

WHAT IS THE BYSTANDER INTERVENTION EFFECT?

And How Can We Counter It?

The Bystander Intervention Effect

When people fail to assist someone who is in need of help in the presence of others



Why Does The Bystander Intervention Effect Occur?

"This does not make sense, wouldn't more people being around increase the chances of the person being helped?"

While it may be logical to suppose that, studies have revealed otherwise and that the bystander intervention effect occurs for a number of reasons.

Diffusion of Responsibility



People justify not helping by believing that other people nearby will help.

Fear of Making a Social Blunder

People are afraid of looking foolish if they seek help and the person is not seriously in need of assistance.

Example: Lifeguards may be afraid to look foolish saving someone they think may be drowning if the person is just holding their breath underwater.

Anonymity

People like to remain anonymous and will be less likely to help if they are anonymous and can remain so



Risk vs. Benefit

People consider how much harm they risk bringing on themselves by helping the person and what benefits they may lose helping the person.



Example: Someone running late for work is less likely to help as they risk getting in trouble themselves for being late.



What can you do if you find yourself in a position where you need help and many people are around but no one is assisting you?

One way to counter the bystander intervention effect is to call on someone specifically and ask them for help or give directions on how they can help.

Another way to counter the effect is to clearly communicate that you need help as people feel less constrained from seeking help if the need for help is apparent.

What can you do if you see someone in need of help and no one else is doing anything?

- Act as if you were the only person they were asking for help.
- Ask for clarification on if the person is okay or how you can help.
- Delegate other people to help as well.

Bystander Intervention starts with YOU



For more information on the bystander intervention effect, please visit:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/bystander-effect>