

Being a positive bystander

Duration: 45 minutes

Learning objective:

To understand what a positive bystander is and why it is important to be one

Learning outcomes:

- I can explain why being a positive bystander is important
- I can assess the things that can make it hard to be a positive bystander
- I can identify ways to be a positive bystander in a range of situations

Resources:

- Ask-it-basket
- Slides: Being a positive bystander
- Flip-chart paper and pens
- Worksheet: Beliefs survey
- Handout: Being a positive bystander symbols (optional communication tool to support additional learning needs)

Before using this resource, it is your responsibility to ensure that:

- You have read all of the advice in the 'Respecting me, you, us introduction and guidance' document.
- You have considered adapting the content to meet the needs and characteristics of individuals, or the class as a whole. We recommend using:
 - **Key vocabulary** lists and **alternative activities** to support young people with different learning needs.
 - **Extension activities** and **optional homework** to support young people who finish the activities quickly, or need further challenge.
 - **Editable worksheets** and **slides** to make content changes for young people with special educational needs or difficulties.

(Further information can be found on [page 4- 6](#) of the introduction document)
- You are following your organisation's policies and procedures for safeguarding and delivering Relationships and Sex Education.



- The designated person responsible for safeguarding in your setting is aware that you are delivering this resource.

Key vocabulary

Bystander: someone who witnesses (sees or hears) something happening.

Positive bystander: someone who witnesses (sees or hears) something bad happening and does something to try and improve the situation.

Passive bystander: someone who chooses, for whatever reason, to ignore the bad thing or do nothing about it.

Ally: a person or group that provides support in an ongoing effort, activity, or struggle.

Oppressor or bully: someone who treats people in an unfair or cruel way.

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Slide 2. Introduce the learning objectives and outcomes for this lesson. Explain that the lesson is about being a positive bystander. Explain that:

- A **positive bystander** is someone who witnesses (sees or hears) something bad happening and does something to try and improve the situation.

Slide 3. Share the ground rules, adding any additional rules that are relevant.

Introduce the **Ask-it-basket**. Explain that young people can write questions anonymously and put them in the box at any time throughout the lesson or as exit cards. Let young people know when you will answer important questions (this could be at the end of the lesson or at another point over the next week. For example, schools may wish to answer these during form time). Remind young people that the ground rules also apply to the use of the Ask-it-basket.

2. Baseline activity – Beliefs (5 minutes)

Slide 4. Read the statements below and ask the class to move to one side of the room if they **agree** and the other side if they **disagree**.

Let the class know that it is ok to be unsure (they can stand in the middle for this), that there is no right or wrong answer and they should respect differences of opinion.



Statements:

- If a young person notices someone doing or saying something that could upset someone else, they should generally just mind their own business.
(**Note:** explain to young people that 'mind your own business' means to ignore what other people are doing and focus on yourself).
- We all have a responsibility to care about other people.
- In life people should stand up for each other more.
- Offending someone is ok if it was meant to be a joke.

Alternative activity (written based)

Read the statements and ask the class to write down whether or not they agree and why they agree or disagree with the statement. Ask the class to feedback and contribute one answer for each statement.

3. What a positive bystander is and why it is important (10 minutes)

Slide 5. Explain that:

- A **bystander** is someone who witnesses (sees or hears) something happening.

We will all be bystanders to difficult or negative situations at some point in our lives, at these times we can either be:

- **A passive bystander:** someone who chooses, for whatever reason, to ignore what's happening or do nothing about it.
- **A positive bystander:** someone who does something to try and improve the situation. Other names you might hear for this are being an 'active bystander' or an 'ally'.

Slide 6. Highlight the following key points:

- There are usually a range of things people can do to be a positive bystander.
- People can be positive bystanders by themselves, or as part of a group. Acting as part of a group is often called 'collective action'.
- People can act as positive bystanders through body language, actions or words.
- It doesn't have to involve challenging the person/people in the moment, it might be something done afterwards.



- What people do will vary according to the situation, what is possible and what is safe

For example, a young person may feel it is ok to challenge someone in their year group or below, but it may be less safe to directly challenge older people.

Slide 7. Ask young people if they can think of an example of someone being a positive bystander. This might be something they have seen in a film or TV, or an imaginary scenario. Remind young people that this can be in person or online, but should not be a personal example from their own or their friends' lives. Take some examples from the group.

