



Bystander Resources

DOMESTIC ABUSE IS

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PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

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Intervening in Verbal Abuse in Public

Though verbal abuse predominantly occurs in private settings, part of the abuser's tactics may include to embarrass or humiliate their victim in public.

Therefore, you may come across what appears to be verbal abuse in a public setting. As with all types of domestic violence, this abuse will be part of a systematic, **calculated system of control over the victim**, so what you witness will only be part of the picture.

The victim may appear distressed, nervous, or withdrawn. They will be **subjected** to this (and maybe other forms of domestic violence) **on a regular basis**, with the aim of belittling, demeaning, and humiliating them. Their **self-esteem may have been chipped away**, and they may have **rationalized the abuse** as being part of a normal relationship. They may be mentally exhausted.

If you hear someone being berated in public, you may want to say something. This would be a positive step to:

- **Reinforce** to abusers that this conduct is **unacceptable** and that **domestic violence is everyone's concern**.
- **Show** the victim that this conduct is **not normal**.
- **Give** the victim an **opportunity to get help**. Bear in mind though, the victim **may not realise** that they are in an abusive situation, and may react accordingly.



Intervening in Verbal Abuse

If the victim is part of your social network

Many perpetrators are charming to everyone else except the victim – who may be the only one to see their abusive side. This can act as a barrier to the victim seeking help as they might think no one will believe them, and it can also reinforce the abuser's claims that the victim is imagining the abuse, or that they are 'going mad.'

If you witness domestic violence or hear verbal abuse whilst amongst friends or acquaintances, you could:

- **Confront the abuser with someone else** – there is safety in numbers.
- **Speak to the abuser's friends about your concerns** and ask them to intervene.
- **Talk to the victim away from the abuser** to make sure they are okay or ask if they need support.
- **Speak to the victim** at another time to see if they need support.

If you don't know the victim

If you witness domestic violence or hear verbal abuse in public, it's important to take your own safety into account as well as the victims. Before you intervene, it's important that you feel confident about doing it, and assess the situation first. Think about:

- **Would it be safe to interrupt?** Remember, your personal safety is a priority – never put yourself at risk.
- **Do you think the victim wants someone to help?**



Intervening in Verbal Abuse

If 'yes,' you could:

- **Intervene Directly:** If possible, **take someone with you** to stand nearby and **call out the abusive behaviour** by telling the abuser to stop. Ask the victim 'Are you okay?' or 'Do you need help?'
- **Delegate:** **Look for a person of authority** to help – for example, a security guard, shop manager, or transport worker. **If the situation is escalating, contact the police.**
- **Document:** **Record the incident** with your phone to document the abuse. Don't post this online or pass it to the authorities unless the victim requests it. See more advice on this **here**.
- **Distract:** **Shift the focus** on to something else by starting up a conversation about something random with the potential victim to **interrupt the situation**, e.g. 'Someone's lost a mobile around here, have you seen it?' or 'Do you know where (shop/library/market etc.) is?'
- **Delay:** You may not be able to intervene immediately, but **may be able to speak to the victim privately afterward**. Ask them if there's anything you can do to help, or if they would like you to stay close to them for a while.

Remember, your safety is just as important – don't intervene if you feel uneasy or unsure about doing so.

If you or a loved one has experienced domestic or sexual abuse and is seeking help, visit the [NO MORE Global Directory](#) today.