



Active Bystander Toolkit

**Be an active bystander:
tips on how to intervene**

Direct action

Directly intervene, for example, by asking the person to stop. Immediately act or call out negative behaviour, explaining why it is not ok.

Distraction

Indirectly intervene, for example, de-escalating by interrupting or changing the subject or focus. Useful where the direct approach may be harmful to the target or bystander.



Delay

Wait for the situation to pass and check in with the individual. Then take action at a later stage when you have had time to consider. It's never too late to act.

Delegation

Inform a more senior member of staff, for example, your Head of Department, Director or Manager. Use someone with the social power or authority to deal with it.

Direct action

Body language

Frowning and raising (not pointing!) one index finger shows disapproval. If you're sitting down, stand up.

Use the offender's name

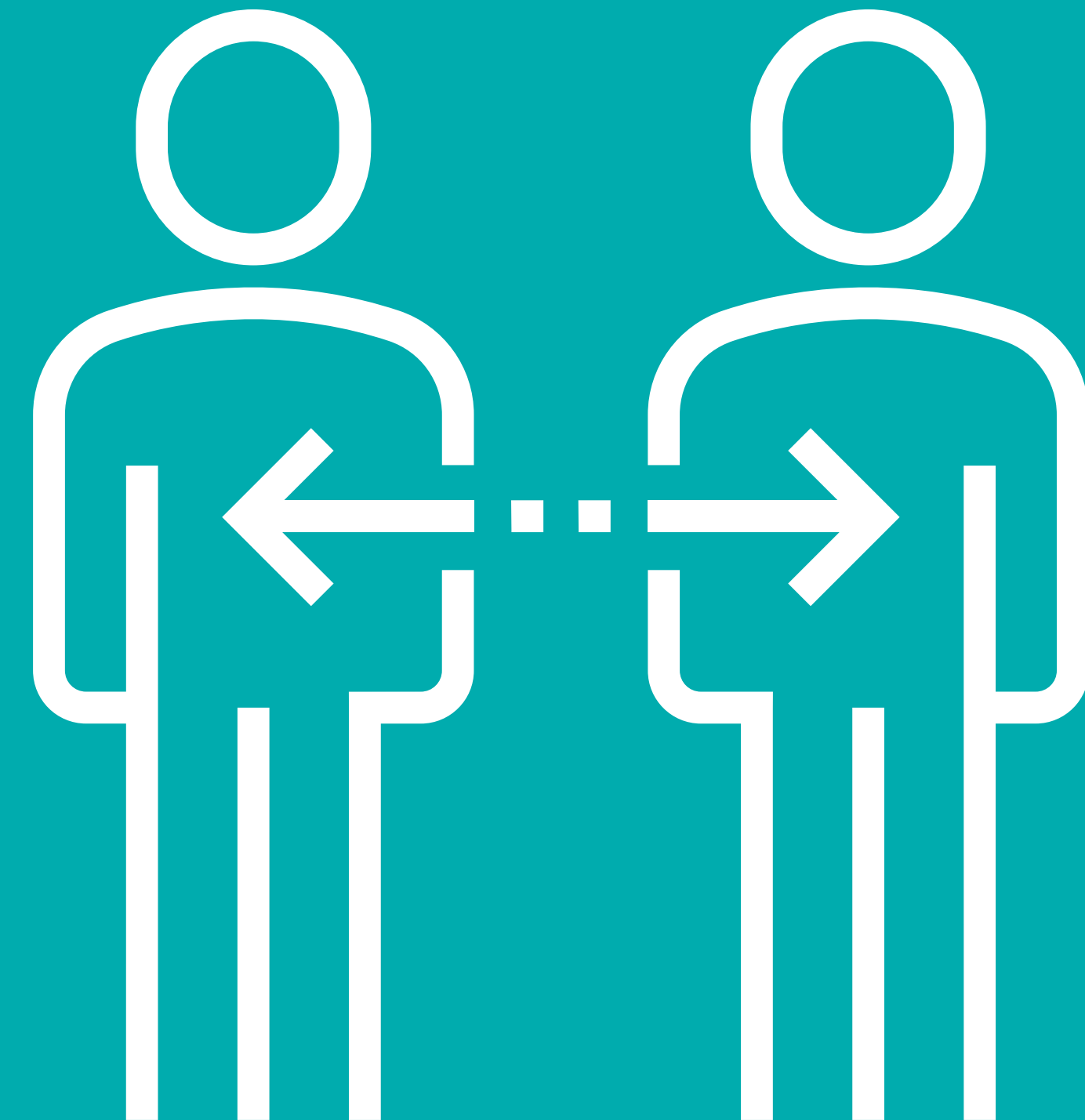
Say their first name (or however you could normally address them) before you make your point/call out the event.

