1. The bystander effect in action

**Group size**



Small groups

**Suggested timing**

25 minutes

**Method**



Discussion, film and article

**What you need**

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[Film](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSsPfbup0ac)

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[Newspaper article](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1280887/Dying-man-left-pavement-hours-shoppers-walk-him.html)

Learning objectives

* Learn about the bystander effect
* Understand why people might not feel able to help
* Think about what motivates people to help others
* Feel able to help someone in need of first aid

## Overview

## Watch a film and read a newspaper article that show the bystander effect in action. Discuss the impact of the bystander effect and what learners can do to overcome it.

## Preparation

Be able to play the film, and share the newspaper articles, either on screen or by printing them out.

## Delivering the activity

1. Watch the film with learners: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OSsPfbup0ac>

*The film shows actors posing as injured or collapsed members of the public, with a commentary on people that do and don’t intervene to help. The footage discusses the bystander effect in more detail; you can use the suggested prompt questions below to discuss the film with learners.*

Prompt questions

* What is happening in the film? How do people react? Does anything change their actions?
* What might the people be thinking as they walk past the man or woman on the steps?
* What might be stopping people from helping? (Ask learners what thoughts people passing by might have and what they might observe about the person needing help, e.g. it’s not for me to intervene, I think they are drunk, I should leave them alone, etc.)
* What internal conflicts or factors might stop them from intervening, in the film? (e.g. I’m late for work, there’s lots of other people who will help, I don’t know what to do, I’m too busy, etc.)
* Watch the video again, from 0:00–0:34 and then from 1:15–1:38, and identify two key reasons why the passers-by may not have stepped in to help.
* The two key factors psychologists say lead to the bystander effect are:
* Diffusion of responsibility – people think someone else will help.
* The need to behave in a socially acceptable way – people don’t want to behave differently to the rest of the group.
* What happens when someone starts to behave differently from the rest of the group? (Others often join them, forming a new social group that is helping).
* What might have made them decide to help?
* Why does the man’s outfit make such a difference to whether people helped? (E.g. by dressing smartly the male actor became part of the social group of smart City workers who previously walked past).
1. Print out or display this newspaper case study <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1280887/Dying-man-left-pavement-hours-shoppers-walk-him.html>

*It is recommended for older learners 14 years old+:* *This article discusses the death of a man who was considered to be drunk; eventually someone stepped into help him, but by then it was too late – the article explores the outrage of the community.*

1. Ask learners to read the newspaper article. working in pairs ask learners to summarise the article and the key points back to the whole group.
2. Use the suggested prompt questions below to support discussion around the article.

Prompt questions

* What is happening in the article? How do people react? Is there anything that changes their actions?
* What might the people be thinking as they walk past the man in the article?
* What might be stopping people from helping? Ask learners what thoughts people passing by might have and what they might observe about the person needing help e.g. it’s not for me to intervene, I think they are drunk, I should leave them alone, I am late for work, etc.
* Ask learners if they can identify some of the factors in the article that may have led to the people not helping. Ask if this is related to the bystander effect.
* How do the families or communities feel about what has happened? What impact has the incident had on them?
* What do learners think they would have done in this scenario?
* What might people be able to do to make sure the bystander effect doesn’t happen?

## Summing up

Invite learners to discuss the bystander effect, what have they learned? Has it made them more or less likely to act to help? How could they put kindness into action and safely help others?