

Bystander Intervention: Theory and Research and Intervention Skills

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Agenda



- Overview of active and passive bystander behavior
- Bystander Intervention research and theory
- Social norms and bystander behavior
- Examples of bystander campaigns
- Bystander Intervention Skills and Practice
- Next Steps

The social norms approach and bystander intervention can serve as unifying paradigms for our prevention efforts

What is the greatest asset of the UMN community?



The values and ideals of its members

Most people care and want to do what is right

**Most people are uncomfortable with
unwanted behaviors and social injustice**

**Therefore, our goal is to focus on the positive
in order to transform the negative and to
help individuals act “from the heart”**

Bystander Theory and Research

Bystanders can make a difference



- A passive bystander is someone who “stands by” and does not do anything when they notice a problematic situation or behavior even though they may find the behavior to be problematic.
- For almost all health and social justice problems there are bystanders
- Bystanders who act have the ability to create an inhospitable climate for risk behaviors and their perpetrators and to intervene to prevent harm

Key Points



- Individuals can be taught to overcome their inhibitions to intervene and learn skills to do so effectively
- Most people underestimate the willingness of their peers to “be part of the solution”
- It is possible to create a culture in which individuals feel encouraged and supported to express concern and intervene
- Correcting misperceptions of BI serves to inhibit perpetrators and support individuals to intervene

Bystander Intervention Contexts

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- To prevent a sexual assault
 - To intervene against sexual harassment
 - To prevent alcohol-related harm
 - To prevent mistreatment and injustice
 - To interrupt inappropriate remarks and behaviors
 - To respond to victim blaming
 - To change the culture that allows these and other behaviors to occur

Think of a time when you wanted to intervene but didn't while at UMN

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Share with a partner

What did you do?

How did you feel?

What kept you from intervening?

Was there a time when you needed someone to
intervene on your behalf and no one did?

Bystander Intervention Programs

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The “Green Dot” Campaign Mentors in Violence Prevention Bringing in the Bystander

Bystander intervention is a science-based recommended practice with a strong emerging research literature

Each program has strengths and weaknesses and varying research support

None of the well-known BI programs integrate the SNA

You can design your own program tailored to UMN

All BI programs have been shown to strengthen bystander intentions and in some cases behavior but all rebound

Levels of Bystander Behavior



- To an individual
- To a group
- To a system or institution

Stages of Bystander Behavior



- Notice the event
- Interpret it as a problem
- Feel responsible for dealing with it
- Have the necessary skills to act

How could you move the UMN community through these stages for sexual assault prevention other issues?

What is the “event” for sexual assault?

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- Sexual harassment, rape myths and other attitudes and behaviors on the continuum
- Noticing situations involving lack of consent
- Understanding perpetrator MO (exploiting vulnerability, grooming victims, use of alcohol, etc)
- Interrupting actual assaults

How are these “events” differ for your different communities?

What is the ‘event’ for your department, group or program?

Reasons for Being a Passive Bystander

- Assume that it isn't a problem because others don't intervene (social influence)
- Fear of embarrassment (audience inhibition)
- Assume that someone else will do something (diffusion of responsibility)
- Believe that others' aren't bothered (social norms)
- Fear of retaliation or negative outcomes

The “Bystander Effect”

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- The presence of other's inhibits the desire to help, which is called the “Bystander Effect” (more bystanders results in less help)

but...

