



Kingstone
HIGH SCHOOL

Building Respectful Communities



Module 5: Bystanders, Responsibility, and Positive Choices



Introduction

In previous modules, we explored what bullying is, why people join in, how bullying affects people, and how bullying can happen online.

Throughout the programme, we have followed the experiences of Ryan, Noah, Mia and Jake. As we have seen, bullying situations often involve more than just two people. There may be people directly involved, people who join in, people who encourage behaviour, or people who witness what is happening.

This raises an important question. What responsibility do people have when they witness bullying?

Many students believe responsibility only belongs to the person who starts the behaviour. However, situations are often more complicated. The choices people make when they witness bullying can influence what happens next.

This module explores the role of bystanders, the challenges people face when deciding how to respond, and how positive choices can help create safer and more respectful communities.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- ☐ Explain what a bystander is.
- ☐ Understand why people sometimes stay silent.
- ☐ Recognise different ways people can respond to bullying.
- ☐ Understand that doing nothing is still a choice.
- ☐ Identify positive actions that may help others.
- ☐ Reflect on your own responsibilities when witnessing harmful behaviour.

Key Vocabulary

Bystander	A person who witnesses a situation but is not directly involved.
Responsibility	Being accountable for your choices and actions.
Intervention	Taking action to help improve a situation.
Influence	The ability to affect the behaviour or decisions of others.
Empathy	Understanding another person's feelings and experiences.
Courage	Choosing to do the right thing even when it feels difficult.

Understanding the Role of a Bystander

A bystander is somebody who witnesses a situation without being directly involved. Most people will be a bystander at some point.

For example, a bystander may:

- Witness teasing.
- Observe exclusion.
- See harmful messages online.
- Hear unkind comments.
- Notice somebody being treated unfairly.



Bystanders often have choices, and these choices can influence what happens next. Sometimes people underestimate the influence they have when they are not directly involved.

However, every reaction, response or decision can affect the wider situation.



Activity - Bystander or Participant?

Read each situation.

Decide whether the person is acting as a bystander or participant.

Statement 1

A student watches a group making fun of somebody but does not join in.

☐

Bystander

☐

Participant

Explanation:

Statement 2

A student laughs along with others.

☐

Bystander

☐

Participant

Explanation:

Statement 3

A student witnesses bullying online but does not respond.

☐

Bystander

☐

Participant

Explanation:



Scenario - Mia Remembers

Several weeks have passed since the incidents involving Noah. Mia keeps thinking about what happened. She remembers hearing the jokes that Jake made about Noah, seeing other people laugh, and feeling uncomfortable.

“It wasn’t really my business.”

“Someone else will deal with it.”

“I didn’t want the attention on me.”

Now, after learning more about impact and responsibility, she begins wondering whether staying silent helped the situation continue. Mia is not blaming herself. However, she is beginning to think more carefully about the choices available to bystanders.

At first, Mia assumed speaking up would be easy. After all, she knew the behaviour was wrong. However, when she imagined actually saying something, the situation felt much more complicated.

She worried that:

- Jake might become annoyed with her.
- Other students might think she was overreacting.
- Her friends might stop including her.
- Attention could be directed towards her instead.



Mia realised that doing the right thing is not always as simple as knowing what is right. Sometimes people face difficult choices between their values and their desire to fit in. This does not mean staying silent is always the best option.

However, it helps explain why being a bystander can sometimes feel challenging.



Activity - Staying Silent

Tick any statements that might explain why somebody stays silent.

- ☐ "I don't want to get involved."
- ☐ "Someone else will help."
- ☐ "I don't know what to do."
- ☐ "I don't want people to turn on me."
- ☐ "It's not my responsibility."
- ☐ "I don't think it will make a difference."



Explain Your Thinking

Choose one statement from above. Explain why somebody might think this way:



Scenario - What Noah Notices Most

As Noah reflects on what happened, something surprises him. He cannot remember every comment that was made.

Some details have faded over time. However, he clearly remembers who was there, who laughed, who joined in, and who stayed silent.

Noah understands that some people may not have known what to do. He understands that some people may have felt uncomfortable. However, their silence still affected the way he experienced the situation.

It made him wonder: Did they agree? Did they not care? Would they support me if something similar happened again?

This reminds us that people experiencing bullying may interpret silence in different ways. Bystanders do not always intend to send a message. However, their actions, or lack of action, can still affect how situations are experienced.

Think About It

Why might silence be interpreted in different ways?

Do you think silence always means agreement? Why or why not?



Activity - Ways to Respond

Responding does not always mean confronting somebody directly. There are many ways people can make positive choices.

For example, somebody might:

- Check in with the person afterwards.
- Report concerns to a trusted adult.
- Include somebody who has been excluded.
- Challenge behaviour respectfully.



Different situations require different responses. The important thing is recognising that people often have more options than they first realise.

Read each situation and decide which response might be helpful.

Situation 1

A student is repeatedly excluded from a group.

Possible response:

Situation 2

A harmful message is shared in a group chat.

Possible response:

Situation 3

Somebody appears upset after being mocked.

