
BYSTANDER INTERVENTION 101



A Training Outline



The People's Response Team, Chicago, IL

1st Edition - March 2017

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Who We Are

Originally a working group of **We Charge Genocide**, the People's Response Team was inspired by the **Anti-Police Terror Project's** First Responders Team in Oakland, CA. APTP's First Responders Team has committed to supporting families impacted by various forms of police brutality. The team documents abuses by police throughout the Bay Area, and connects impacted people with resources and legal referrals after an incident.



As we form our rapid response team in Chicago, it is important to note that this work is **not** new. Our communities are actively responding to police shootings in Chicago on a daily basis. Our goal is to build an infrastructure of resources to offer to families and loved ones once mainstream media turns their light onto the next story. We aim to counter mainstream media and law enforcement narratives that don't match community narratives. We also aim to offer year-round trainings that help to build our communities and weaken our dependence on the state for our daily needs. We do **not** collaborate with or talk to law enforcement. We work in partnership with Justice for Families, a working group of **Black Lives Matter-Chicago** that provides long-term support for families who've lost loved ones to police murder. Many of us are already organizing against police/state violence in Chicago as members of **Assata's Daughters**, the **Chicago Community Bond Fund**, **National Lawyers Guild - Chicago**, **For the People Artists Collective**, and **Organized Communities Against Deportations**.

Prepping for Training

Note: *Because the People's Response Team is based in Chicago, Illinois, our training is shaped with Illinois laws, practices & resources in mind. We will **highlight** where we think you should research your specific state/city/town laws & resources.*

Goals of the Workshop

This training will focus on ways to intervene in public instances of racist, anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Trans, and other forms of oppressive interpersonal violence and harassment while considering the safety of all parties. In addition to group discussion, participants have the opportunity to use role-plays as a tool in practicing intervention techniques, and learning new ways to protect ourselves and our communities. We do not believe anyone is an expert on bystander intervention as different situations and one's own risk factors will influence how they intervene; however, we seek to hold space for people to share skills and experiences in a safer and affirming environment.

Roles Needed

When we host our trainings, we utilize a collective effort to maximum efficiency and minimize confusion and burnout. These are the roles we typically have for each training.

- 1-2 Lead Facilitators
- 1 Note-taker (jots down questions & concerns from audience to review later)
- Social Media team (live-tweeting: make a hashtag for your workshop so people online can follow along for cop watching tips! Later, you can make a Storify to recap the workshop)
- 1-2 Registration/Sign-in Table Helpers
- Set-up/Break-Down Help
- Tech Support (projectors are always hard)
- Food & Snacks Bringer

Room Setup

This training works best with a minimum of 10 attendees and a maximum of 50.

We typically set up the room “auditorium-style”, with presenters at the front. Helpful to have an aisle splitting the room down the middle. Make sure there is enough room for folks in wheelchairs to easily move around the space, especially for during activities that require movement around the room. If it is a large group, we provide sticky name tags for participants, to indicate name and gender pronoun.

With sticky, presentation paper (or on dry erase boards) prep the room with useful info to write on the walls that you will use during the workshop. We suggest that you prepare these posters:

- What the training is vs. What it isn't
- Ground Rules
- What questions are coming up?
- Strategies (to track suggestions during role-plays)

Workshop Outline

We highly recommend 2 - 3 hours for this training. You will find that training attendees will have lots of questions, concerns, and experiences with bystander intervention to share. We believe it is crucial to make time for those shared experiences in order to fully make sense of the various strategies for responding to , and all of the complexities that come with it.

- Introductions & Check-ins: 15 Minutes
- Bystander Intervention Basics: 10 Minutes
- Exercise 1: Speak-Up! Voice Training: 10 Minutes
- Overview of Strategies for Bystander Intervention: 10 Minutes
- Scenarios to Practice through Discussion OR Role Plays: 30 Minutes
- Break: 5 Minutes
- Mid-point check-in: 10 Minutes
- Discussion OR Role Plays continued: 20 Minutes
- Q&A: 15 Minutes
- Wrapping Up: 10 Minutes
- Closing

Introductions

20 minutes

- Who are you (facilitators) and what is your organization?
- Who is the People's Response Team? Why are you using this training outline?