Ask questions to gain assertiveness

'Can I just check - do you consider that behaviour to be appropriate? I'm afraid I don't - so can we talk about that please?'

Advanced technique

Say what you're going to say
For example, 'there are two/three things which strike me here. Firstly ...secondly... (etc).' This sets up a sequence and gets you permission to speak without interruption until you've made all your points. It commands attention and puts you in a position of authority in other people's minds.



Distraction

Take the 'sting' out

Draw attention to any work tasks you have in hand. E.g 'ok, I just want to focus our minds on this project for a second, as the deadline is getting fairly close. Can we just check where everyone's got to please...'. If the phone rings or if somebody enters the room, it can be useful to use these as reasons to change the subject/ distract people.

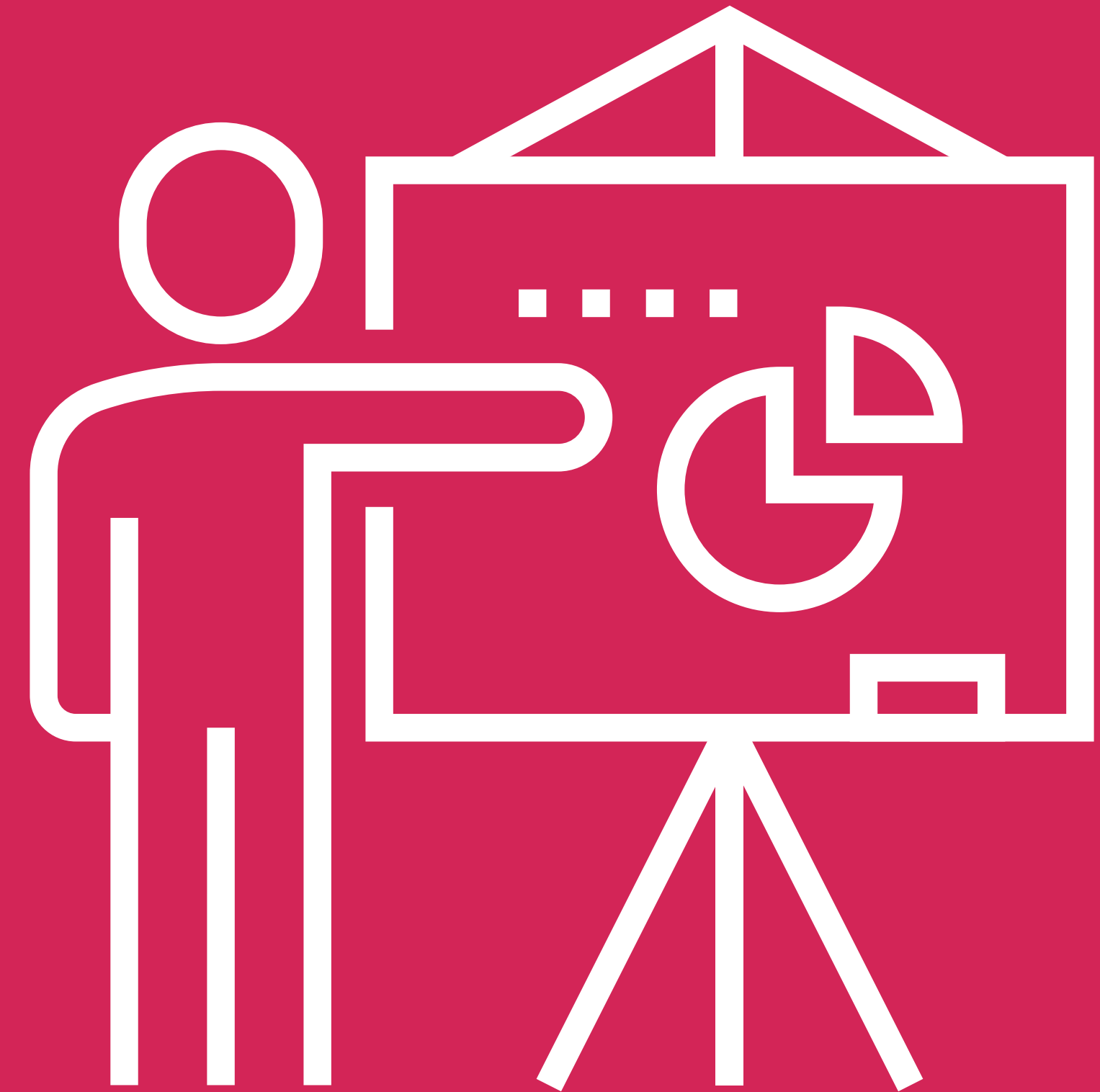
Take the target away from the situation by suggesting a coffee (or similar). This neutralises the situation (albeit temporarily) and sends a subtle, rather than confrontational message to the offending party.

