

I KNOW SOMEONE – BYSTANDERS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

MAKE THE LEAP: LEARN ABOUT ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO STAND UP FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND TO INTERVENE SAFELY AND EFFECTIVELY.

Most of us have witnessed or know someone who has experienced sexual violence, anything from sexist ‘jokes’ to sexual assault. It’s hard to speak up even when you know it’s wrong. You may feel uncomfortable for the person on the receiving end and not know what to do. It’s not that you don’t care. You might feel afraid of what your friends will think or you don’t want to make the situation worse, or draw the abuse to yourself. Speaking up takes courage. Knowing how and when to speak up is something we can all learn.¹

CHALLENGE AND CHANGE SOCIAL NORMS

First, we have to overcome our hesitation to help. When it comes to sexual violence, people assume that most other people think you should mind your own business. Research shows that this is not true.² Most people are really uncomfortable seeing or hearing abusive or harassing comments and actions. They respect those who intervene.

IT TAKES COURAGE TO TAKE ACTION

People are more willing to step in and help if they have had education on sexual violence, understand the myths and stereotypes and know someone who has been a victim.³

Some of the things that people who have stepped up to intervene have said:

- It was the right thing to do.
- Someone helped me once.
- I knew he was drunk and I wanted to make sure that no one got hurt.
- It makes me uncomfortable to hear my buddies talking like that about women.
- I want everyone to feel safe.
- I felt good knowing that I’d made a difference.

Did you know that approximately 5% of men commit 90% of reported sexual assaults. That means the majority of men do not assault and can prevent the minority from doing so.

— Alan Berkowitz

ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE⁴

- You can interrupt a situation of harassment just by calling out to the person being harassed – “are you ok?”
- You can disrupt harassment – “do you know how to get to the subway?”
- If you know the harassing person, ask them later; “do you know how you came off in that situation?”

You can learn more about what actions to take by visiting “Draw the Line”, a public education campaign that supports bystanders of sexual violence in Ontario.⁵

¹ Adapted from: I Know Someone campaign. Western University. See: <http://www.iknowsosomeoneuwo.ca>

² Megan, J. et al. (2015) Predictors of Sexual Assault-Specific Pro-social Bystander Behavior and Intentions: A Prospective Analysis. Sage Publications

³ Megan, J. *ibid*

⁴ New York Times: #Me Too: How