

Ms.

5 Ways to Make Harassers Back Off!

Cut out this handy reference card, fold it in half and place it in your wallet!



Stop Right There!

An anti-harassment tool kit that really works

When faced with sexual harassment, your best response is a clear, principled “nonviolent confrontation,” which will surprise the harasser and throw him off balance. Most harassers fold immediately; some will even apologize. Just remember to stay calm (no insults, sarcasm, cursing or yelling), stand tall, make eye contact and use a matter-of-fact voice. Don’t smile or undermine your message with verbal fluff and padding. Keep your statement brief, honest, serious and specific. Here are five of the most effective confrontation tools:

Name the behavior. Describe exactly what the harasser is doing, stating behavior (“you are exposing yourself”), principle (“this is about respect”) and a direct command (“put that penis back in your pants right now”).

Interrupt the harasser with this all-purpose statement: “Stop harassing women. I don’t like it—no one likes it. Show some respect.”

Put up a “stop sign.” Put your hands in front of your chest, palms out, look the harasser in the eye and say, “Stop right there.”

Make an A-B-C statement. “When you do A [stare at women’s breasts, for example], the effect is B [obvious to everyone in the room] and I want C [look us in the face from now on].”

Ask a Socratic question. “That’s so interesting—can you explain why you think you can put your hand on my leg?” The more idiotic the action the more impossible it will be for the harasser to explain.

Adapted from an article by Marty Langelan in the Fall 2005 issue of *Ms.*

Langelan is the author of *Back Off: How to Confront and Stop Sexual Harassment and Harassers* (Fireside/Simon & Schuster, 1993).