Advanced technique

Say 'let's...'

It sounds like a suggestion, but is perceived as a command. Use it when you want something to happen. E.g 'let's just have a look at X before we do anything else.' It's softer than giving an order and gets people on side.

An alternative here is the reassuring 'why don't we...' - especially when someone is confused, in a bit of a panic, or needing someone to take the lead in a situation.



Delegation

Sometimes you have to tell tales

Telling somebody about an unpleasant event - especially if they have social power or authority - can sometimes feel uncomfortable and underhand.

It's useful to 'inoculate' against your message if you find yourself in this position. E.g 'I'm not sure if I'm doing the right thing here by telling you this, but I figured it was better to raise it than not. And if I'm doing the wrong thing - please tell me. So - here...'

This will reassure you that the person you are talking to has plenty of opportunity to stop you if they want to - and, crucially, pushes the onus on them to say if they think your intervention is misguided,

with your permission. It also shows you are being conscientious rather than underhand. And most of the time, people will want to reassure you that you've done the right thing.

Advanced technique

The no-brainer

If you feel strongly about what you've witnessed, and want to make sure that the person you're reporting it to acts quickly and decisively, you need to make what you're about to say sound like a 'no-brainer'. Do it like this: 'you and I both know that... (main point)' - or - 'you know I don't need to tell you that... (main point)'. This presupposes that your main point is not up for discussion.



Delay

If you decide to do something about an offending situation - but not quite yet - it's important that you reassure the target that you have good intentions, and the reasons for delay. The most important thing they need from you at this point is your support, and the knowledge that you are on their side. You can show them this immediately, even if your intervention can't happen straight away.

If you have an idea of when you will be able to intervene, let them know of your planned time scale - and explain why. Crucially, ask them immediately how they are and if they're ok.

If you are able to speak to the perpetrator in the meantime, inform them that you intend to intervene/take action and explain why. Keep calm and unemotional. Remember, you have your employer - and the law - on your side, and you have a duty to protect colleagues in the workplace if you can. Make that point in a business-like manner.



Intonation

In the UK and Ireland, when you want to be assertive, it's more emphatic to finish your point with a downward intonation.

Don't be tempted by the current tendency to make it sound like a question. It can imply, subconsciously, that you may not be convinced by what you are saying.

Manage your mindset

You know you're right. You know you need to step up and step in. But you just need to silence any remaining nagging voices of doubt in your head first.

1. What goes on inside your head comes out in your communication. So, fixate - in your mind - on something else that you're absolutely convinced by.
2. For example, think about the hard and fast fact that the sun will rise tomorrow - or that your first name is X and you are X years old.
3. This triggers a neurological chain reaction in your brain and will inform your verbal and non-verbal communication to make you feel and appear more confident and convincing.

Interventions

Good interventions are about getting your point across authentically in order to get your desired result. It does not mean being bossy, judgemental, deliberately confrontational or unnecessarily authoritarian.

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