Now ask attendees:

- Who are you? (Name, pronoun, organizational ties, if any)
- What is one thing you're hoping to get out of this training?
 - *Write their responses on board/presentation paper to re-visit throughout the training.*

Disclaimers & Workshop Goals

- What the training is for:
 - ▶ building confidence for situations where you are intervening as a third party or stranger(s)
 - ▶ sharing tips and using our collective knowledge in the room to gain ideas and confidence
 - ▶ to get used to the messiness when trying to respond - because harassment and interpersonal violence are messy
- What the training is not for:
 - ▶ resolving conflicts within a close community where you can follow up and build with people (restorative justice and transformative justice practices are great - not what we're engaging with here)
 - ▶ a training that will give you all the answers
 - ▶ the solution to white supremacy, anti-blackness, islamophobia etc - this is just a tiny step to build our capacity to act. Organizing & building power for systemic change is essential.

Workshop Goals (3 P's)

1. PROVIDE resources & tools
2. Offer space to PRACTICE what we preach
3. One piece of our commitment to love & PROTECT one another

Share our Ground Rules for the training - opportunity to add/change:

- One diva, one mic
- What's said stays, what's learned leaves
- This is a practice space - none of us are experts (together we know a lot)
- Take care of yourself *(Content Note: Scenarios can involve yelling during role-plays)
- Land the plane
- Move up, move back

Bystander Intervention Basics

10 minutes

Getting ready to intervene...

- Ask: What are the biggest barriers to intervening and remaining a bystander?
- After hearing some ideas, share that these are the most common two:
 - ▶ Not having the confidence that you know what to do
 - ▶ Fear of making it worse
- We train people in bystander intervention with two main goals in mind:
 - ▶ Reduce harm in the moment - make our presence known to the targeted person
 - ▶ If it's a verbal/argumentative attack - the goal isn't to convince the perpetrator they are wrong, it's to show observers an alternative

- ◎ Say: If we approach bystander intervention with those two goals in mind, it helps to remind us that it is hard to actually make a situation worse, and that there doesn't need to be a "right answer" in order to show support to someone being targeted for harassment.

How do you know if/when a situation needs intervention?

- ▶ BE ALERT, SCAN YOUR ENVIRONMENT.
- ▶ *A note on headphones...many of us wear headphones as a preventative measure. It's a universal language for 'don't talk to me.' At the same time, having the music up loud can mean that we miss important audio clues that a situation is escalating. That's just something to keep in mind.
- ▶ Notice how your body is responding. Do you have that sinking pit feeling in your stomach? Is your heart racing? What is your baseline for intervention?

Remember to breath.

- ▶ The author of [this article](#) recommends that anyone wanting to build their muscle for bystander intervention practices saying "no" assertively. Let's do that together now.
- ▶ Instruct the group to square their feet with their shoulders, sit up-right in the chairs, take a deep breath (so they feel it in their belly), and practice saying "no" assertively.
 - * Try to resist the urge to count to 3 or say it at the same time, the goal is for people to work through the discomfort of hearing their own voice, so it's important to have it be free-flowing.

Go into a situation with a buddy whenever possible.

- ▶ It can help keep everyone safer.
- ▶ If you are with friends, make sure they are aware of the situation your are intervening in, so that they can have your back.
- ▶ If you are alone, but you notice other people observing a situation, try to make eye contact with someone before taking action.

Exercise 1 - Speak up!

Voice Training

10 minutes

*This exercise comes from United Against Racism - a European network against nationalism, racism, fascism, and in support of migrants and refugees. It is taken from their pamphlet: "Who, If Not You? How You Can Intervene When Witnessing Racial Assaults."

In this exercise you learn how to attract the attention of bystanders just with the help of your voice. Often people are unaware of the actual power their voice can have. Addressing people around you in a clearly audible and distinct way will give you the confidence to demand attention when getting caught up in a difficult situation.

