



# Personal Responsibility

## Bystander vs. Upstander

### Pre-Teaching/ Guiding Language:

Have you ever been in a situation where you see something going on that you know is not right, but you do not do anything about it? Maybe you think it's not your problem, maybe you think someone else will step in and stop it, or maybe you are worried about what would happen if you did get involved.

When this happens, you become a *bystander*. A bystander is someone who witnesses something bad or wrong happening and does not step in to stop it or say anything. A bystander doesn't even necessarily need to see it happening in the moment. If they are aware something is going on and don't do anything about it, it makes them part of the problem. Some bystanders may just laugh along with everyone else. For example, if they see a mean online post they may like it, share it, or just scroll by and pretend they did not see it.

The opposite of a bystander is an *upstander*. The upstander recognizes when something is wrong, and they will step in to help the situation. They do their best to help and support their peers. Qualities of an upstander are:

1. Respect everyone
2. Kind and compassionate
3. Stand up for their peers
4. Tell someone when they see something wrong
5. Report untrue or hurtful things online

### Key Takeaways:

- Students will understand the difference between a bystander and an upstander.
- Students will increase respect and compassion for their classmates and peers.
- Students will increase confidence when it comes to reporting instances of bullying and unkind or inappropriate behavior.

### Duration + Materials:

- 40 minutes
- Chart paper
- Markers, crayons, drawing supplies

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Bystander**- A person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part.
- **Upstander**- A person who speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause.
- **Compassionate**- Showing or feeling sympathy or concern for others.



## Activity:

1. Use the pre-teaching language to introduce the concept of bystanders and upstanders, including the characteristics of each.
2. Use the discussion questions to guide a conversation around different types of situations and how you should intervene.
3. Break the class up into small groups, not to exceed 5 students per group.
  - a. Make sure you are selecting the groups as not to leave any students out.
4. Provide each group with large chart paper or poster board and writing or drawing materials.
5. Give the students 20-30 minutes to “design” their own app that will aide them in being an upstander online.
  - a. Write the “upstander” qualities on the board and encourage students to “think outside the box” when it comes to being an upstander online.
  - b. Set a timer and give students 5- and 10-minute warnings.
6. Once students have finished, allow any group who wants to share 1-2 minutes each to share their designs.

## Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you knew something was wrong, but you didn't know what to do?
2. What would have helped you in that situation?
3. Have you ever been somewhere where you knew the right thing to do but you were too afraid to do it?
4. What was standing in your way of doing the right thing?
5. What would it take for you to be an upstander?
6. Have you ever witnessed someone being an upstander?

## Supplemental Materials:

If teachers would like to go deeper into the bystander effect: <https://www.verywellmind.com/the-bystander-effect-2795899>

## Reinforcement Activities:

1. Praise your students when you see them engaging in upstander behaviors.
2. Model upstander behaviors in your classroom.
3. Build empathy in your classroom by questioning bystander behaviors. Ask students to hypothesize how their actions may cause others to feel.