



Are You an
EMPOWERED
Bystander?

THE
CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY
of AMERICA



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We Are Called

As members of the Catholic University community, we are called to be **EMPOWERED BYSTANDERS** and to look out for each other. The belief in the inherent dignity of each person is the foundation of all Catholic social teaching. We all share responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment that promotes the safety and dignity of each person.



The Good Samaritan — An Example for All of Us

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, a traveler is robbed, beaten, and left along the side of the road to die. Two different men walk past the traveler and neither offers help. A third man, the Samaritan, sees the traveler and stops to dress his wounds. The Samaritan then brings him to a place of safety and makes sure he is well cared for before going on his way.

Can you think of a similar incident in your own life? Maybe you saw someone in need of assistance, or perhaps you were the one who needed help. Did you or someone else step up and take action?

Too often we observe a situation in which an acquaintance, a friend, a loved one, or even a total stranger is being harmed or treated poorly by others and we simply choose to stand by and do nothing. Why is this? There are many reasons that prevent people from intervening:

- They think someone else watching is more qualified to help.
- If no one else is acting, it can be hard to go against the crowd.
- It is not always clear if the person is in danger or wants help.
- They may feel that they risk embarrassment with their friends or others if they intervene.
- They are not sure how to help.

When we bear witness to acts that compromise the dignity of those in our community it is our responsibility to be empowered bystanders.

Taking Action

If you see someone in a risky situation, there are many different ways to step in and make a difference. This is known as “bystander intervention.” How you intervene can vary based on the situation and your comfort level. Having this knowledge in hand can give you the confidence to take action when your gut tells you something isn’t right. Stepping in can make all the difference, but you should never put your own safety at risk.

You Have the Skills to Act

Here are three different strategies, also known as the “3 Ds,” that you can use to step up and take action:

D Direct

If you are comfortable you can directly approach either or both parties involved. Let them know your concerns and why you are intervening. Not sure if a friend is in trouble? Just ask! Send a text or step in and say, “Are you OK right now?”

D Delegate

Sometimes you may not feel that you are the best person to directly intervene in a situation. Maybe you do not know the person, do not feel safe, or just feel someone else would be more effective. That is OK. Find friends of either party and encourage them to intervene. If you feel the situation is too serious for you to get involved or you are simply unsure, call the Department of Public Safety or find a resident assistant.

D Distract

Use a distraction to divert attention and redirect the focus somewhere else. A distraction can give the person at risk the chance to get to a safe place. You can diffuse the situation without directly confronting anyone. Step in and change the subject, tell your friend you need to talk to him or her, or commit a party foul.

Tips for Intervening

Effective bystander intervention doesn't always have to occur after an incident. There are many opportunities to do something or say something before someone is in a risky situation. As empowered bystanders we can step in to diffuse problem behaviors before they escalate.

Here are some examples of behaviors that may indicate a potentially dangerous situation:

- Making someone feel uncomfortable
- Suggestive or harassing remarks
- Inappropriate jokes
- Testing boundaries
- Disregarding set boundaries
- Attempting to isolate someone from their friends
- Pressuring someone to drink
- Aggressive or obsessive behaviors

If you hear something or see something that makes you feel uncomfortable, trust your instincts. The person may be in more trouble than you think.

When intervening always remember:

- If you feel the situation is dangerous, call for help.
- Approach everyone as a friend.
- Do not be antagonistic.
- Avoid using violence.
- Be honest and direct whenever possible.
- Recruit help if necessary.

Resources for Help

If you are on campus and need assistance, call the Department of Public Safety at 202-319-5111. If you are off campus and need assistance, call 911.

Take the Empowered Bystander Pledge

Now that you have the knowledge and skills to step up to help a friend or a member of the University community in need, we challenge you to be an empowered bystander. To take the pledge, visit **empowered.cua.edu**.

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