

One-on-One Scenarios & Conflict Management

Ehsaan Hossain, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematics

Michael Liut, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Computer Science



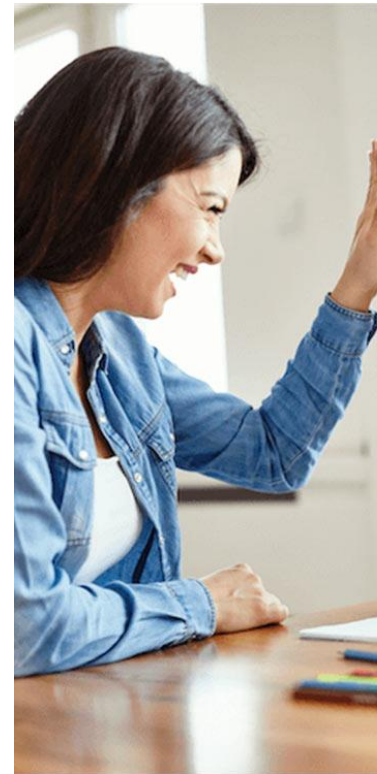
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Helping students one-on-one

"The Before Times, c.2019"



"Zoom TA vs Zoom Student, c.2021"



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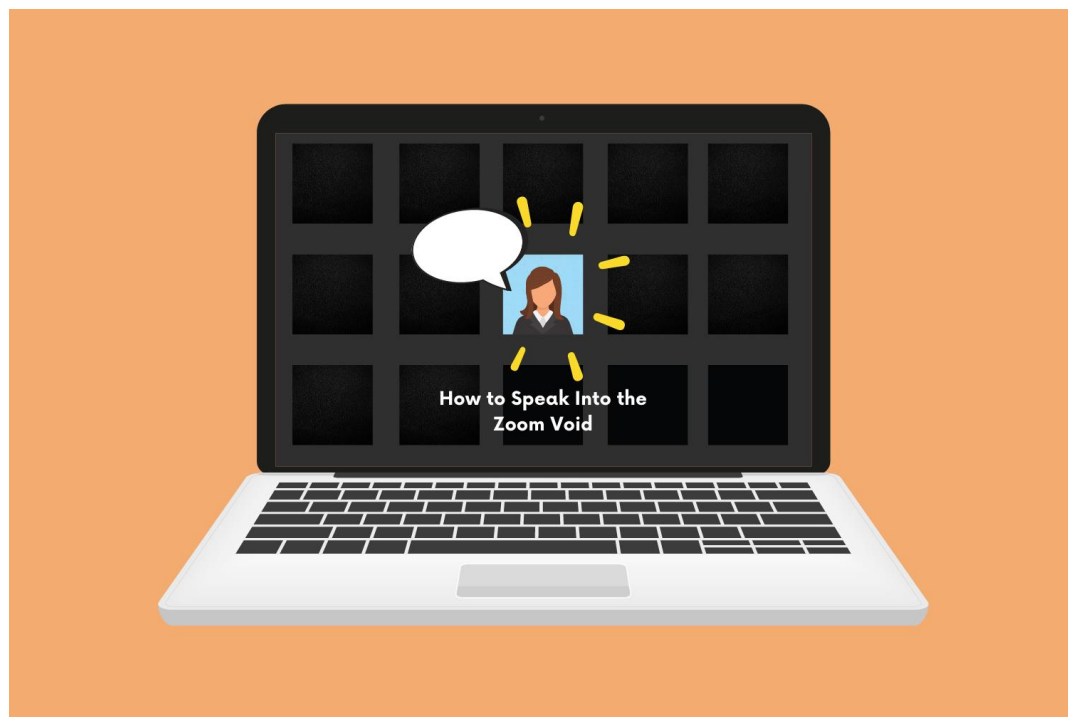
Transition to independent learning

To handhold or not to handhold?



Technical difficulties...?!

How do you make sure your student is on track, if you can't see or hear them?



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Breakout: Case Scenarios!

After you have read the scenario, take a moment to reflect and then discuss the following with your group:

1. Identify the issues in the scenario.
2. What is your role/responsibility as a TA?
3. How would you deal with this scenario to promote a safer and more inclusive environment?
4. What resources could/should you contact?

<https://bit.ly/388Vf00>



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Scenario #1: The Grade Grubber

Blake approaches you to complain about their grade on an assessment.

1. Blake got 3/20 on a homework assignment, worth 5%.
2. Blake got 19.5/20 on a homework assignment, worth 5%.
3. Blake got 19.5/20 on the midterm test, worth 20%. He tells you that he's very close to meeting the POSt requirement.

