

# SKIDMORE

C O L L E G E

Office of Leadership Activities

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## HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE MOMENT

*You must first be the change you wish to see in the world. ~Mahatma Gandhi*

### The Bystander Effect

In groups, the diffusion of responsibility prevents individuals from intervening in troubling situations. Research has shown that individuals will look to others instead of taking responsibility themselves. To overcome the Bystander Effect...

1. **Notice** a critical situation
2. **Define** it as a situation in need of intervention
3. **Feel** a sense of personal responsibility
4. **Believe** you have the skills needed to succeed
5. **Commit** to helping

(To learn more about the Bystander Effect, see Peter Fischer et al. (2011) "The Bystander Effect: A Meta-Analytic Review on Bystander Intervention in Dangerous and Non-Dangerous Emergencies" *Psychological Bulletin* 137: 517-537.)

### Three Intervention Strategies

#### **1. Direct**

Directly approach either or both parties involved. Let them know your concerns and why you are intervening. Not sure if a friend is in trouble? Just ask! Send a text or step in and say, "Are you okay right now?"

We are at a party where there is alcohol being served and see a guy taking a drunken girl up to an empty room. Because a drunken person cannot consent to having sex, it is considered sexual assault or rape. Rape is not sex or love, but an act of violence. You can say, "Hey man, she's been drinking, it's not okay to do that." This would be a direct approach to bystander intervention.

#### **2. Distract**

Distract a person to divert attention and redirect the focus elsewhere. You can diffuse the situation without directly confronting anyone. Step in and change the subject, tell your friend you need to talk to him or her, or commit a "party foul."

At this same party, a distraction might be to yell up to the guy, "Hey man, your car is being towed!" or to the crowd, "Cops! Everyone out!"

#### **3. Delegate**

Sometimes you may not feel that you are the best person to directly intervene in a situation. Maybe you do not know the person, do not feel safe, or just feel someone else would be more effective. That is fine. Find friends and encourage them to intervene. Call Campus Safety or find an RA if you feel the situation is too serious for you to get involved (or if you are simply unsure).

Make sure you have Campus Safety's phone number in your contacts (518-580-5566).

## STEPS FOR ASSERTIVE REQUESTS

*In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.*  
~Martin Luther King, Jr.

O.F.N.R.

Observation, Feeling, Need, Request

Marshall Rosenberg, in his study of “Non-Violent Communication,” offers this formula for basing requests on needs rather than on judgment, guilt or demands.

OBSERVATION

*Describe things that could be captured on a video camera. Keep opinion out.*

Scene: student has asked neighbor to quiet down because he is trying to sleep, and gets this response: “Sleep is for fags.”

“I just heard you say the phrase ‘sleep is for fags.’”

FEELING

*Express how you are feeling. Avoid feeling words that denote guilt, fault and blame.*

“I’m feeling really pissed and disappointed.”

NEED

*Explain your feeling by its connection to your needs.*

“Because I have a need for inclusion/tolerance/respect/consideration.”

REQUEST

*Gently ask for support in meeting your needs.*

“And I was wondering if you would be willing to talk about quiet hours without disrespecting people.”

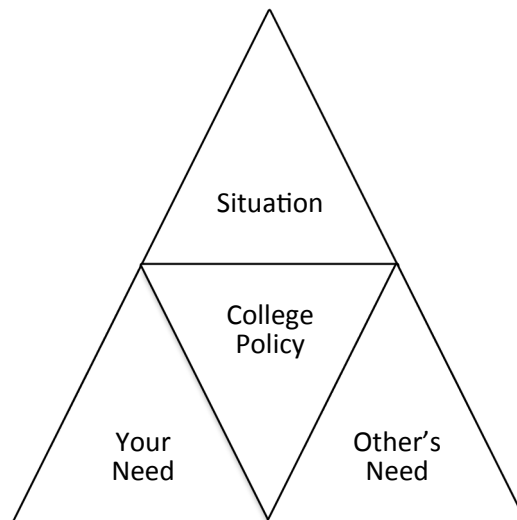
## STEPS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

*Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does. ~William James*

### INVITATION

*Proposal for problem-solving that meets each other's needs.*

"I see you want to hang out with your friends, so can you do this in a way where you get to hang and I get some sleep?"



Use the triangle to come up with the win-win brainstorming question:

**“What ideas can you come up with about \_\_\_\_\_  
(the issue)**

**that will meet your need for \_\_\_\_\_  
(value of one person)**

**and meet my need for \_\_\_\_\_ ?”  
(your value)**

Example: “What ideas can you come up with about **our living space** that will meet your need for **hanging out** and also meet my need for **quiet**?”