

The Bystander Effect

Purpose: Discuss why people respond in different ways when they witness an injustice, something that they know is wrong, or something that seems wrong.

ADVISOR NOTES: None

PROCEDURE:

1. Reflect on Taking a Stand in the Face of Injustice

- Ask advisees to reflect on the following questions in a journal response. Let them know that they will be sharing their responses. Give them at least three minutes to answer the first question before giving them the second one.
 - What factors motivate a person to help someone? Make a list of as many ideas as you can think of.
 - What factors hold a person back from helping someone? Again, make a big list.
- Make a T-chart on chart paper (so you can refer back to it in upcoming meetings) and ask advisees to contribute their ideas.
 - Factors that Motivate Us: Share answers to the first question in a **Wraparound** (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy). Each advisee should add at least one idea to the list before soliciting additional responses.
 - Factors that Hold Us Back: Share answers to the second question in the same way.
- Time allowing, have advisees work in pairs or triads to rank each list of factors from 1 to 5, from most to least likely to motivate someone to take action and hold them back from taking action. Alternatively, you might have half of the pairs work with one list and half with the other list. Then ask them to share their ideas and discuss points of agreement and difference as a whole group.

2. Learn about the Bystander Effect

- Play the video **The Bystander Effect** (03:35) at y2u.be/OSsPfbup0ac. Have advisees jot down notes in their journals about points they find interesting. Time allowing, show the video twice, once just watching and once with note-taking.

APPROXIMATE TIME:

30 minutes

MATERIALS:

VIDEO

The Bystander Effect

(see y2u.be/OSsPfbup0ac)

- Have advisees use the **S-I-T** strategy to respond to the video in their journals (visit facinghistory.org/advisory-media to learn about this teaching strategy), noting:
 - One surprising idea
 - One interesting idea
 - One troubling idea
- Debrief the S-I-T reflection in pairs, small groups, or as a whole advisory.

3. Discuss the Bystander Effect

Move into a circle (or small groups) to discuss the video. You might select from the following questions:

- Why is it easier to ignore someone who needs help when you are in a group than when you are alone (what scientists call the “diffusion of responsibility”)?
- How can a crowd of strangers become a group with an identity? How do people learn the rules of the group? How does being a member of the group impact people’s decision-making process?
- What new, different, or deeper understanding do you have about the factors that motivate people to help and the factors that hold people back from helping someone?
- Is it ever okay to be a bystander? How might learning about the bystander effect impact the choices you make if you see someone who needs help?