How is your response different in each of these cases?



Scenario #1: The Grade Grubber

Facilitator's comments for discussion

- [Ehsaan] First-year or third-year student? Check the paper for TA comments.
- [Michael] Focus on the learning, not the grade. Discuss and assess if they understand the material and where they went wrong. Help them improve their understanding for the next evaluation.



Scenario #2: "I Don't Know Where to Start!"

Your student Donna says she is stuck on her homework. When you ask what she has tried, she says, "Nothing --- I don't know where to start!"

1. The problem is to implement a new method *pop()* using a custom Stack class from lecture.
2. The problem is a simple integration-by-parts.
3. The problem is a tricky proof using sets.



Scenario #2: "I Don't Know Where to Start!"

Facilitator's comments for discussion

- [Ehsaan] Ask guiding questions. "What's the defn of [X]?" "Have you seen similar problems in class?"
- [Michael] Ask what they've tried, if nothing, ask where they think they should start. Asking open-ended (divergent) and high-level questions, as they provide the student with an opportunity to display their knowledge and you the chance to guide them to getting started. Referring to previous course material is a start!



Scenario #3: Talking Into The Void

Your student Jessie comes to your office hours and wants help with Problem 3.7.1. They say their cam/mic isn't working, and are only interacting with you through the chat box, leaving short messages like "idk", "yes", etc.

How can you help Jessie?



Scenario #3: Talking Into The Void

Facilitator's comments for discussion

- [Ehsaan & Michael] "Try writing up your question on Piazza/email, where I can give you a more detailed answer. If that doesn't work, we can schedule an appt."



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Conflict Resolution

- A means for 2+ parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement
- Different situations may require different types of intervention:
 - With Students
 - With other Teaching Assistants
 - With Supervisors (Staff/Faculty)
 - On-campus vs. off-campus
 - Online vs. in-person



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7 Steps to Resolution

1. Understanding the conflict
2. Communicating with the opposing part(y/ies)
3. Brainstorming possible resolutions
4. Selecting the 'best' resolution
5. Using a mediator
6. Exploring alternatives
7. Coping with the stress



Bystander Behaviour

Social Influence: assume that it isn't a problem because others don't intervene

Audience Inhibition: fear of embarrassment

Diffusion of Responsibility: assume someone else will do something

Social Norms: believe that others aren't bothered or that nothing will change

Outcome: fear of retaliation or negative outcomes



Social Norms and Bystander Behaviour



- Social norms refer to the acceptability of an action or belief i.e., unwritten rules about what is normal for a group or setting
- Misperceived norms are a strong influence on behaviour
 - Often used as self-justification
 - Influence problem's perception and intervention
 - Reinforces unhealthy cultures and other prejudices



Intervention Options

- Direct vs. Indirect
 - Talk to the person directly or to others who are present
- On the spot or later
 - Take action immediately or after the fact
- The goal is to have more options to respond and feel good about how you choose to respond
 - It may not always “feel good” but may be the “right course of action”

