



What's stopping me? (bystander behaviour)

Most people who see harmful behaviour want to do something about it. But wanting to act and acting are 2 different things.

This resource looks at some myths or thoughts that can stop people acting when they see harmful behaviour. This can help you notice when you have similar thoughts. It can also help you find ways to respond safely to support others.

Myth

Everyone else is laughing, so it isn't that bad.

Fact

When everyone looks around and sees others laughing or staying silent, they assume everyone is fine with it. Most people are not. They are just responding the same way as everyone else.

Myth

It is not my business; it is between them.

Fact

When something bad happens to someone and other people are there, it stops being just between 2 people. Being there makes you part of what happens next.

Myth

If I say something, my friends will think I am weird or turn on me.

Fact

This fear is real. It's worth taking seriously. Responding to harmful behaviour does not mean you have to say something in public. You could check in privately, not laugh along, or tell a trusted adult. These are all things you can do without putting yourself at risk.

Note

If a situation feels unsafe, telling a trusted adult is always the right thing to do. Keeping yourself safe is not the same as doing nothing. If the first person you talk to doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.



Myth

It only happened once, so it is probably not a big deal.

Fact

Even if something happens just once, it can still be harmful. It is worth taking seriously.

'What hurts more isn't always what was said ... but how normal it felt for everyone else to let it happen.'

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH COLLECTIVE

Myth

It'll sort itself out.

Fact

Sometimes this might be true. But often, ignoring bullying or other harmful behaviours makes things worse.

Myth

I do not know what to say, so it is better to stay quiet.

Fact

One small action can still make a difference. You don't need to have all the answers or for what you say to be perfect. You do not need to say or do something big and public to support someone in need.

Myth

It's just a group chat/it's just online, so it doesn't really count.

Fact

There is a real person behind the screen. Things that are done or said online can still cause real harm.

You can report harmful behaviour online to **eSafety** at esafety.gov.au/report.



Myth

Someone else will do something.

Fact

If everyone thinks this way, then no one does anything. One small act can make a big difference. It can help stop someone from feeling alone.

Myth

If I tell a teacher or trusted adult, I will be a dobber or a snitch.

*'What happens online
isn't separate from real life;
it often is real life.'*

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH
COLLECTIVE

Fact

Dobbing means trying to get someone in trouble. Telling a teacher or trusted adult to help keep someone safe is not dobbing.



Note

If a situation feels unsafe, telling a trusted adult is always the right thing to do. Keeping yourself safe is not the same as doing nothing. If the first person doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.

Note

If what you've seen feels serious or if someone is unsafe, talking to a trusted adult is an important next step. This is true even if it happened once or online or somewhere you weren't meant to be. What matters is that you help, not where it happened. Choosing to act is a sign of maturity, not weakness.

Go to the 'Connected resources' section for more support if you're finding it hard to think of someone to talk to. You can also talk to someone at the support organisations listed in the 'Where to get more help' section at the end of this resource.

If the first person you tell doesn't help, tell someone else. Keep trying.



*'Bravery in the face of
bullying doesn't always look
like a big dramatic stand, but
sometimes it's just refusing
to let someone be invisible.'*

– YOUNG PERSON, PROJECT
ROCKIT NATIONAL YOUTH
COLLECTIVE

Connected resources

- ◉ What kind of upstander am I?
- ◉ How do I support someone?
- ◉ What can I do? Guide to upstander action
- ◉ Who's in my corner?

Where to get more help

If you need further support, help is available:

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 or kidshelpline.com.au. Free, confidential counselling for bullying and other harmful behaviours, school issues, online harm and wellbeing, available 24/7.

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or beyondblue.org.au. Mental health support for stress, anxiety or overwhelm, available 24/7.

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or lifeline.org.au. Crisis support and counselling if things feel overwhelming, available 24/7.

Dolly's Dream Bullying Support Line: 13 36 55 (13 DOLLY) or dollysdream.org.au. Counselling and guidance for children and young people experiencing bullying and other harmful behaviour, available 24/7.

headspace/ehespace: 1800 650 890 or headspace.org.au. Mental health, wellbeing and early intervention support, available 9 am–1 am daily.

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732 or 1800respect.org.au. Sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for anyone who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault, available 24/7.

13YARN: 13 92 76 or 13yarn.org.au. Culturally safe 24/7 support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

QLife (LGBTIQA+ young people): 1800 184 527 or qlife.org.au. Free, anonymous peer support and referral service, available 3 pm–9 pm daily.

eSafety Commissioner: esafety.gov.au. Report cyberbullying, get advice and request content removal support.

Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au. Support for cases involving discriminatory harm. Reports can be made via their website or by emailing infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.

State, territory and non-government education sectors will reflect the expectations of the National Framework for Addressing Bullying in Australian schools in their policies and procedures by Term 1 2027. This includes making reasonable efforts to initiate a response to bullying and harmful behaviour within two school days, recognising that further time may be required to fully address the issue. By Term 1 2027, all schools will also publish or link to policies and procedures that align with the National Framework (or equivalent contemporary jurisdiction specific Frameworks) and their local polices and school context.