



Marianne Cerilli, Change Agent
Community Development for Health, Sustainability, Peace

HEALING FOR CHANGE | By-Stander Journal

The Concept

Similar to the Trauma Journal, and the Privilege Journal this By-Stander Journal helps people self-reflect on how they respond to conflict, power struggles, and oppression in various forms. It can help us to create a full picture of how we engage in the world or rather don't engage.

We are not likely always to be a by-stander, but we may be surprised at how often we choose to "mind our own business" rather than step up as an ally when we witness injustice. When you are a by-stander or a witness you are part of the situation whether you want to be or not. Even if you do nothing you are still part of the situation.

Completing this journal chart will help you see patterns in your choice to avoid coming to support someone who might need support, or how to intervene in a conflict or toxic work environment.

Of all the roles in a conflict or bullying situation, (the target, the perpetrator, and the by-stander), the by-standers or witnesses who are often the most easily able to shift or transform the dynamics in the situation. This is the role where people can most readily become a peace maker, up-stander, or ally.

The Background Story

After creating the Trauma Journal and the Privilege Journal it made sense to complete the set and create the By-Stander Journal. By-standers are witnesses with a choice. We have a choice when we observe a conflict or injustice to do nothing, to intervene badly, sometimes by taking sides inappropriately, or otherwise enabling and escalating the situation.

We can also build our skills and get support to intervene well. Generally, in conflict resolution or mediation you would not take sides but try to support those in conflict or a power struggle to engage in a civil conversation. However, in a situation where there is injustice it may require supporting a target to stop the harmful actions in the short term.

It may require a group to intervene in a situation where there are abuses of power, or an imbalance of power, where the targets have little positional power or authority.

Using the By-Stander Journal will help consider our history of how we choose to intervene in these situations, it is a first step to moving from by-stander to peace maker or ally. How we intervene well as an up-stander, peace maker or ally, where you stop the harassment, bullying or abuse of power, is the next step and there is a separate tool(s) for that.

How to use this tool

This tool might be helpful for people working with a therapist, elder, mediator or other health helper. If you begin using the

chart on your own and feel overwhelming distress, you are encouraged to seek support from someone with expertise in conflict resolution, mental health, or spiritual care.

1. Most people can start on the left side of the chart and list some experiences where you witnessed bullying or an injustice. List these chronologically from your earliest experiences or memories to the most recent.
2. Then use self-reflective writing or free writing to journal about that experience and fill in the rest of the chart.
3. You can ask yourself questions based on each heading in the chart, for example, what did I feel when I saw my friend get teased in grade ten?
4. Then work through the other columns of the chart in the same way following each column for each experience. Ask yourself how did I cope with feeling scared during this experience? Did I fight, flee or did I freeze, fawn or fuse and do nothing?

- 5. In the end you may discover through your writing some current behaviour pattern or body sensations or health issue that is connected to that situation. Witnessing abuse or injustice of someone else is often also traumatic and can result in a trauma response similar those who are the target of the abuse, bullying or harassment.
- 6. Other people may start from the right side of the chart and begin with a pattern they observe, like telling yourself you should mind your own business, or you don't know what to do, or getting angry then avoiding conflict. These are the by-stander patterns we are looking for that may be based on fear and negative experiences from when you tried to intervene.
- 7. You may find it helpful if witnessing this conflict was particularly troubling to add those experiences to a trauma journal instead of a by-stander journal. Write about your experiences as a by-stander or witness is the focus of the By-Stander Journal where you can capture your exploratory and reflective free writing.

How we respond to being called out

Another aspect of by-standing is being called out for not acting or intervening poorly. It can be helpful to apply a framework for how we respond to having our behavior including by-stander behavior pointed out to us. Those with more status and privilege are going to have an easier time by-standing or avoiding.

By-standing becomes a privilege that is afforded to those with certain social rank and positional rank. By-standing can also become part a necessary part of a dysfunctional or toxic culture that allows oppression, abuse, bullying and harassment to continue.

Three main ways we can respond when our by-standing behavior is brought to our attention.

- 1. Defend, make excuses, deny it
- 2. Guilt, freeze or avoid it
- 3. Open, accept, learn, and address it

The tasks for each of the roles in the situation are:

Accused or bully

become aware of their impact, take responsibility
- commit to learning and change.

Target or victim

get support to address the situation assertively
– don't avoid or attack back.

