

See Something, Say Something Do Something Intervening in Cases of Elder Abuse

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Topics

- The big picture: issues underlying Elder Abuse
- Bystander intervention research, theory and skills
- Social norms and bystander behavior
- Bystander intervention skills
- Concluding questions

Some Underlying Issues to Consider

- Relation of ageism to ableism
- Materialism and glorification of the body (i.e. what gives value to a person?)
- Denial/prejudices about vulnerability (individual and cultural)
- Protective and self-sacrificing parental values

All of these issues are "in" us as well as "in" the situations we are trying to address and each one also has a cultural component

Understanding the Problem

Examining risk & protective factors across the ecological model will help identify things that may be changed (i.e., goals) and how to apply what is known about what works in changing them including intersections among prevention efforts.

The Social Ecological Model

<p>Societal</p> <p>Community</p> <p>Family & Group</p> <p>Individual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▮ Larger social influences Marginalization and mistreatment Laws, regulations, requirements ▮ Policies, practices, procedures Data gathering & Media Training of trainers for programs Coordination-collaboration (task Force) ▮ Education & awareness programming Group-specific social norms clarification Bystander intervention skills training ▮ Increased awareness and empathy Skills and knowledge to reduce risk Changes in perceived norms Increased intervention skills
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Bystander Intervention Contexts

- To prevent elder abuse (in family and institutional environments)
- To address warning signs of elder abuse
- To interrupt inappropriate remarks and behaviors including ageism and ableism
- When observing inappropriate caregiver behavior
- To address inter-related social justice issues (racism, classism, sexism, etc.)
- To undermine and contradict underlying cultural issues

Key Points

- Bystanders are in a position to actively intervene to prevent unwanted behaviors and shift the climate that permits them (ex: friends, family, faith communities and other social organizations)
- Awareness of warning signs, risks and desired interventions needs to be widely disseminated
- Individuals can be taught to overcome their inhibitions to intervene and learn skills to do so effectively
- Most people underestimate the willingness of their peers to be part of the solution and the norms of their community that would support intervention

Reasons for Being a Passive Bystander

- Assume that it isn't a problem because others are not observed intervening (social influence)
- Fear of embarrassment (audience inhibition)
- Assume that someone else will do something (diffusion of responsibility)
- Believe that others aren't bothered (social norms)
- Fear of retaliation or negative outcomes
- Confusion about what elders want and need

When uncorrected these inhibit the desire to help (the bystander effect)

How can we reduce the barriers for elder abuse?

Stages of Bystander Behavior

- Notice the event
- Interpret it as a problem
- Feel responsible for dealing with it
- Possess the necessary skills to act

Elder abuse has unique challenges at each of these stages

How do we move our communities through them?

Social Norms

- Social norms refer to the acceptability of an action or belief
- Are unspoken rules about what is normal for that group or setting
- Perceptions of social norms predict what people say and do
- For a norm to be real, it is not necessary for the majority to believe it, but only for the majority to believe that the majority believes it.

What are the norms that support or would inhibit elder abuse and intervention against it and are they perceived correctly?

Social Norms: Underlying Beliefs

- **Pluralistic Ignorance:** the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others
- **False Consensus:** the incorrect belief that one represents the majority when one is actually a minority

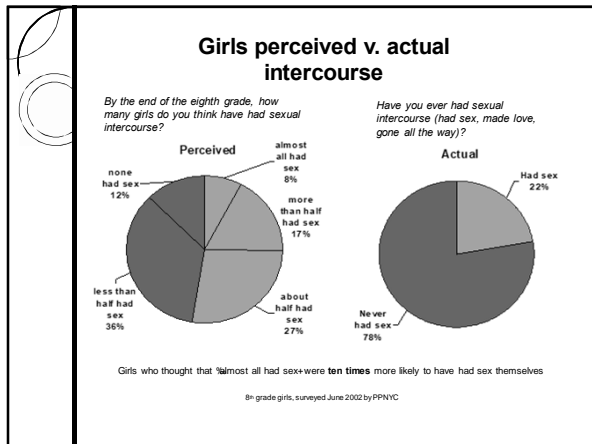
What misperceptions exist for elder abuse and how would they impact bystander behavior?

What Misperceptions Might be Relevant to Elder Abuse?

- How we evaluate the emotional and intellectual competencies of elders
- When someone would want you to intervene on their behalf
- Whether someone who intervenes would be respected and supported
- What kind of recompense is appropriate for a caregiver
- If the problem is over or under-estimated
- If abuser attitudes are shared by the community

Misperceptions and Bystander Behavior

- Individuals are bothered by problem behaviors but underestimate others' discomfort with them and desire to have someone intervene (pluralistic ignorance)
- Intervention is more likely when others are perceived as willing to intervene
- Problem individuals use the misperception to justify their behavior and keep others from intervening (false consensus)

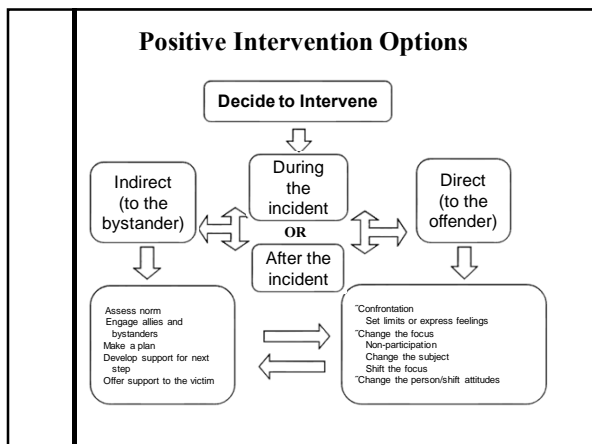


According to a September 2002 survey of PS140 6-8th graders, 67% believe that sexual intercourse is for adults in committed or married relationships.+

Part 2

Strategies for Responding to Unwelcome Remarks and Behaviors

- ### Intervention Options
- Direct versus Indirect: Talk to the person directly or to others
 - On the spot or later: Do something right away or wait
 - Types of interventions
 - Confront the person/impose consequences, state feelings
 - Shift the focus (change the situation)
 - Shift the person (change the person)
 - Talk to or inform a third party
- Goal: To have more options for responding and feel better about your response



Case Study Examples

Concluding Questions

- How do we disseminate the warning signs?
- How do we prepare families to enter elder-care situations with appropriate safeguards and agreements?
- What bystander intervention techniques do we want to use and teach and how do we lower the barriers?
- What forms of media would reinforce our efforts and shift the culture in a desired direction?

Remember

Successful prevention is comprised of multiple interventions at different levels of the social ecology that are mutually reinforcing and synergistic

Citation Information

The material in this presentation is from:

• **R**ESPONSE ABILITY: The Complete Guide to Bystander Behavior+available from www.lulu.com

• **A** Grassroots Guide to Fostering Healthy Norms to Reduce Violence in Our Communities: A Social Norms Toolkit+available from www.alanberkowitz.com

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