Note: Make sure there's enough space for folks in wheelchairs to move around.

1. Preparation:

Think about a situation in which it is important to gain the attention of others. Here are some examples: You notice a fire; you note somebody stealing a woman's handbag; you see somebody being harassed. Think about what you could say or do to point to the problem and how you can make yourself heard. Perhaps even make a short one-line script for yourself, and speak it whatever language is most comfortable for you.

2. Scene:

Now all participants of the exercise stroll around the room and start speaking all at once. At some point the facilitator randomly taps a person on the shoulder. They then try to draw everybody's attention to the imagined problem just by means of their voice.

3. Debrief:

Did you manage to attract attention? If yes, what do you think was the reason? If not, what was the problem? How did your intervention affect the others? Did they understand the message you were trying to get across? Discuss your opinions and observations with other members of the group. Repeat the exercise until everybody has given it a try.

This easy exercise strengthens your confidence and ability to point to an emergency situation loudly and distinctly.

We do this exercise NOT to imply that being loud and drawing attention to an incident is always what's needed. Remember we are building confidence, which is needed no matter the strategy you employ to intervene. This activity helps us to build confidence.

Overview Of Do's & Don't's

Strategies for Bystander Intervention

10 minutes

- Distribute the Do's & Don'ts handout that can be found online here (APPENDIX 1):

http://www.peoplesresponseteamchicago.org/uploads/8/7/9/8/87981704/bystander_invention.pdf

- Have volunteers read each segment of text out loud, including the explanation of the handout at the top. Ask if there are any questions as you go along.

* Important Note:

We included "Don't Call The Police" as one of the strategies, because we see this as an important intervention in the vast majority of resources that exist for Bystander Intervention. Almost every other resource, tutorial or guide we've seen encourages people to delegate conflict resolution to the police as an immediate/first step. However, we see a number of risks involved with calling the police, especially in situations that have not yet escalated to physical violence. Additionally, we want to encourage individuals and communities to build our capacities to resolve situations without relying on harmful institutions such as the police.

We would add that there are going to be situations in which the person being harassed or targeted may ask you to call the police, an ambulance, or 911 on their behalf, and we would encourage people to recognize that if authorities are reached out to we would hope it would be with the consent of the person experiencing the harm/risk.

- Ask if there are any questions about the other suggestions on the Do's & Don'ts handout, and make clear that during the next portion of the training, we will have time to practice these strategies and see them in action.

Scenarios

Practice through Discussion or Role-Plays

30 minutes

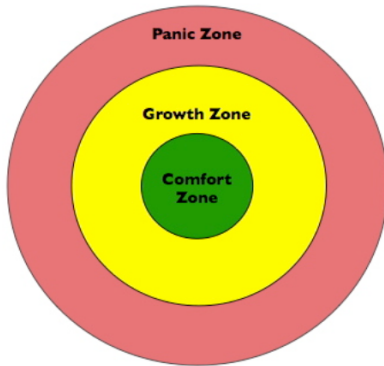
A Note for facilitators: Role Plays take more time, but can be very instructive. However they take trust and skilled facilitation. With each of the following scenarios, we have found that it also works to describe the situation, and ask people to discuss their response in small groups before debriefing in the large group. We hope that whoever facilitates will decide the method that makes the most sense for their group.

Notes on how to structure the role-play scenarios:

There are many ways to structure this section. If you have a relatively small group, we'd suggest keeping the group together. If you have a large group, we'd suggest breaking into smaller groups, and allowing each small group to experiment with the different role-plays. It is important to debrief altogether to share in the learning.

