

How to act as an Active Bystander in situations of inappropriate behaviour

Be alert to:

- Signs of bullying, discrimination, racism, or (sexual) harassment.
- Not sure? Trust your instincts—it's better to speak up too often than too late.
- Also pay attention to non-verbal cues that may indicate discomfort or fear in others.



Use the 5 D's of Active Bystanding

Choose a strategy that suits the situation and ensures your own safety

1. Direct

Address the behaviour directly:

- “What you said is not okay.”
- “That comes across as hurtful – maybe you didn’t mean it that way, but...”

2. Delegate

Get help:

- Click [here](#) to find out where to seek support at VU Amsterdam.

3. Distract

Distract to de-escalate the situation:

- Ask a different question.
- Change the subject.
- Remove the person from the situation.

4. Delay

Did you miss the moment to act?

Talk to the person afterwards:

- “I saw what happened—are you okay?”
- “You’re not alone. Would you like to talk about it?”

5. Document

Make a note of what happened (who, what, where, when):

- This can be valuable when making a report or during a follow-up conversation