of dancers and begins to monopolize one woman's attention. It is loud, so you can't hear what they are saying to each other. He has moved in the way of seeing her face, cutting her off from the rest of your group.

Scenario Three: Adults are Talking

Your friend tells you about how a six-year-old boy neighbor is pushing her five-year-old daughter into playing "pants down" games. The daughter is uncomfortable with doing what the boy wants, but is not sure what to do. Your friend teaches her daughter to say "no" and to call her whenever it happens. She wants to know if there is anything else she should do.

Scenario Four: You Don't Know My Life

You see a man and woman in the supermarket checkout line begin to argue. He yells at her for what she has bought, how much she wants to spend, and how she cooks. He continues to yell and begins to criticize how she looks. You see the woman cringe at the yelling, but she makes no effort to leave.