The bystander effect can be reversed when there are shared norms in support of intervention



Social Norms



- “Social norms” refer to the acceptability of an action or belief
- Are unspoken rules about what is “normal” for that group or setting
- Perceptions of social norms predict what people say and do
(perceptions of norms can be correct or misperceived)

Misperceptions Influence Behavior

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- Men and women over-estimate others' negative behaviors and under-estimate positive behaviors.
- Women and men under-estimate others' willingness to intervene, discomfort with risk behaviors, sympathy for victims, respect for someone who intervenes, etc.
- Problem individual over-estimate other's agreement with and support for their behavior.
- Leaders language can reinforce or correct misperceptions

Misperceptions & Bystander Behavior



- Individuals are bothered by problem behaviors but underestimate other's discomfort with them and desire to have someone intervene
- Men underestimate other men's respect for someone who intervenes
- Intervention is more likely when others are perceived as willing to intervene
- Problem individuals use the misperception to justify their behavior

Misperceptions are one of the critical barriers to intervention and foster inaction

Social Norms and BI: Underlying Beliefs



- **Pluralistic Ignorance:** the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others
- **False Consensus:** the incorrect belief that one represents the majority when one is actually a minority

Bystander misperceptions inhibit active intervention and encourage perpetrators

A Model SN-BI Campaign

The UCM EPIC Program



Encouraging Positive Interventions in Chapters

- Collect actual and perceived norms in Greek chapters for alcohol-related bystander scenario's
- Share results of data with chapters in tailored workshops
- Social norms media campaign
- Active BI Video contest
- Also offered as an in-class program on sexual assault for first year students

Data Collected



- Norms for alcohol use
- When I would like someone to intervene on my behalf
- When I would intervene in a situation
- How much I am bothered by risky situations

Program Overview



- 90 minutes
- Shared social norms data and taught theory
- Taught bystander intervention theory and skills
- Used clickers to teach, check understanding and reflect
- Practiced skills with role plays and scenario worksheets

How much does the following bother you? (fraternity)

Noticing an intoxicated chapter member
harassing or bothering someone

	Perception	Reality
Not at all	7.7%	11.5%
Somewhat	50.0%	11.5%
Very much	38.5%	73.1%



What I want from my sisters...

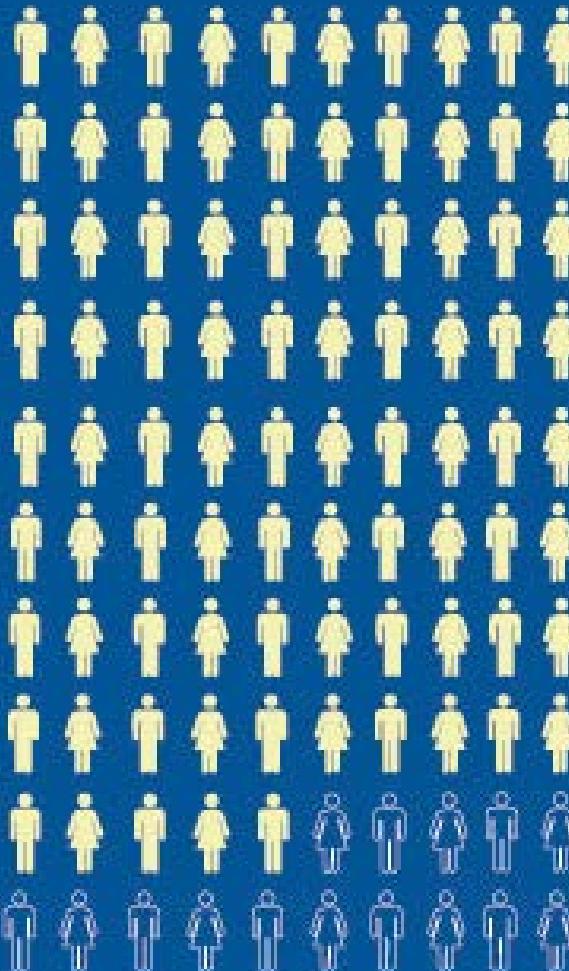


- **100% of my sisters said they want sisters to...**
 - Step in when I'm drinking to the point of harming myself
 - Step in if I'm drinking to the point of putting the health & safety of others in jeopardy
 - Step in if I'm intoxicated and embarrassing the chapter

Did You Know?

85% of UCM
Greek students
think it's
unacceptable
to miss class
due to alcohol.

