



FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

What Can Bystanders Do to Prevent Sexual Violence?

Most people want to do something when they see the potential for sexual violence or victimization, but don't because of embarrassment (not wanting to make a scene), fear of retaliation, self-doubt, or because they assume someone else will do it for them. Don't let these fears prevent you from acting as a responsible member of your campus community!

You don't have to put yourself in danger or be a hero to help. Most situations leading to sexual violence have bystanders, people who notice the situation occurring and could take action to prevent it beforehand. Here are some simple steps you can take to prevent sexual violence by intervening before it happens.

The Three D's

Distract

Ignore the behavior, but create an interruption that separates the target and the person who may be about to commit sexual violence (or keeps them from leaving together). When you have the target alone, ask if he or she is okay, feels safe, or needs help. Offer to call a cab to get the individual home safely.

- *Get the target out of the situation:* Ask her to go to the bathroom with you. Ask him for directions. Say "Hey, I need to talk to you for a minute" or "This party is stupid, let's go."
- *Become a third wheel:* Start a conversation with the couple and don't leave so the target cannot be isolated with a potential attacker.
- *Get the potential attacker out of the situation:* If you see someone who is looking uncomfortable (frowning, looking tense) with the attention they are getting, tell the person making advances that his or her car has just been towed. Or you can step in and ask "What are you doing with my girlfriend/boyfriend" (even if you don't know the target). You can even "accidentally" spill your drink on the person to break up the situation.

Direct

- *Ask:* If you see someone who looks like they are in trouble, ask if they are ok. If you see a friend or co-worker doing something sketchy, say something.
- *Silent Stare:* Sometimes silence speaks louder than words. A disapproving stare can sometimes disrupt a problematic situation.
- *Show you care:* Approach the harasser as a friend in a caring and non-critical manner. Example: "As your friend I need to tell you that getting someone drunk to have sex isn't cool and could get you in big trouble. Don't do it."
- *Confront the individuals involved:* Express your concerns to the target or the person making advances. Let them know that you are acting in everybody's best interest. Some examples would be, telling the target, "Let's find your friends so they can take you home," or "I'm not letting you go home with a stranger." Make sure both people get home safely.

Delegate

- *Engage allies:* Consider whether it is better to intervene alone or in a group. Reach out to other bystanders or the friends of the people involved. For example, get someone to find the target's friends and get them to check on him/her while you stay to keep an eye on the situation.
- *Call the authorities:* If things get out of hand or seem dangerous don't hesitate to call the police. You could also ask the bouncer or the host to intervene by saying, "I'm worried about that girl/guy, could you let the person talking to her/him know that she/he is too drunk to go home with."

You can make a difference in ending sexual violence!

(Thank you to Dr. Dorothy Edwards, University of Kentucky, for the 3 D's.)



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Tips to Prevent Sexual Violence

To eliminate sexual violence in our community we need to change our attitudes about these crimes and be clear about our own responsibility to ensure that we are engaging in consensual sexual activity with our partners. The tips below apply to everyone at FSU:

Step up!

- ✓ Don't blame victims of sexual violence. It is never a victim's fault that another person decided to commit a crime.
- ✓ Don't try to get someone drunk or high enough to agree to sex with you. If your partner's judgment is significantly impaired by drug or alcohol use, their consent to sex is not valid (no matter what they say). On the flip side, do not accept drinks or drugs from people you do not know.

Talk about it!

- ✓ Don't make any assumptions about sex. Define your limits and make your intentions known to your sexual partners.
- ✓ You don't have a "right" to sexual activity with anyone. If you are interested in proceeding sexually, seek permission and **do not proceed** without an explicit "yes" from your partner.
- ✓ Respect boundaries set by your sexual partners. Consent to one type of sexual activity does not imply consent to any other types of sexual activity.
- ✓ Remember that past sexual activity with someone does not automatically give you permission for future sexual interactions with that person.
- ✓ Consent to sex can be withdrawn at any time, including in the middle of a sexual encounter. Good communication is key!

Pay Attention!

- ✓ If your partner becomes verbally or physically unresponsive, "frozen," passes-out, or falls asleep during sex, **STOP** sexual activity immediately. You need conscious and willing consent to sex to proceed.
- ✓ Take care of yourself. Do not depend on others to look out for you, but do look out for your friends.
- ✓ Be aware that excessive alcohol consumption is often associated with sexual violence. Remember that alcohol and drug use are **not** a green light for sex and never excuse engaging in non-consensual sex with another person.
- ✓ Be aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts about dangerous situations. Avoid being alone or isolated with someone you do not trust.
- ✓ Leave with trusted friends. On the other hand, know that the fact that someone agrees to "go to your place" is **not** the same thing as consenting to any type of sexual activity with you.

Speak up!

- ✓ You have an obligation to your fellow Seminoles to intervene if you see a situation that you feel may lead to sexual victimization. Don't let anyone "get away" with sexual assault.
- ✓ If someone is being sexually aggressive, possessive, or threatening, get help. Alert your friends, the authorities of the establishment, or the police (call 911).
- ✓ Most rapes are acquaintance rape (aka "date rapes"). Acquaintance rapes frequently involve men and women who conform to traditional, rigid gender roles. As a result, it is important to re-examine sexism in order to prevent rape.
- ✓ Boycott media and challenge assumptions that promote sexual violence.