If needed, you can share the following examples:

1. Whilst gaming, a young person notices someone pressuring another person to give them in-game items. Although they don't say anything directly, they report it as inappropriate behaviour to the platform.
2. A few friends are chatting and the conversation moves to talk about a friend who isn't there – unkind things are said about them. One person's facial expression conveys that they're uncomfortable and they change the subject.
3. On a train, two young men are making inappropriate comments towards a girl. Another young person sits down next to her, and acts as if they know one another even though they don't (so the girl is no longer isolated).

Slide 8. Explain that being a positive bystander is not a new concept. Key figures throughout history have spoken powerfully about the importance of being a positive bystander.

- *What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander. (Elie Wiesel)*
- *In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. (Martin Luther King)*
- *Courage calls to courage everywhere. (Millicent Fawcett)*

Put young people in small groups and ask them to brainstorm what they think each of the quotes mean. Take ideas from each group.

Key learning points/answers may include:

What hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander. (Elie Wiesel)

- To see someone being hurt (physically or emotionally) and not say or do anything can feel just as harmful to the victim as the bullying itself.

In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends. (Martin Luther King)



- People may forget those that hurt them, but not friends who didn't support them.

Courage calls to courage everywhere. (Millicent Fawcett)

- The brave can inspire the brave.
- Standing up for others inspires others to do the same.

If young people have questions about who these people are:

Elie Wiesel was a human rights activist who survived the holocaust.

Martin Luther King was one of the key leaders of the American civil rights movement, fighting for the rights of black people in America in the 1950s and 1960s.

Millicent Fawcett was one of the key leaders of the movement for women's rights in the early part of the last century in Britain.

Ask young people if they can think of any additional reasons why it's important to be a positive bystander.

Slide 9. Summarise the reasons why it's important to be a positive bystander:

- It can make communities and society better places.
- Whenever one person stands up and says 'wait a minute this is wrong' it helps others do the same.
- Research says that when a 'bully' is challenged, they are less likely to behave that way again.
- Supporting someone in a difficult situation can improve their mental health.
- It can help people to live up to their core values (what they believe is important in life).

4. Statements (5 minutes)

Slide 10. Read these three statements to the class:

- *Mind your own business*
- *Snitches get stitches*
- *It's only a joke (after saying or doing something that could upset someone)*

Explain that these are statements that might hold someone back from being a positive bystander, if unchallenged.



Split the class into three and give each third of young people one of the different statements above. Using flip-chart paper and pens, ask each group of young people to write down answers to these questions:

1. What does the statement mean?
2. What damage could the statement cause?

As a class, discuss answers to the questions for each of the statements.

Answers may include:

Snitches get stitches

1. People that report, tell someone else or seek to get help for someone being hurt (physically or emotionally) will get hurt themselves by that person
2. It could:
 - stop people being a positive bystander or the victim getting the help they need
 - lead people to believing it themselves or saying it to other people in order to fit in or not be harmed themselves
 - create a culture of fear

Mind your own business

1. Don't get involved with things that aren't to do with you.
2. It could:
 - stop people being a positive bystander
 - lead to no one doing anything to help someone, as everyone believes it's not their place to
 - cause people to feel isolated and not part of a supportive group or community

It's only a joke (after saying or doing something that could upset someone)

1. The situation was not intended to hurt the person so they should not be upset. It implies over-sensitivity.
2. It could:
 - stop people being a positive bystander.
 - dismiss peoples' feelings
 - stop people taking responsibility or understanding when they've done something to hurt another person



- make it more difficult for others to challenge as they may be viewed as 'unable to take a joke'

5. Film – Being a positive bystander (15 minutes)

Slide 11. Play the 'Being a positive bystander' film. The film depicts Jade and Jamie witnessing a younger boy being teased.

At the pause point, ask young people to discuss answers to the question: *What could Jade and Jamie do to help?*

You may wish to do this in pairs, small groups or as a whole class discussion. Feedback thoughts as a group before playing the rest of the film. Answers may include:

- Walking next to the boy being made fun of so he isn't alone
- Starting a conversation with the boy to change the situation
- Talking to the two people calmly to challenge their behaviour

Remind young people that taking action doesn't have to involve challenging the person/people in the moment, it might be something done afterwards. What people do will vary according to the situation, what is possible and what is safe.

Slide 12. When the film has finished, ask young people to share their views on the question: *What else could Jade and Jamie do to help the boy (Nathan) and be positive bystanders?*

You may wish to do this in pairs, small groups or as a whole class discussion.