Data collected from Fall
2009 EPIC survey.



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Recommendations

- Document and reinforce the positive in your community (who intervenes, how often, etc)
- Define the ‘event’ for your different contexts and communities
- Hold bystanders accountable but not punitively (positive pedagogy)
- Integrate synergistic interventions and programs
- Combine the SNA with the BI model
- Engage leaders to foster positive BI norms
- Address the larger culture/permissive environment that supports problems



Intervention Options and Strategies

Intervention Options



- Direct versus Indirect: Talk to the person directly or to the others who are present
- On the spot or later: Do something right away or wait
- Types of interventions

Confront the person/impose consequences,
express feelings

Shift the focus (change the situation)

Shift the person (change the person)

Goal: To have more options for responding and feel better about your response

Ingredients for a Successful Intervention



- There is a context or relationship that allows you to intervene
- You see something you feel needs to be addressed
- You are involved in the situation in some way
- You are willing to bring about change

Different Situations May Require a Different Type of Intervention



- With peers
- With subordinates
- With superiors
- On or off campus or international
- Student or staff/faculty

Intervention is situation-specific and must take into account power differentials and identity intersectionalities

Examples for Intervention

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Think of a comment you overheard on campus that bothered you

Confrontation



- Make it clear that certain behaviors and/or remarks are not appropriate and will not be tolerated (confrontation)
- Forcefully tell the other person how you feel about their actions (express feelings)

Shifting the Focus (Changing the Situation)



- Non-participation
- Deflection (change the subject)
- Shift the focus (by addressing the underlying assumption)

Changing the Person (“Shifting Attitudes”)

