1. Exploring bystanders

**Group size**

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Description automatically generated

Small groups



**Suggested timing**

20-25 minutes

**Method**



Discussion

Learning objectives

* Understand and explain what the bystander effect is
* Identify why some people might hesitate to act and what inspires others to help
* Explain how to overcome barriers to helping others

## Overview

## Learn about the impact of the bystander effect by discussing what is means and then thinking through a range of scenarios to understand how we overcome barriers to helping.

## Preparation

Familiarise learners with the ground rules for the session or establish ground rules. Assure learners are given opportunities to ask questions and have a way to ask anonymous questions if they wish to. For guidance on how to do these things, see the [Creating a safe, inclusive and supportive learning environment guidance.](https://firstaidchampions.redcross.org.uk/secondary/guidance-and-support/)

## Delivering the activity

1. Ask learners to get into pairs and discuss the term ‘bystander’. What do they think the word means? If they break down the word down does it give them a clue? e.g. standing by. Invite groups to share their ideas. After a short discussion explain that:

*\*The bystander effect describes a situation where many people see someone in need of help but no-one steps forward to help. We know that once people understand the bystander effect and barriers to action they are more likely to help someone in need of first aid.*

1. Ask learners, what might this mean in terms of giving first aid – how might someone be a bystander in this situation?
2. Ask learners to imagine a scenario. A young person is walking down the street when someone collapses in front of them.
3. Ask them to discuss – in small groups – how might that young person respond if:

* They were alone in the street but it was getting dark
* They were alone in the street during daytime
* They were with one or two friends, but no one else was around
* The street was busy with lots of other people.

1. Next, ask how the young persons’ responses might change if the person who collapsed was:

* The same age as them and/or wearing a school uniform?
* An older man in scruffy clothing?
* A young woman in a suit?

Learners can discuss the scenarios in their small groups. When they have had time to do this, bring the discussion together as a whole group. Use some or all of these prompt questions:

* Do you think they would choose to intervene/stop to help in all of the situations?
* What might make them decide to help or not?
* If you think they chose not to intervene – what might have been another way of getting help (e.g. calling 999)?
* What might influence their decisions to help or not help?
* Do you think they would be influenced by the number of people who are around; if they are with friends, or on their own?
* Do you think the time of day or circumstances would affect their decisions?
* What if they felt that they don’t have the skills to help? Would they just do nothing or do something else?
* Do you think they would be more comfortable to help if the person is of a similar age?
* Do you think they would try to help even if they weren’t sure what to do?
* How might they ensure their own safety?

## Stretch and challenge activities:

1. To extend this activity have learners work through all the prompt questions above and start to think about how they could overcome some of these barriers.

## Summing up

Discuss what learners have found out about the bystander effect – did anything surprise them?

Now follow this activity with the Bystander effect in action – practise activity on the [Exploring bystanders web page](http://firstaidchampions.redcross.org.uk/secondary/helping-others/exploring-bystanders).