1. Read/share the scenario with everyone. Be sure to have one of the facilitators moderate each scenario, to direct the actors as needed and facilitate the debriefs.
2. Have the volunteers role-play how they would respond, without any guidance from the facilitators (3-4 ppl per scenario)
3. Briefly debrief with the actors and audience - what did you notice?
4. Role-play it again (with new people, or with the same people but using suggestions from the debrief)
5. Debrief the role-play again.
6. Take notes on a poster chart paper to track "STRATEGIES" for bystander intervention.
7. Be sure to chart the D's of De-escalation Strategies in the debriefs, on the poster. It is a helpful way to remember these strategies later. We also suggest that you be sure to chart the D's of De-escalation Strategies in the debriefs, on the poster. It is a helpful way to remember these strategies later.
8. For each scenario, we have included important notes based on our experiences that we hope get mentioned in each debrief. We suggest that facilitators offer these suggestions during the final debrief if they don't come up in the participants' debrief.

Things to keep in mind before role-plays:



Share visual reminder about “Growth Zone” (drawing three concentric circles on flipchart paper is a simple way to demonstrate this)

▶ Say: If we stay in our comfort zone, it is harder to learn. We also don’t want people to take such intense risks that they feel panic or undo stress. WE encourage participants to challenge themselves to enter their “growth zone” while participating in this workshop.

▶ We DO NOT advise using actual slurs or using real physical force during role-plays.

- ▶ We encourage facilitators to write a script for themselves as the aggressor before leading the training, so that you are comfortable with each scenario.

Every situation is different, so now we’re going to walk through some of these situations.

SCENARIO 1: Verbal harassment on the train, where the person being targeted appears uncomfortable and unsure of how to respond.

Description: You are riding on the train, it’s crowded, and notice a man muttering slurs and threats under his breath towards a younger person of color near him. You are nearby and notice there is more room on the other end of the train car. What do you do?

3 Volunteers needed:

- Actor (aggressor) - *we recommend this be a facilitator*
- Actor (targeted person)
- Actor (intervener)

NOTES FOR BIG GROUP DEBRIEF:

DE-ESCALATE: In this kind of a scenario, it can be highly effective to act as though you know the person. Saying something like “Hey I haven’t seen you in so long, wanna go catch up over here?” can open up opportunities for the person experiencing harassment to accept your support and leave the situation, or reject your support by saying they don’t in fact know you. Though it may feel silly/vulnerable it can be highly effective, and the worst that happens is you apologize for mistaking them for someone else.

SCENARIO 2: Public, Verbal Abuse where the person being targeted is responding assertively.

Description: You and your friend are walking in a crowded shopping area, and you overhear yelling. You stop and notice that a man you perceive to be white is shouting aggressively at an older Black woman, including telling her to “get a job.” She is yelling back and pointing her cane at him, telling him to leave her alone. What do you do?

4 Volunteers needed:

- Actor (aggressor)
- Actor (targeted person)
- Bystander who intervenes and their friend

NOTES FOR BIG GROUP DEBRIEF:

BE DIRECT: Here we think it’s important to respect the tone of the person being harassed, and consider supporting them rather than acting as a neutral bystander. Especially if there are clear power dynamics of race, class or gender at play.

This scenario was based on a real situation the day after the recent election. On observing the white man yelling racially loaded phrases at her, two PRT members joined the Black woman in yelling at the man to leave her alone and walk away other passersby joined in on the chorus and he eventually left. We checked in with her and walked with her to her next destination. We didn’t de-escalate the situation, we simply expressed our support for the person being harassed and affirmed her agency in shutting down the attack.

SCENARIO 3: Verbal altercation that’s escalating, between two ppl who appear to know each other.

Description: You are leaving a store at the mall and overhear what appears to be a couple arguing about money, with one party accusing the other of over-spending and raising their voice at them. At a certain point they get physical and grab the other person’s wrist and shake them, while still yelling about their money. What do you do?

Alternate Scenario: You are in a store and notice a manager aggressively shaming an employee, who appears uncomfortable and embarrassed. What do you do?

3 Volunteers needed:

- Actor (aggressor)
- Actor (targeted person)
- Bystander who intervenes

NOTES FOR BIG GROUP DEBRIEF:

DISTRACT: The strategy we have most consistently heard advocated and experienced as being effective is to approach the situation with the intention to DISTRACT. In situations where intimate partner violence may be occurring, it can endanger the person later to argue on their side, or point out that you think it is harassment or violent. Simply asking a question like, “is everything okay here?” or “I live close by - just wondering if either of you need anything?” or being even more subtle like asking for directions can de-escalate without bringing extra attention to the person being harmed.

