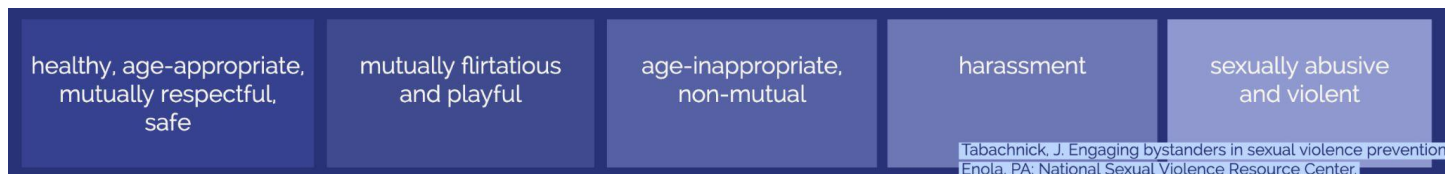


WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU WITNESS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It can be confusing and troubling to observe sexually violent behavior. To decide on what to do, a good first step is to characterize the behavior using the continuum below:



If the behavior in question falls to the middle or right side of the continuum, here is how to step in and speak up.

- 1) **Distract and Redirect:** Distracting either the aggressor or the affected individual may be all that is needed to diffuse a situation. Causing a distraction can also be helpful in getting the attention of others in the room who may not have been aware of what was going on.

A distraction can be as simple as asking "Who's ready to have ice cream?" or suggesting "Let's go hang out at my place. I'm tired of being here."

- 2) **Enlist and Engage:** If distracting or redirecting doesn't work, look around for others who are expressing concern at the behavior of the aggressor. Work together to approach the individual in harm and help them get to safety.

Involving an adult at this stage is also a good idea. If there is a bartender, Resident Assistant, or security guard on site, quickly explain the situation to them and ask that they step in.

If the affected individual has friends nearby, approach them and suggest that they check on their friend. Use a statement like "Your friend seems like she needs help. You may want to go make sure she's OK."

- 3) **Approach and Ask:** To intervene in the behavior in a more active way, approach the affected individual and ask specifically if they are in need of help or if they would like to leave. Listen for any affirmative response, especially one that implies injury or distress. Be prepared to contact law enforcement if necessary.



- 4) **Call and Stall:** If the individual is in imminent danger or has been harmed, call 9-1-1 immediately. Stay on scene with the affected individual until help arrives.

While you wait for law enforcement, try to prevent further harm by either stalling the aggressor or accompanying the affected individual away from the aggressor. Do not go too far, as you will need to remain present for the individual to answer questions when authorities arrive.

- 5) **Share and Support:** When authorities arrive, share what you witnessed clearly, calmly, and concisely.

Before and after help arrives, focus on offering support to the affected individual. Ask them questions like: "Would you like to talk?" and "How can I help you right now?" It is okay if you do not get a response. In this case, consider sharing the [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) with them so that they can speak to a trained advocate.

