



## TOOLBOX TALK #2

# BEING AN EFFECTIVE BYSTANDER



SEPLER & ASSOCIATES  
Strategic and Respectful Approaches  
to Contemporary Workplace Issues

### INTRODUCTION

The "bystander effect" is based upon a social reality – people often don't want to get involved. If they see someone in trouble, they may think, "It's none of my business," or perhaps "someone else will do something," or "it's not worth sticking my neck out." However, it is estimated that for every serious incident of bullying and harassment, at least two other people in the workplace saw it or knew about it and did nothing.

If harassment or bullying becomes a problem in the workplace, it will be disruptive. Investigations, discipline, and taking sides are all part of what may result from a situation that was not addressed early on.

Standing up for someone doesn't need to be dramatic or heroic. It can just be a sign that you are a good human being who will help someone who is being treated poorly, without necessarily putting yourself in harm's way.

### WAYS TO BE AN EFFECTIVE BYSTANDER

- ✓ You can derail problem interactions by changing the subject or distracting the person involved. This can be as simple as interrupting with a question, pointing out something that needs doing, or finding a reason to draw attention elsewhere. While this doesn't fix the problem, it does disrupt a potentially harmful situation.
- ✓ You can react to what you are seeing and disarm the person doing the bullying or harassment. This might involve questioning the person ("Did I just hear you right?" Or "What's going on here?" or using humor ("How do you spell 'harassment?')")
- ✓ You can take the person doing the bullying aside and let them know you are concerned they will be facing consequences if they don't stop the behavior. Let them know you don't want them to get in trouble and explain why the behavior is a problem.
- ✓ You can call out the behavior with a simple, "knock it off," or "I'm not okay with that."
- ✓ The more senior you are, the more likely you have influence on those you work with and are taking the least risk by being an active bystander. Bystanders are protected from retaliation in the workplace.

CAWP's Respect in the Workplace Program is an industry initiative to promote the need to build a company culture based on mutual respect. Creating a work culture of respect will prevent workplace harassment and improve the well-being, safety, and productivity of all employees.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT [CAWPRESPECT.ORG](http://CAWPRESPECT.ORG)