In institutional settings, reminding people that they have responsibilities to attend to can be helpful. For example, if you noticed the alternative scenario happening, walking up and asking ‘where can I find a certain item?’ can de-escalate and allow the employee some immediate relief.

5 Minute Break!

Mid-point Check-in

10 minutes

Pair & Share: (3 minutes)

Have participants turn to the person next to them and discuss the following questions:

- ▶ how are you feeling? what have you learned so far?
- ▶ what questions are coming up? What’s missing?

Share-back: (7 minutes)

Popcorn out some responses (scribe the questions onto poster chart paper for the Q&A session towards the end)

Scenarios (Continued)

20 minutes

SCENARIO 4: Physical Attack

Description: You're leaving a party, and you notice that several people who appear drunk are shoving another person who seems non-confrontational, but also unable to get away. What do you do?

6 Volunteers needed:

- Actor (aggro X 3)
- Actor (targeted person)
- Bystander who intervenes and their friend

NOTES FOR BIG GROUP DEBRIEF:

DELEGATE: Situations involving physical violence mean there is a greater risk of a bystander also experiencing violence by becoming involved, but it also raises the stakes and urgency of intervention. While there is no single answer for how to intervene, we suggest always finding another person to support you, and/or notifying a friend or loved one (via text or a phone call) if you are intervening in a situation of physical violence. While many believe this is the moment to call the police, acting as a witness and threatening to call the police (or acting as though you are on the phone with them) can also be sufficient to scare off an attacker. Trust your instincts, assume the level of risk you are willing to, and proceed with caution. If you decide to intervene physically consider whether it is more strategic for you to try to shield the person being attacked, help them move to a different location, or directly confront the attacker. There is a huge range of possible responses, and they could have a variety of outcomes, always depending on a number of circumstances.

SCENARIO 5: A situation involving the police harassing a stranger.

Description: You and a friend are walking home past a 7-11 and notice two police officers harassing someone you appear to be homeless and telling them they cannot sit on the sidewalk. You also observe that the manager/employee of the store is watching the situation. What do you do?

6 Volunteers needed:

- 2 Police Officers
- Actor (targeted person)

- Bystander who intervenes
- Store Manager

NOTES BEFORE ROLE-PLAYING THIS SCENARIO:

We included this scenario because many of the situations of interpersonal harassment that we witness or are asked about are in fact instigated by and/or involving the police, and it is helpful to think through ways to respond. We encourage the facilitators and participants to also consider seeking out our full Copwatching Workshop (PDF will be available on our website in February 2017), and reading the article linked below for more details about the legal considerations, specific risks, and helpful strategies involved when copwatching.

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2016/12/20/a-workshop-on-cop-watching-shows-chicagoans-how-to-safely-document-police-stops>

NOTES FOR DEBRIEFING THIS SCENARIO:

In this particular scenario, we would hope that the bystanders would engage the store manager to encourage them to assure police that the person was welcome and/or not causing problems. People with institutional power in a situation involving police can have far more influence than bystanders/passersby without an apparent relationship or connection to the situation. We would also hope that one of the bystanders would ask the person who appears to be homeless whether they are okay, if they need anything, or if they would like us to wait with them until the police leave. One of the biggest myths about copwatching is that it means antagonizing/engaging with cops themselves. While any engagement during a situation involving police will likely be bothersome to officers, we have seen it be very effective to try to communicate directly with the person they are questioning and/or arresting instead of the officer. This simultaneously shows the officers that they are being watched serves multiple purposes.

Another option is for the bystander to make a phone call to a free legal aid hotline, to report the arrest and assist the arrestee in finding legal representation. **In Chicago, we have the First Defense Legal Aid Hotline (1-800-LAW-REP-4), which provides free, 24-hour legal representation to people in Chicago Police custody and educates Chicagoans about how to protect their rights.** We recommend that you write this number on the board and encourage participants to memorize it and/or write it down.