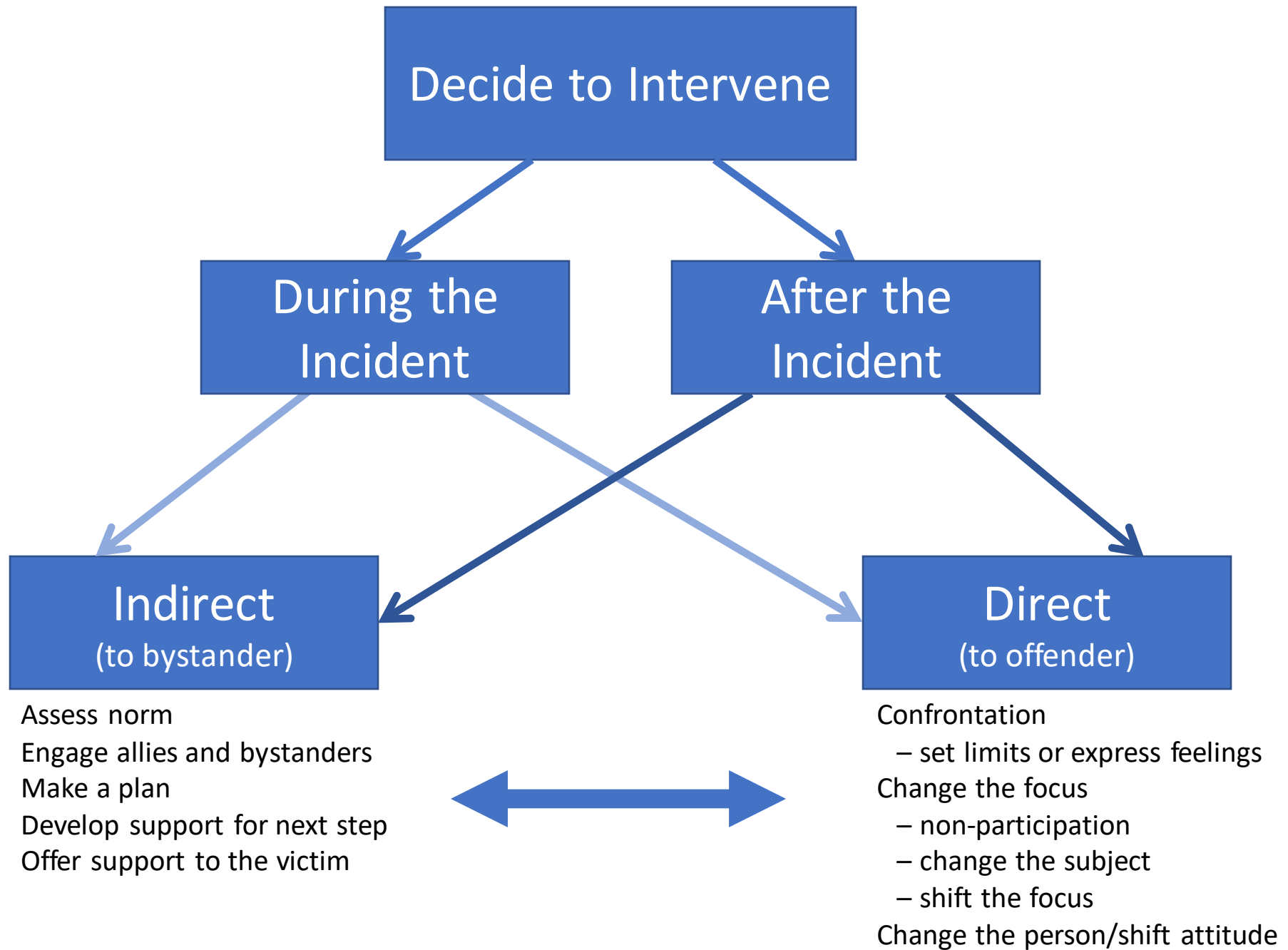


Types of Intervention

1. Confront the person, impose consequences, or express feelings.
2. Shift the focus (change the situation)
3. Shifting attitudes (change the person)

Intervention is situation-specific and must account for personality, culture and identity, power-differences, collegiality, and potential backlash.





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Scenario #4: Fighting Classmates

You organize a Kahoot! for your tutorial and some students decide to pick offensive names (e.g., culturally derogatory). This sparks a 'fight' in the chat, derailing the objective of the tutorial. You are the only TA in the Zoom call.

What is the best way to defuse the conflict and refocus your class?



Scenario #4: Fighting Classmates

Facilitator's comments for discussion

- Restart the Kahoot game, allowing one more chance to input usernames (or remove this and use auto-generated names). If it doesn't work, cancel the game and do the questions on the "board" instead.
- "This is why we can't have nice things." Custom usernames are a privilege.
- Depending on the names chosen, you should consider addressing the issue (or letting your course instructor handle this).
- Report this to the course instructor.



Scenario #5: Backstabbers

During a breakout room, the students are chit-chatting about their favourite and least favourite TAs. They start making fun of the teaching style of one particular TA, Sean. One student says, "How did Sean even get hired?"

- (a) How would handle this if you've never met Sean?
- (b) How would you handle this if you agree with the students' opinion?
- (c) How would you handle this if Sean is your friend?



Scenario #5: Backstabbers

Facilitator's comments for discussion

- Remind the students that this isn't an appropriate place for this conversation. TA's go through a hiring process; they are selected for good reason.
- It's OK to have a favourite TA/instructor, but what if Sean heard these comments? Ask the students how they would feel if they were a TA.
- *Constructive* comments can be made directly or submitted on a course evaluations or through anonymous feedback channels (if the course permits).



Other Possible Scenarios

- What would you do if a student says to you “You look so young, how could you possibly be a Teaching Assistant?”?
- What would you do if a student says to you or another Teaching Assistant “Your name is so hard to pronounce. I’ll never remember it. Can I call you something else?”?
- More examples [here](#) with responses.



Questions





Thanks for listening!

Ehsaan Hossain e.hossain@utoronto.ca

Michael Liut michael.liut@utoronto.ca