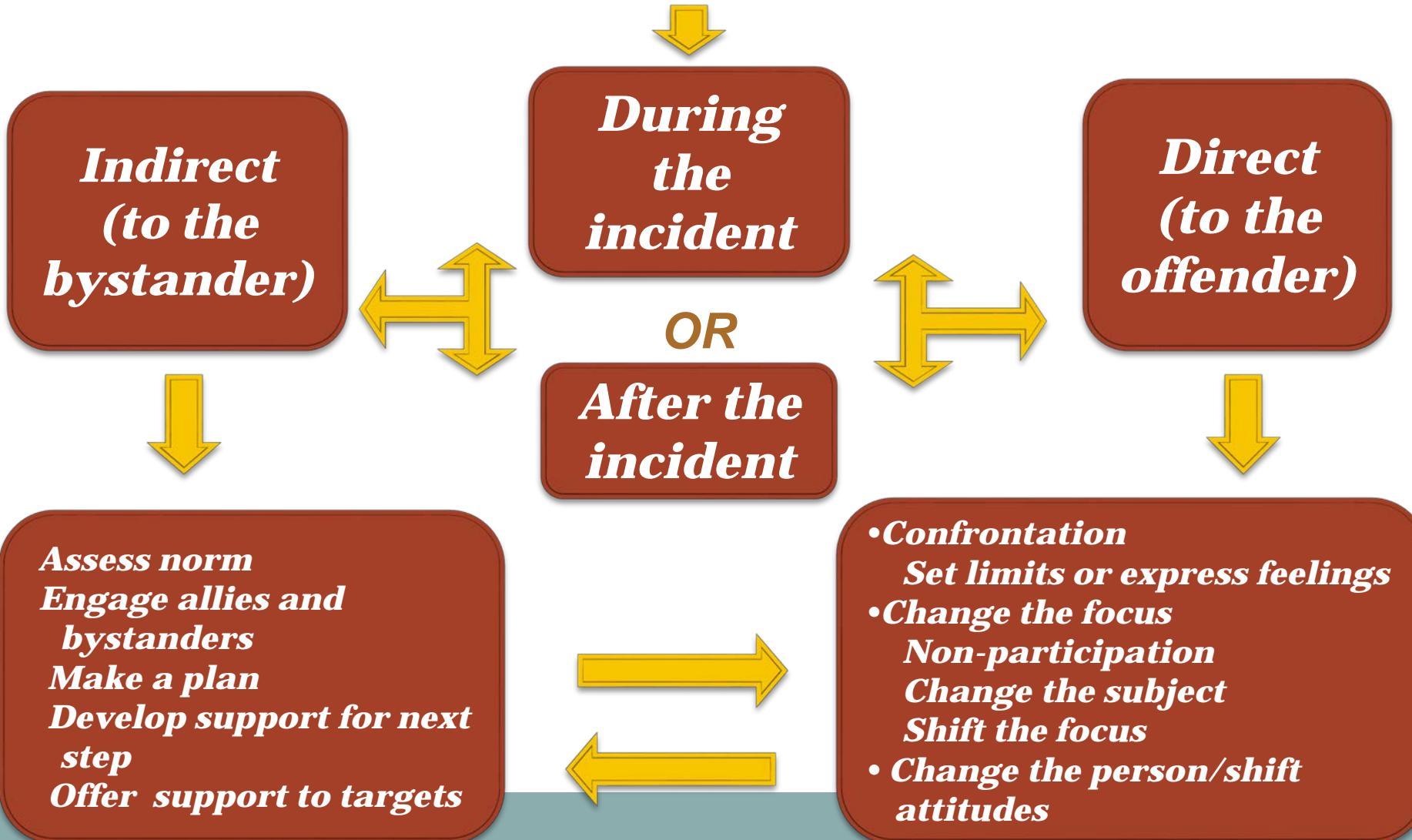


- Is non-confrontational
- Reduces defensiveness
- Address the “ouch”
- Helps the person understand *why* the behavior is problematic
- Fosters deeper change by correcting the underlying assumption
- Is not a good idea with “toxic” individuals

(www.ncbi.org)

Positive Intervention Options

Decide to Intervene



Role Plays and Practice

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- Think of a situation you would like to use as an example for intervention
- Alan role-plays in front
- Meet in group of three and take turns responding to a situation using the different skills, in three roles: intervening, making the remark, and observing-feedback
- Discussion and next steps

Small Group Discussion

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Meet with a few others who share your workplace or a professional or personal identity

- What are the common bystander situations for your group?
- What are some appropriate intervention skills?
- What are the barriers to intervention and how can they be reduced?
- Are there any misperceptions that inhibit intervention which can be corrected?

Next Steps and Questions



- Should we use a packaged BI program (MVP, Green Dot, Bringing in the Bystander) or develop our own?
- Should norms correction be incorporated into your BI program and how?
- What combination of different interventions will be the most effective and synergistic?
- What is/are the issue(s) and target audience(s)?
- What are the barriers to implementation?

How to Eliminate the Rebound?

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- View bystander intervention as a process and provide mentoring and de-briefing opportunities
- Design synergistic interventions to reinforce and support BI efforts
- Include a normative feedback component
- Provide individuals with a variety of skills that are situation and identity specific
- Create an institutional culture that supports bystander intervention with leaders as models

Concluding Remarks



- Change takes time and collaboration
- Doing less can be more effective than trying to do too much
- Address barriers before proceeding
- Have a long-range vision and how you want to get there and a steering committee to implement it
- Get key stake-holders on board
- Address policy-enforcement issues

What do I want for UMN?



- People are more likely to intervene when they know that other people also want to intervene and will support them if they do.
- We can create a campus culture in which people feel supported to behave in compassionate and caring ways in response to unwanted behaviors and injustice.

Resources

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Most of the material in this presentation is from the following book:

- Alan Berkowitz (2009), Response-Ability: The Complete Guide to Bystander Intervention. Available from www.lulu.com or www.alanberkowitz.com
- Additional material and articles available from www.alanberkowitz.com including video clips of BI and published research articles
- Check out my Research Gate site for thought-pieces and state of the art overviews

Thank you!



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