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Should Bystanders Simply Standby?

Imagine walking through Central park on an afternoon in late October. The brisk air chills the tip of your nose and the tips of your ears, so you pull your hood up over your head. You cup your hands and blow into them as you look at all of the people around you. Everyone seems to be enjoying the fall weather as much as you are, but suddenly someone comes up behind you and takes your purse/wallet and runs off with it. You shout for someone to stop the thief, but everyone just keeps on walking, some stopping to stare. Everyone looks at each other thinking someone else will take action, but in the end no one does. You look with anger at the people around you because since they hadn't helped, your money, credit cards, and other valuables are now in the hands of some stranger who you can't even see anymore.

Had you seen the robbery happen to someone else, would you have intervened? Many people would say *no* to that question, as they believe that it is not their responsibility to get involved. Most people would stand by in the face of violence, conflict, or danger, but to do so is just as bad as them committing the action themselves. By not doing something to help someone who had their wallet stolen, is one truly better

than the one who stole it? It is obvious that one has the responsibility to intervene and help in any way possible, despite the effect it may have on them.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, two planes were flown into the World Trade Center in New York City around 8:45 that Tuesday morning. This action resulted in both of the twin towers collapsing, a plane crashing into The Pentagon and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, as well as the deaths of thousands of Americans. In the face of true terror, strangers became compatriots and helped one another in their time of need. Firefighters and police helped those at the scene while those trapped in the buildings helped others find a way out. On United Airlines Flight 93, the staff and passengers worked together to take back the plane from the terrorist hijackers. This resulted in the plane missing the White House, its intended target. Had bystanders not intervened, the death toll could have easily been exponentially greater than it was. This dreadful day is one of the most prominent examples of what good can come out of bystanders taking action and helping those in the face of danger. But what would happen if the complete opposite had occurred?

If no one decides to assist another in the face of violence or conflict, the effects it has could be irreversible and deadly. This is evident in the murder of Kitty Genovese, a young bar owner who lived in Queens, New York. On her way home from work (around 3 a.m.), Kitty was stabbed by Winston Moseley, a twenty nine year old man, outside her building while those living in it watched and did nothing. He later came back to rape and finally kill her. It took over thirty minutes for a neighbor to call the police, and Moseley was charged and sentenced. Why hadn't anyone reacted sooner, thus saving the life of

poor Kitty? In the face of danger, each neighbor displayed the bystander effect: each person thought that someone else would do something, which led to nothing being done. Due to the bystanders' lack of intervention, the young girl was brutally raped and murdered right on the stairs of her apartment building.

According to some, the risk of getting the reward is too great, therefore it is not the responsibility of the bystander to get involved. Many believe that it is not their business to get involved, and that in the end no one will truly benefit. However, the proof is in the pudding. Look at Kitty Genovese. No bystander intervened and it resulted in the rape and murder of the young girl. However, if one looks at what took place on 9/11, the risk of bystander intervention is worth the reward. By bystanders taking action, hundreds of lives were saved, and an additional plane was stopped from flying into the capital by the passengers onboard. Any time someone doesn't get involved, the outcome is always grim. However, when someone steps in, the result is nothing short of a happy ending.

Without a doubt, it is the responsibility of the bystander to intervene when there is trouble, conflict, or danger. Whenever one takes action, the end result is more than positive. However, the absence of intervention leads to nothing but one's downfall, either physically or metaphorically. Had those brave men and woman not helped their neighbors on September 11, the death toll would have been greater than it was. Had Kitty's neighbors helped her and called the police sooner, the death toll for that night would have been nonexistent. Whether it be a murder in queens, a terrorist attack in the

World Trade Center, or a walk in Central Park on an autumn day, the importance of bystander intervention is undeniable.