By-stander or observers

engage as ally/peace maker, address assertively
- don't avoid or attack.

Summary

The goal in using the By-Stander Journal is to help build better self-awareness of our habits and patterns, and to build understanding and compassion for yourself and others.

By-standing itself is a coping mechanism and this tool will help us shift the way we respond to a world that is full of injustice and harm at the individual, family/community, and systems levels.

There is greater agreement now and an evolution in understanding conflict and oppression, how denial and other impacts work, including how emotions of traumatic experience can be stored in our bodies and nervous systems.

This tool helps gain some perspective about how witnessing situations can contribute to patterns that helped with coping and survival at the time but are no longer serving us as we seek to become allies and peacemakers.

It is these pattern that can keep us in fear and uncertainty, contributing to inaction or ineffective action. In our society we have all witnessed injustice, and it can be overwhelming to think we need to intervene all the time. We can't.

However, it is helpful to know our patterns and to be aware of skills we can develop so when we do choose to intervene, we

can be more effective. Addressing the skill gap will likely go beyond just completing this chart. As mentioned earlier completing the chart is a tool along with many other healing modalities from various professions.

Sometimes when we by-stand we really don't have the power or skill to successfully intervene. In many cases structural violence, lateral violence mean we would also be harmed. Sometimes it is the people and structures or professions with a mandate to intervene, that should be helping that are by-standing. Many people in organizations are ill equipped to deal with the enormity of the injustice that we face we need to work and build our justice muscles.

There are more activities and tools for building your awareness, your health, your healing, and your capacity for justice in the Politics of Unity and Healing for Change on www.mariannecerilli.ca

The old paradigms of retribution, of punishment and retaliation are falling away, new patterns of restorative practice of restorative justice are becoming common in many sectors.

The escalation in abuse of power we now see is part of a desperate pattern of power and control trying to hang on before there is change. The more of us who can face our own

pain, who can heal from our hurts and trauma, who understand how to carry and use our privilege wisely for social justice and social change the better off we will all be.

This By-Stander Journal can be used independently or with support of a therapist, counsellor, or other helper/support person. It is not designed to replace therapy or treatment. It can be used in combination with other tools and activities. For a list of those go to www.mariannecerilli.ca

DATE OR TIMEFRAME	INCIDENT, WHAT HAPPENED	FEELINGS AT TIME OF INCIDENT, (FIGHT, FLIGHT, FREEZE, FUSE, FAWN)	COPING STRATEGIES AT TIME OF INCIDENT	PATTERNS AND HABITS BASED ON COPING STRATEGIES	TRIGGERS THAT SPARK PATTERNS AND HABITS	HEALING NOTES WAYS OF CHANGING
When the experience happened location, age, date? Was it a single incident or repeated? Was it an ongoing situation?	What happened, your experience? What did you witness? Who was involved? What happened immediately after the experience? What was your role? Were you supported? Were you believed?	What were your feelings in the moment of the incident or experience? What was your primary emotion? What was your secondary emotions? (Or reactions to the way you felt at the time) What did you do? Did you try to intervene? someone? Were there witnesses? Did they help? How was that received? Did it contribute to the trauma? Were you believed? or shamed? Or ... Did you get the support you needed? Etc.	How did you cope with your feelings from that experience? Were there secondary emotions that predominated? Did you have a trauma response? Was /is the experience largely denied?	What patterns have developed in the way you relate to the world and others based on your experience the way that you coped with this by-stander experience? What did or do you say to yourself in these situations? Bigger impacts overtime - compulsiveness - habits - fears and phobias - mental health impacts or challenges - assertiveness continuum - power styles - relating to authority	What situations or experiences, people, places smells, etc. can trigger unresolved feelings and patterns of behavior for this response? What stressors can cause feeling overwhelmed or an intolerance? What are crisis situations, examples of injustice or other situations are you avoid, or have you not resolved?	What additional thoughts ideas things to remember? What actions can you take now? What do you need to discuss? What do you need to keep track of?
Example 1972 watched friends get beaten up, ran home	Friends were beaten up by other kids excluded from a baseball game	Fear of being hurt, fear of getting into trouble. Flee the scene, ran home	Lied about it to parents when 'friends' came to our door looking for me	Made up excuses to friends for being afraid, tried to get their mercy.	Willing to stand alone or not be part of a group to fit in, oppose cliques, power plays	How secondary emotions work, and rationalization, sharing fears openly