Being a Bystander with Marianne LaFrance, Professor of Psychology, Yale University

We all like to think of ourselves as people who don't let emergencies happen without doing something.

It turns out, what science tells us is that the more people are present at an emergency the less likely it is that anyone will help.

Everybody thinks that everybody else or somebody else in the group will know what to do and will step up and do something.

Let's say that you're at a party and you notice a person backing another person into a corner, and they may be pushing them and there's some indication that it's getting really serious.

What do you do? Do you do anything?

Or let's say you're at another party and you notice that a couple of males are leading a woman, a young woman, who is obviously intoxicated up the stairs.

Do you do anything? Do you say anything? Or do you kind of just let it go?

People tend to think that maybe, well, these people know each other, maybe the perpetrator and the victim are a couple that have been going out for a long time, they should know better.

Well, not necessarily because we know that physical abuse and psychological abuse is more likely to occur among people who know each other.

We know that sexual assault in college campuses is more likely to occur, again, among kids who know each other.

So because people know each other doesn't necessarily mean they know what they're doing, especially if they're intoxicated or they've been fighting or tension is high.

So again we'd suggest that if you're an observer, a witness, a bystander, to something that looks like it could turn into something not good, that there could be harm, then it's time to actually step up and actually do something.

And it's possible to do it if you define it as needing some help, if you recognize that the victim is not necessarily the cause of the problem that the cause of the problem is the abuse and it needs to stop.