Q&A

15 minutes

Now that we've had time to review several different kinds of scenarios, are there any scenarios we didn't talk about that participants would like to discuss?

Any burning questions? (*Reference the Q&A sheet from the mid-point check-in*)

Take ideas from the audience around how to respond to those scenarios/questions.

Wrapping Up

10 minutes

(Optional) Distribute & Collect Feedback Forms

- What was one new tool you gained today?
- What did you find challenging?
- How are you feeling as you leave?
- What was missing from the training?
- What would you do differently if you lead this training?
- Anything else?

Be sure to make announcements about future trainings or ways to stay involved with your organization.

- Hand out some feedback forms for attendees to anonymously fill out & leave behind
- Let people know you'll be sending out a follow-up email with notes from the training and possibly some next steps or even the next trainings
- Remind attendees that we just reviewed a **ton** of information and it makes sense if they're feeling overwhelmed.
- Encourage everyone to pair up with someone from this workshop and commit to meeting up over coffee and reviewing what they learned together.

Closing

2 minutes

Say: We are going to say “No” loudly and firmly at the same time. Imagine all that we are rejecting with this word - state violence, interpersonal harm, white supremacy, etc. And remember that by saying “no” to these things we are opening up space for alternatives, and practicing living and building the world that we want to see.

1-2-3- “NO!”

Resources

A Practical Web Tutorial to Bystander Intervention and De-escalation Tactics

<https://watt.cashmusic.org/writing/deescalation>

Do's and Don'ts for Bystander Intervention:

http://www.peoplesresponseteamchicago.org/uploads/8/7/9/8/87981704/bystander_invention.pdf

Resources for Intervention and De-escalation:

<http://www.interventionanddeescalation.com>

VIDEO: Don't Be A Bystander

<https://www.facebook.com/ShowingUpForRacialJusticesurj/videos/1288600371186561/>

A workshop on ‘cop watching’ shows Chicagoans how to safely document police stops

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2016/12/20/a-workshop-on-cop-watching-shows-chicagoans-how-to-safely-document-police-stops>

Here's How to Cop Watch

<http://www.thenation.com/article/heres-how-to-cop-watch/>

Peoples Response Team

<http://www.peoplesresponseteamchicago.org>

DO'S AND DON'T'S FOR BYSTANDER INTERVENTION

This handout offers tips for how to intervene in public instances of racist, anti-Black, anti-Muslim, anti-Trans, and other forms of oppressive interpersonal violence and harassment while considering the safety of all parties. Clearly, this is only a start. We hope it can be one tool on the way towards building strong communities that resist institutionalized racism and state violence.

DO:

Do keep both of you safe.

- Assess your surroundings - are there others nearby you can pull in to support? Working in a team is a good idea, if it is possible.
- Can you and the person being harassed move to a safer space/place?

Do make your presence as a witness known.

- If possible, make eye contact with the person being harassed and ask them if they want support.
- Move yourself near the person being harassed. If possible and you feel you can risk doing so, create distance or a barrier between the person being harassed and the attacker.
- If it's safe to do so, and the person being harassed consents—film or record the incident.

Do take cues from the individual being harassed.

- Is the person engaging with the harasser or not? You can make suggestions, “Would you like to walk with me over here? Move to another train car? For him to leave you alone?,” and then follow their lead.
- Notice if the person being harassed is resisting in their own way, and honor that. (Especially white folks, don't police the tone of the person being harassed).
- Follow up with the individual being harassed after the incident is over, see if they need anything else.

DON'T:

Don't call the police.

- For many communities experiencing harassment right now (including Arab and Muslim communities, Black people, queer and trans folks, and immigrants) the police can cause a greater danger for the person being harassed.

Don't escalate the situation.

- The goal is to get the person being harassed to safety, not to incite further violence from the attacker.

Don't do nothing.

- Silence is dangerous--it communicates approval and leaves the victim high and dry. If you find yourself too nervous or afraid to speak out, move closer to the person being harassed to communicate your support with your body.

