

UNIT 12

Move Beyond Bystander

We are witnessing both an increase in public eruptions of discord, and equally, we're at a powerful moment of social transformation. To take a proactive approach means to meet the moment we are in with awareness: to question with courage and act with integrity.



TOOL 1

Fumble Forward

Perhaps you are unsure of the terminologies needed to join a conversation. Perhaps you are unsure if your questions will offend someone or reveal your lack of knowledge. Perhaps you haven't fully formulated your ideas and opinions yet or feel like you don't quite know how to say something.

Invite all in the conversation to create a mutual agreement for intellectual humility and mutual exploration. Donna Mejia's practice called **Fumble Forward** can help:

1. Select a group of friends, family, or classmates with whom you are connected.



2. Explain that the idea of this tool is to practice intellectual humility and mutual exploration and that you would like to enter into a social agreement/contract together as a community.

**Before speaking, say,
“I am about to fumble with words.”**

**The community responds as a
chorus with, “Fumble Forward!”**

This is a social agreement/contract to let confusion be a vital part of discourse.

For the next few minutes, **all have agreed to suspend judgement, lean in and help each other** clarify through a process of corrective, delicate, or clumsy verbal surgery.



Fumble Forward allows people to stay open and speak from the heart with diplomacy, even if their voices are trembling and they can't find confident, stable ground. **Fumble Forward** gives all a starting place to back away from sounding off on each other.

**We can diplomatically move towards
true listening and communication.**



TOOL 2

Take a Stand, Avoid Bystander Passivity

You may find yourself in a situation where a fellow student, a friend, or maybe even someone you don't know is in need of your help.



Your first step is to ask how you can be helpful. It is normal to feel a range of emotions which might include anxiety, anger, confusion, sadness, or fear.



The **Bystander Effect** names the phenomenon that individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when there are other people present; the greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that one of them will help.

Bystanders passively accept bullying, injustice, discrimination, microaggressions, and other acts of oppression by watching and doing nothing. Often without realizing it, these bystanders also contribute to the problem. Bystanders provide the audience an aggressor craves.

To disrupt this power dynamic, try these tools:

- ✓ Remember that your first step is to ask how you can be helpful.
- ✓ Stand beside the victim, offer to speak to them while the attack is going on. Say clearly "I am here for you."
- ✓ You can try using direct intervention that communicates clearly that the harassment is not acceptable.
- ✓ Consider delegating the problem to an authority trained to assist. Record and report the incident.
- ✓ Distract, such as pretending to know the person; this can off-set the perceived power privilege that the aggressor is seeking to create.
- ✓ Delay your time in the picture to ensure the person leaves the interaction feeling safe. Ask if they need help, offer to help with phone calls, offer to get water, or just be present.
- ✓ Stay calm. Model respectful behavior when you intervene.

Reporting on the CU Boulder Campus

If you need assistance: violations of campus policies and acts of harassment should be reported to the CU Boulder Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance.

Confidential assistance for all CU Boulder students, staff, and faculty with any university-related dispute or concern is available from the CU Boulder Ombuds. Our campus offers a consultation to explore options for reporting at [Do Not Ignore It](#). If you are considering reporting a concern, we encourage you to report:

- **Even if you don't know the identity of the person who caused the harm.**
- **Even if you are unsure whether it's something the university could address.**
- **Even if you don't know what you want to have happen.**
- **Even if you think it's not serious enough.**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



Which of the Move Beyond Bystander tools did you use this week? How did it go?



Did you notice any challenges when practicing with the Move Beyond Bystander Tools this week? If so, what thoughts, emotions, or sensations did you notice?



Are you interested in building one of the practices into your daily life?

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