Possible response:



Scenario - Ryan Faces a Choice

One lunchtime, Ryan hears a student making fun of another student. Several people laugh. The situation reminds him of everything explored throughout the programme. Ryan notices something. This time he has a choice.

He can:

Laugh

Stay Silent

Walk
Away

Change
The Subject

Tell
Somebody

For the first time, Ryan begins thinking carefully about the consequences of each option. He realises that responsibility is not only about avoiding harmful behaviour. It is also about considering how his actions might influence others.

Ryan realises that every option sends a message; some are helpful and some are not.

Activity - What Could Ryan Do?



Imagine you were Ryan.

Tick any responses that you think might help improve the situation.

- ☐ Laugh along.
- ☐ Change the subject.
- ☐ Encourage the behaviour.
- ☐ Check in with the student afterwards.
- ☐ Report concerns to a trusted adult.
- ☐ Include the student later.

Key Learning Point

Positive Influence

In Module 2, we explored how influence affects behaviour. Influence can encourage harmful behaviour, but it can also encourage positive behaviour.

One student choosing to act respectfully can influence others.

One student choosing to include somebody can influence others.

One student choosing not to laugh can influence others.

Positive influence does not always involve dramatic actions.

Sometimes small actions make a significant difference.

Scenario - A Small Choice



A few days later, Ryan notices another student sitting alone during lunchtime. Several students have been excluding them from conversations and activities.

Ryan remembers everything he has learned throughout the programme.

At first, he considers ignoring the situation. Then he makes a different choice. He walks over and starts a conversation.



A few minutes later, another student joins them. The atmosphere begins to change.

Later that day, the student thanks Ryan for including them.

Ryan realises something important. He did not solve every problem. He did not change everything. However, one small action made a positive difference.

Activity - Small Actions, Big Impact



For each action below, explain how it might positively affect somebody.

Including somebody in a conversation:

Sending a supportive message:

Refusing to join in with teasing:

Reporting a concern:

Another Perspective - Mia's Learning



As the programme progresses, Mia notices something important. She originally believed that bystanders had very little influence. Now she understands that choices matter.

She realises that:

- Staying silent is a choice.
- Speaking up is a choice.
- Offering support is a choice.
- Showing kindness is a choice.

Not every situation is easy.

Not every response feels comfortable.

However, positive choices can still make a difference.





Looking Deeper - Courage

People sometimes imagine courage as something dramatic.

However, courage is often demonstrated through everyday actions and decisions, such as:

Choosing not to join in.

Checking if someone is ok.

Reporting concerns.

Challenging unkind behaviour.

These actions may seem small. However, they often require confidence and responsibility. Courage is not about being fearless. It is about making thoughtful choices even when situations feel uncomfortable.



Activity - True or False?

Read each statement below and decide whether each statement is true or false.

Statement	True	False
Only adults have responsibility for addressing bullying.	☐	☐
Silence can affect how situations are experienced.	☐	☐
Positive influence can improve situations.	☐	☐
People can support others without confronting somebody directly.	☐	☐

Choose one statement from above and explain your answer:



Scenario - Ryan's Reflection

By the end of the module, Ryan has learned something important. At first, he believed responsibility belonged mainly to the people directly involved. Now he understands that everybody's choices can influence situations.

He now realises that:

Bystanders can have influence.

Silence can be impactful.

Support matters.

Positive choices matter.

Responsibility is shared.



Ryan understands that he cannot control every situation. However, he can control the choices he makes. He also understands that making a positive difference does not always require dramatic action. Sometimes a small choice can change somebody's experience.

Think About It

What do you think Ryan has learned about responsibility?

How might this affect Ryan's future decisions?

Key Learning Point

Small Actions Can Make a Difference

People sometimes believe they need to solve problems on their own.

In reality, positive choices often begin with small actions.

Checking in.

Showing support.

Reporting concerns.

Choosing not to join in.

Including somebody.

Showing kindness.

These actions may seem simple.

However, they can influence situations, support others and help create respectful communities. Everybody has the ability to make positive choices.

Personal Reflection

Think about a time when somebody's actions helped improve a situation.

You do not need to include names. What happened?

What action made a difference?

What can you learn from this experience?

Write a response explaining what a bystander is, why people sometimes stay silent, different ways people can respond, why positive choices matter, and what you have learned from this module:

[illegible]

Module Reflection

One thing I learned about bystanders is:

One thing I learned about responsibility is:

One thing I learned about courage is:

One thing I learned about influence is:

One thing I will remember from this module is:

Key Messages to Remember

- Bystanders can influence situations.
- Silence can affect how situations are experienced.
- People often have more choices than they realise.
 - Support and kindness matter.
 - Positive influence can make a difference.
- Everybody has the ability to make responsible choices.

Staff Review



- ☐ Student understands the role of a bystander.
- ☐ Student can identify positive responses to bullying.
- ☐ Student understands shared responsibility.
- ☐ Student can reflect on influence and support.
- ☐ Student has engaged with the activities.
- ☐ Student is ready to progress to Module 6.