

# Stand Up Against Harassment – Empowering Young Women to Communicate and Act Against Gender-Based Pressure

Best Practices for Educators and Youth Workers



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# What Is *Stand Up Against Harassment*?

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*Stand Up Against Harassment* is an evidence-based training practice designed to help girls and young women develop practical, safe, and flexible ways to respond to gender-based harassment, discrimination, and pressure in everyday situations.

The practice focuses not only on awareness, but on how to act - supporting young women to recognise harmful behaviour, choose responses that feel safe, and build confidence through practice and reflection.

It is suitable for young women aged approximately 14–29, and can be applied in schools, youth centres, vocational training, internships, and early workplace settings.



## The challenge

Girls and young women may often experience gender-based pressure such as:

- Sexist remarks and “jokes”
- Being interrupted, dismissed, or underestimated
- Comments focused on appearance rather than competence
- Pressure to stay silent to avoid conflict or negative consequences

These experiences often lead to:

- Reduced confidence and participation
- Withdrawal from leadership or male-dominated fields
- Normalisation of discrimination and self-blame

**This practice responds to this challenge by helping participants recognise these situations and rehearse realistic responses, instead of remaining silent or feeling powerless.**





# Core method

As a youth worker, you can facilitate girls and young women through practice. Participants gain skills by actively experimenting, reflecting, and rehearsing how to respond to gender-based pressure or harassment.

At the heart of the practice is the 5D Bystander Intervention Model, developed by Hollaback! and used internationally.

## **The 5Ds:**

1. **Direct**- Calmly and clearly addressing the behavior

*Example: "That comment is not appropriate."*

2. **Distract**- Interrupting the situation without confrontation

*Example: changing the subject or creating a diversion*

3. **Delegate**- Seeking support from peers, teachers, managers, or HR

4. **Document**- Recording what happened (when safe and ethical)

5. **Delay**- Offering support to the affected person after the incident

**A key principle:** participants choose the response that feels safest and most realistic for them.

## **This practice supports the development of:**

### **Personal & social skills**

- Assertive communication
- Boundary setting
- Emotional awareness
- Confidence and self-agency

### **Education & workplace skills:**

- Professional communication
- Navigating power dynamics
- Allyship and teamwork
- Knowledge of reporting and support mechanisms

### **This practice:**

- Challenges the normalisation of gender-based harassment
- Reduces silence, self-blame, and isolation
- Encourages collective responsibility and allyship
- Builds safer, more inclusive learning and working environments

It supports young women not only to cope, but **to actively shape their environments.**

# Step-by-Step Guide for Youth Workers

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## Phase 1: Creating a Safe Learning Environment

Purpose:

To ensure participants feel safe, respected, and in control before discussing sensitive topics.

What the youth worker does:

Youth workers begin by establishing a supportive group climate. Clear group agreements are set, including confidentiality, respect for different experiences, and voluntary participation. Participants are reminded that everyone has different comfort levels and that no one is required to share personal experiences.

Key facilitation focus:

- Normalise hesitation and uncertainty
- Emphasise safety, boundaries, and choice
- Reinforce that there is no “right” way to respond to harassment

## Phase 2: Understanding Gender-Based Pressure

Purpose: To help participants recognise harassment, microaggressions, and power dynamics in everyday contexts.

What the youth worker does:

Youth workers introduce common forms of gender-based pressure experienced in school, training, internships, or work. The focus is on understanding patterns and impact, not blaming individuals.

Activities:

Scenario-based learning is used, presenting short, realistic situations such as:

- A girl’s idea being unfairly dismissed in group work
- A colleague commenting on appearance instead of performance
- A teacher or supervisor repeatedly interrupting a young woman

Participants reflect together using guiding questions:

- “What is happening in this situation?”
- “How might someone feel here?”
- “Why could it be difficult to respond?”

Key message to reinforce:

Experiencing discomfort does not mean weakness or overreaction.



### Phase 3: Learning and Practising the 5D Responses

#### Purpose:

To build confidence and skills through rehearsal, experimentation, and peer learning.

#### What the youth worker does:

Youth workers introduce the 5D model step by step and explain that different situations require different responses. Safety and personal choice are always prioritised.

#### Activities:

Role play and guided rehearsal are used:

- Participants work in pairs or small groups
- Roles may include the person affected, a bystander, or a supporter
- Participants practise different 5D responses using earlier scenarios

After each role play, youth workers facilitate brief reflection:

- “What felt safest in this situation?”
- “What was harder than expected?”
- “What might you try next time?”

#### Important facilitation note:

There are multiple valid responses. Youth workers avoid correcting participants and instead support learning through reflection.



### Phase 4: Reflection and Transfer to Real Life

#### Purpose:

To help participants recognise what they have learned and apply it beyond the session.

#### What the youth worker does:

Youth workers guide participants in connecting the practice to real-life contexts such as school, internships, part-time jobs, or future workplaces.

#### Activities:

Group reflection focuses on:

- Which strategies felt most natural
- How responses might differ in school versus work settings
- Who participants could turn to for support in real situations

Youth workers help participants identify how these skills relate to professional communication, confidence, and workplace dynamics.

