

ACCOUNTABILITY IS A FORM OF CARE

disrupting inaction, cultivating responsibility

Workshop Resources for Code for America Brigades: May 30, 2018

Breathe. **Believe.** Act. Change.

Bystander Intervention

Bystander intervention disrupts the normalcy of collective inaction during violence. When we take action, we take active responsibility for the well being of folks in our community. This is the small, daily work we invest in changing our broader cultures to prevent violence in the first place.

Modern bystander intervention focuses on 5 tactics known as “the 5 D’s”: **Direct, Distract, Delegate, Delay, Document.** Each of these can be directed toward either the aggressor, the person doing the harassing or the target, the person being harassed. What works best will depend on you, the intervener, the people involved, and the nature of the situation.

DIRECT	DISTRACT
<p>Directly engage with the people at the heart of the situation. Speak up and address inappropriate comments and behaviors head on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name the behavior:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ “That’s racist/homophobic/etc”○ “You’re bothering them”○ “They don’t want to talk to you”○ “That’s inappropriate/disrespectful/not okay”• Check in on the person being harassed:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Make eye contact○ “Are you okay?”○ “Do you need help”• Position yourself between the aggressor and target	<p>Create a diversion and disrupt the situation. This can throw people off (in a good way), giving folks time to cool off, change gears, or get away.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be disruptive<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Pretend to be lost○ Ask for the time○ Describe what you’re seeing to someone sitting next to you or on fake a phone call○ Get creative: do something noticeably weird with your body/sound○ Sing• Pretend you know one of the folks involved<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Strike up a conversation○ “[Insert name] is looking for you”○ “Did you drop this?”

DELEGATE	DELAY
<p>Alert other people to the situation, such as friends of either party, fellow bystanders, and in certain situations, authorities, and ask for their help and/or decide what to do together.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activate the friends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Your friend is being a jerk” ○ “It looks like your friend might need help” • Activate communal response teams (if you have them) • Activate fellow bystanders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Do you see what’s happening?” ○ Point to people (literally) and assign them to specific tasks 	<p>In the moment: slowing down to figure out the best course of action.</p> <p>After the moment: checking in with the folks involved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “Are you okay?” ○ “I saw what you did and that wasn’t okay” • Validate the person who experienced harassment: Affirm that what happened was wrong. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “What can I do to help?” ○ Offer to accompany them to their destination or sit with them for a while ○ Share resources and offer to help make a report if they want to

Document
<p>Use that cell phone camera and/or take notes (be sure to mark the date, time, location). When documenting video, always ask someone beside you watching the action to describe what is happening as it is happening. Ask the target if they’d like you send your documentation to them. Depending on the event, you can also document using the ACLU Mobile Justice App.</p>

Pssst. Hey! Superhero! Over here. Remember, our perception of violence is complicated. Some situations that we experience will be pretty cut and dry -- our action and the action to interrupt will be clear. Others, however, will be complicated -- and compounded by the identities of everyone involved. *Don’t be like BBQ Becky.* Your thoughtfulness can prevent and halt harm, but your thought/lessness can escalate it. Gutcheck reactions based on racial and cultural stereotypes and watch your assumptions about someone’s gender.

This call to reflection shouldn’t stop you from acting, rather, it should be your guide on how to act. Practice awareness even as you practice action, and you’ll chip into structural violences that we are coded to contribute to.

Sources: The material above is adapted from publicly accessible resources from Hollaback!, Girl Army, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, as well as 2017 trainings from Collective Action for Safe Spaces, and the popular education learnings from the 12/18/2016 DC Bystander Intervention Jam.

Personal and Communal Accountability

“Accountability is a form of care. Correction, an expression of love. You don’t call people to their higher selves if you don’t want them to get there. Yes, there are nuances, exceptions, etc...but in the context of communities, accountability is mutually assured survival.” - [@elle_mccann](#)

Accountability is the process by we proactively and reactively assume responsibility for harm and take action to make amends. Although the bystander intervention tactics reviewed above are useful (full stop), we have plenty of individual and collective work to do when it comes to seeing, mitigating, healing from, and preventing violence in our selves and in our communities.

If you’re interested in more formal or ongoing intervention training check out the work of...

- Collective Action for Safe Spaces (CASS) - anti-harassment, healthy masculinities, DC/National - <http://collectiveactiondc.org/>
- White Noise Collective - intersection of anti-racist & gender(ed) oppression, CA/RI - https://www.conspireforchange.org/?page_id=97
- AORTA - anti-oppression trainings, national - <http://aorta.coop/>
- Trainers near you!

Additional resources to consider learning from and maybe even replicating for/in your area:

- Alternatives to Calling the Police via Showing Up For Racial Justice (SURJ, DC but adaptable)
- Communal Accountability (ca) is a specific practice of community-based reconciliation for violence where state support (i.e. police, etc) is not available, not desirable, would cause further violence, or is the origin/instigator of violence, originally developed by collectives of women, gender-non-conforming folks, trans people of color, including INCITE!
 - ca and transformative justice practitioners can be found around the US
 - Learn more: <http://incite-national.org/page/community-accountability>
 - Learn from BYP100’s case study: <http://transformharm.tumblr.com/tagged/community-accountability>
- [book] The Revolution Starts At Home, edited by Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha
- [book] Conflict is Not Abuse by Sarah Schulman
- [zine] come hell or high water: a handbook on collective process gone awry by Delfina Vannucci & Richard Singer

Training, like your Codes of Conduct, will only impact your community positively if paired with ongoing effort and commitment to changing your underlying culture. That commitment requires working on exclusionary behaviors and systems (not just inclusionary), and being considerate about how this “commitment” translates into individual and communal activity.

As you explore what exists and experiment with new ways of being, consider: Who’s driving this work? Who does the labor of education? What would it look like to distribute this effort differently?