

Your Role as an Active Ally

You have a role to play when you see or are aware of things that do not sit right with you or a colleague

We all want to be working in a positive environment free from behaviours which are offending and aggressive and make us feel uncomfortable. We all want to be treated with respect and feel safe at work. Being an active ally will help achieve this.



Do something

We have all witnessed negative interactions in our workplace- something that does not feel right. Sometimes you see it and sometimes you are just aware of it without anyone speaking directly to you.

If not you, then who?

If not now, then when?

What can you do?

Notice the inappropriate behaviour

Such as personal attacks, undermining others etc. We don't want to see them as the norm.

Feel responsible to act: see yourself as being part of the solution by helping and don't wait or assume that someone else will act.

Remember that "doing nothing" is an action. Silence or inaction will mean you are taken to approve of the situation.

Take action

Sometimes it is about intervening and diffusing a difficult situation. You can show the affected individual that you have noticed their discomfort and you are there to help. You can speak with them and offer them some support, advice, perspective. You can also tell where they can find support or people who are better placed to help them in those situations.

Sometimes it is as simple as not laughing at a joke we find inappropriate.

It is for you to decide what's the best approach in light of the severity of what is going on, who is involved, the relationships at play.

See it in practice - how you can be an active ally

"JUST" JOKING

A colleague makes a joke involving an offensive stereotype during a meeting.

Immediate actions

Change the topic; Interrupt the incident; get up and leave;

Use body language to show disapproval such as a frown, clear throat, wide-eyed surprised look; Ask a clarifying question- "What do you mean by that?";

Name or acknowledge an offense- "That's harsh/rude/offensive".

Delayed actions

Talk privately to the actor- "Look, I know you well enough to know you don't mean it, but someone could take offense or feel hurt";

Report the actor.

SCAPEGOATING

In a meeting, a supervisor describes a problem, personalizes the fault to a single individual and berates that person loudly and with a strong language.

Immediate actions

Name or acknowledge the offense or the issue- "That's not only his/her fault and it may be humiliating to him/her";

Get others to publicly denounce the inappropriate conduct.

Delayed actions

Advise the target to report the incident; accompany the target if she/he decides to report.

CORRIDOR FIGHT

Two people are arguing loudly and angrily in the main office.

Immediate actions

Process observation- make your presence known;

Tell the actors to stop the fight / the inappropriate conduct- "Please stop shouting with each other I'm sure it is possible to solve differently".

Delayed actions

Talk to the target about what happened;

Reinforce the group norms - "In this office, we do not shout".

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

A colleague brags often about his/her sexual conquests in front of another colleague and even makes an explicit offer to spend the night with her/him.

Immediate actions

Covertly keep the target away from the actor – for example tell him/her to come with you because you want to talk to him/her;

Tell the actor to stop the inappropriate conduct.

Delayed actions

Publicly encourage the target to report the inappropriate conduct;

Reinforce group norms;

Report the actor formally to (administration supervisor, etc...).