

Mirabel's blog: Being safe as an Active Bystander

The phrase *active bystander* might sound a bit strange, but studies show that when people are in a large group, they are often less likely to help someone who is being verbally or physically hurt. This can happen even if they are kind people. Sometimes people feel embarrassed, unsure what to do, or worried about getting involved.

Bullying and harassment can take many forms, including racism, sexism, homophobia, appearance-based bullying, and online abuse. These behaviours can happen in person or on social media.

Being an active bystander means recognising when something is wrong and choosing to help in a safe way. Understanding different types of bullying and harassment can help you decide what action to take. It is important to remember that no one should put themselves in danger. For example, a 13-year-old would not be expected to step into a physical fight between older teenagers.

There are lots of safe ways to help.

If someone is being bullied, your first instinct might be to step in and tell the person to stop. This is called **direct action**. However, it is often safer to ask someone else for help, especially a trusted adult. This is called **delegating**. Another option is to **distract** the person causing the problem by creating a diversion and helping to move attention away from the victim.

If you do not feel safe taking direct action, you could **document** what is happening by making notes or, where appropriate, recording evidence. This can help if the incident needs to be reported to a teacher, parent, or the police. If you collect photos or videos, always check that the victim is okay and ask for their permission before sharing anything. If you can't act in the moment, you can still make a difference by checking in on the person after the incident. This is called **delaying**.

Of course, not every situation needs to be reported. Friends sometimes joke around or play about with each other. However, if someone is being threatened, physically hurt, or made to feel unsafe, it is important to take it seriously and seek help.

Whatever action you choose, always think about safety first. Try to keep yourself and the victim as safe as possible, because everyone's safety matters.