Possible answers may include:

- Talking to a trusted adult (like a teacher)
- Reporting the live stream and any copies made to the social media platform (the platform will review the content and may be able to take it down)
- Letting the boy (Nathan) know that he can go to organisations like Childline if he wants to speak to someone anonymously about anything that worries him

Note: If young people make inappropriate suggestions (for example, physically hurting them) challenge these answers by making them aware of the consequences of negative actions.

Slide 13. Reinforce the learning points from the film, explaining that being a positive bystander may include:

- **Reporting:** telling a trusted adult, reporting to social media or websites, or reporting illegal activity to police.



- **Changing the situation:** this could be by distraction, changing the subject or interrupting negative talk.
- **Body language:** walking away or not joining in with bullying or negative conversations. Using facial expression to show you disagree or are unhappy with the conversation.
- **Supporting:** talking to the person targeted or hurt, asking how you can support them. Calling for help when needed.

6. Closing activity – Beliefs survey (5 minutes)

Slide 14. Ask young people complete the **Worksheet: Beliefs survey**, which asks them to revisit the statements from the baseline activity and rate their agreement with them after the lesson. Ask them to complete this by themselves without discussing or showing anyone else their answers.

After completing the beliefs survey, ask young people to write down:

- 3 ways someone can be a positive bystander
- 2 reasons why being a positive bystander might be challenging
- 1 reason why being a positive bystander is important

Slide 15. Explain that there are sources of support available to young people who are worried about something that's happened to them or others.

Optional homework

Ask young people to reflect on the following during the next week:

- Notice how others are positive bystanders
- Think about what they can do to be a positive bystander



Worksheet: Beliefs survey

1. Rate how much you agree with each of these statements:

If a young person notices someone doing or saying something that could upset someone else, they should generally just mind their own business

①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

We all have a responsibility to care about other people

①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

In life people should stand up for each other more

①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

Offending someone is ok if it was meant to be a joke

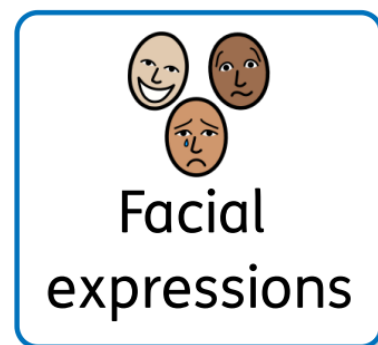
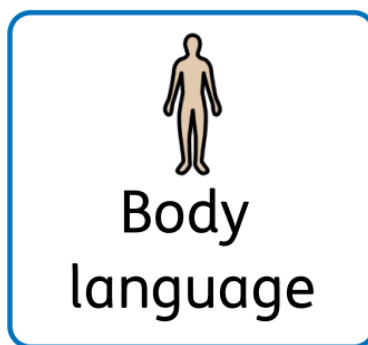
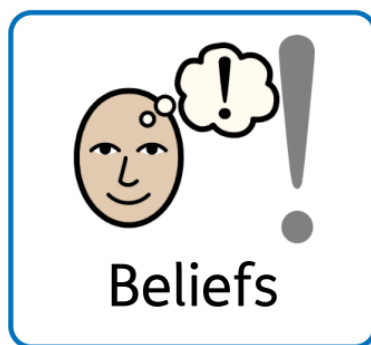
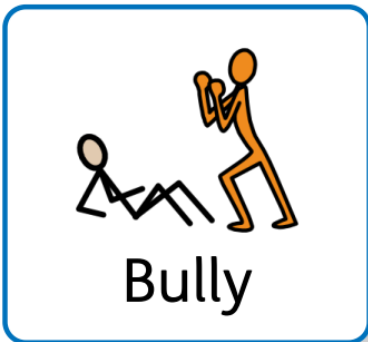
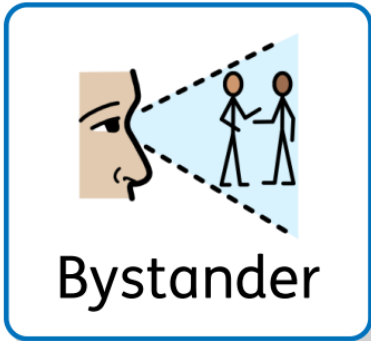
①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤
Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. After this lesson, how confident do you feel about your ability to be a positive bystander (in general)?

①-----②-----③-----④-----⑤
Not confident at all Very confident



Handout: Being a positive bystander symbols (optional)



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