



No Means No: How to Respond to Harassment

USE YOUR VOICE, FACIAL EXPRESSION, AND BODY LANGUAGE

- **Body language:** neutral stance, weight balanced, head up, shoulders back, hands at your sides ("stop" or "time out" signs are ok), no aggressive gestures (pointing, finger wagging)
- **Tone of voice:** voice intense and loud enough to be heard clearly, from conversational to insistent to "command voice" as the situation warrants. Keep your voice as calm as possible.
- **Facial expression:** Serious face, no smiling.

ADDRESS THE BEHAVIOR, NOT THE PERSON

- Keep to the facts - you are objecting to their behavior, not to them.
- Identify the harasser by appearance: "You, the man in the yellow shirt . . ."
- State what they said or did, as simply and clearly as possible. "You are standing too close to me." "You just said . . ." "You just grabbed/touched my . . ."
- Avoid name-calling or use of obscenities

TELL THE HARASSER WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO

- Keep it simple and specific. For example: "Move away from me." "Take three steps in that direction." "Stand over there" "Don't talk to me." "Don't touch me." "Stop following me."
- Ignore as calmly as possible their objections, namecalling, or use of obscenities
- Repeat until they comply, or until you can get away.

MATCH YOUR RESPONSE TO THE LEVEL OF THE THREAT

Be prepared to increase the intensity of your response if needed.

MAKE AND HOLD EYE CONTACT

After telling them what to do, and if it is safe for you to do so, hold eye contact silently for a count of three. Then, if possible to do so safely, walk away.

***HELPING YOU
GET FROM POINT A
TO POINT B**

FOCUS ON YOUR GOALS

- Your goals are
 - to stop the current behavior
 - get out of the situation safely
- No need to respond to diversions, threats, questions, blaming, etc.
- No need to elicit an apology, explanation or admission of guilt

MAKE NO EXCUSES OR APOLOGIES

- No need to plead, apologize, or say something clever or funny
- Be polite (not overly nice) at first, drop that if they don't respond
- No need to be nice or attempt to reduce their upset or make them feel better
- No need to argue, rationalize, explain, defend

USE STATEMENTS

- For example: "Leave me alone!" (Not "Would you please leave me alone?")
- No questions, not even rhetorical questions like "Who do you think you are?"

REPORT THE HARASSMENT**In a workplace or other professional setting:**

- Create and keep a written record of what happened, when (date and time), where, and who (if anyone) was present and witnessed it. This will be extremely valuable if you decide to report the incident.
- If the harassment continues or reoccurs, continue to assert that the behavior is unwelcome and unwanted, verbally and (if possible) in writing
- In the workplace, you will need to follow the employer's or union's processes for reporting harassment
- In other settings, such as meetings and conferences, report incidents to the person in charge of the event or activity

To report harassment on the street or on public transportation:

- Street harassment: report it to security or police (more on this at www.stopstreetharassment.com)
- Public transportation: report it to the public transportation agency; many agencies have made it easier to report harassment
- Harassment in other public places: (e.g. stores, gyms, theaters): report it to management or security
- Harassment in bars, clubs, or restaurants: report it to the maître d', bartender, manager, or bouncer.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I SEE HARASSMENT?: Active Bystander Intervention

If you witness a physical assault of any kind, or if you feel in danger of being assaulted, stay out of reach of the assailant and call venue security or call 911 immediately.

Trust your gut – if the situation doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. However, be aware that unconscious bias can creep in, particularly if the situation involves a person of color. If you're not sure what is going on, check with the target (Option 2, below).

Ensure your own safety. Walking away, recruiting others, and/or going for help are always options.

Your goal is to stop the harassment, not elicit an apology or change the harasser's mind.

Option 1. Address the harasser directly.

Best when:

- You witnessed or heard the harassment
- When the target is at a distance or has moved away.

Steps to take:

- Calm demeanor, serious face, neutral body language, make eye contact if possible.
- Address the behavior, not the person.
- Stick to facts of what just happened.
- Describe how it affected you, don't speak for the target.
- If relevant, refer to norms of professional conduct or organizational policies.
- Tell them what to do.

Option 2. Address the target

Use this technique when you see an interaction that looks, feels, or sounds like harassment, the target is present, and you decide to intervene.

Best when:

- Target and harasser are still engaged with each other
- Target is looking uncomfortable or you get a strong sense that something is "off"
- Target and harasser are not under the influence

Steps to take:

- If possible stand out of reach of the harasser and between the target and the harasser.
- Address the target.
 - o Ask a question, "Are you ok? Is everything ok here?"
 - o If the target says they are not ok, ask, "How can I help you? Do you want me to walk with you? Are you here with anyone? Is there someone I can call? Would you like me to contact the manager/security?"

- If the target says they are ok, they may be feeling coerced. Stop asking questions and stand out of reach and keep looking. Just knowing you are paying attention may be enough to stop the harasser, at least temporarily. You can say out loud: "OK, but I'm going to stand here and keep an eye on you until I'm sure you're ok."
- As much as possible, ignore the harasser.
- If possible, get the harasser's name, so that you can make an incident report for later follow-up (or even just for the record).

Option 3. Distract either the target or the harasser

Best when:

- Target and harasser are still engaged with each other.
- You need to separate the target and the harasser quickly.
- The harasser and/or the target is under the influence and more easily distracted

Steps to take:

- Distract either person in the situation to intervene. Say something like:
 - "Hey, don't I know you from . . . ?"
 - "I haven't seen you in a while, let's go sit over there . . ."
 - Ask for directions, the time, or other assistance. "Can you tell me if I'm on the right train/bus?"
- If possible, before you step in, recruit another bystander to distract the other person. Tell your recruit what to do. "You ask the harasser for the time, I'm going to pretend I know the target . . ."

Option 4: Delegate to someone in authority

In many places, transit and hospitality workers are being trained in active bystander intervention. If you aren't comfortable stepping in, try to find someone with some authority in the situation and tell them what you noticed. This could be the bus driver, bartender or wait staff, manager, bouncer, or a staff person at a meeting or convention.

Resources:

www.stopstreetharassment.com - offers a state-by-state list of laws that prohibit harassment
Gavin. De Becker. *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals That Protect Us From Violence*. New York: Delta, 1999.

Martha Langelan. *Back Off: How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers*. No Edition Stated ed. Touchstone, 1993.

Holly Kearl. *Stop Street Harassment: Making Public Places Safe and Welcoming for Women*. Stop Street Harassment: Making Public Places Safe and Welcoming for Women, 2012.