

## Bystander Intervention Key Takeaways

*Central Vermont Showing Up for Racial Justice, Peace & Justice Center, and Vermont Human Rights Commission*

**What is a bystander?** Anyone who becomes aware of and/or witnesses unjust behavior. Typically is unburdened by the direct impact of the discrimination and often times in the same “group” as the aggressor.

**What keeps people from intervening?** Uncertainty, discomfort, or fear of intervening, and the “diffusion of responsibility” (someone else will do it).

**Pyramid of Hate from the Antidefamation League-** [link here.](#)

The Pyramid shows biased behaviors, growing in complexity from the bottom to the top. Although the behaviors at each level negatively impact individuals and groups, as one moves up the pyramid, the behaviors have more life-threatening consequences. Like a pyramid, the upper levels are supported by the lower levels. If people or institutions treat behaviors on the lower levels as being acceptable or “normal,” it results in the behaviors at the next level becoming more accepted. In response to the questions of the world community about where the hate of genocide comes from, the Pyramid of Hate demonstrates that the hate of genocide is built upon the acceptance of behaviors described in the lower levels of the pyramid.



**Pyramid of White Supremacy from The**  
In a pyramid, every brick depends upon  
the bricks at the bottom are removed,

**Equity Institute-** [link here.](#)  
the ones below it for support. If  
the entire structure comes

### The Pyramid of White Supremacy



tumbling down.

**Intervention tools/tactics: Below are multiple frameworks to help you navigate intervening**

*Framework 1:*

1. Notice what's happening
2. Interpret the situation as a concern
3. Figure out how much responsibility you feel
4. Figure out what help is required—get consent from the impacted party
5. Act!

*Framework 2:*

1. Be ready: Familiarize yourself with words or actions (subtle or overt) that can counteract, change, or stop the behavior
2. Name the problem out loud: Describe the behavior candidly so the aggressor hears what they did. Avoid labeling the person
3. Set limits: Make your boundaries clear and follow through

- 4. Find an ally: Get support from others

Framework 3, The 5 Ds of Intervention:

- 1. **Directly** intervene
- 2. Use **distraction** to stop the incident
- 3. **Delegate** tasks to others—ask for help
- 4. **Delay** certain actions and follow up after the fact
- 5. **Document** the incident by recording or filing a report

Things to consider:

- When is it a moment for intervention? How do I know?
- What are the barriers to taking action and what can I do about them?
- How can I ground myself in my own values first?
- How can I slow down to do a gut check before taking action?
- What tactics can I use to get consent before taking action on behalf of someone else?

**Remember:** Inaction IS action. It’s action that aids the oppressor and hurts the oppressed. Unless we are actively engaged in disrupting bias, we are helping to perpetuate it.

*“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” -MLK, Jr.*

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