

INTERVENE GET HELP FOLLOW UP



**A GUIDE TO A BETTER WORK CULTURE
IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY**

WE MUST BECOME EVEN BETTER AT TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER IN OUR WORK COMMUNITIES

We need a decent and safe work culture, and we need to take better care of each other. We must be better at intervening when a situation becomes transgressive and problems arise in working relationships.

Ensuring a good working environment is clearly the employer's responsibility, but at the same time it is a task that we can only solve together – employers and employees. The work culture is something we create together.

With staff and colleagues from different cultures and a work form that involves tough deadlines and overtime, work culture can come under pressure. With this material, the Danish Producers' Association wants to contribute to a work culture in

the games industry where no one is exposed to transgressive behaviour. The term transgressive behaviour covers a wide range of transgressive acts such as bullying, discrimination, exclusion, harassment, unwanted sexual attention, violence, threats, abuse of power and similar acts perceived as degrading and affecting mental health in the workplace.

In 2022, the Producer's Association conducted a survey in the games industry which showed that challenges in the industry mainly concern unpleasant jokes, gender discrimination and verbal abuse/offensive language.

See the survey here:

<https://pro-f.dk/analyse/undersogelse-af-graen-seoverskridende-adfaerd-i-spilbranchen>

THIS ACTION GUIDE PROPOSES THREE KEY LINES OF ACTION:

INTERVENE

- TRY TO CALMLY INTERRUPT THE SITUATION WITHOUT ESCALATING THE CONFLICT.

GET HELP

- IF YOU CAN'T INTERVENE YOURSELF, GET HELP FROM SOMEONE WHO CAN.

FOLLOW UP

- TELL THOSE INVOLVED HOW YOU EXPERIENCED THE SITUATION.

The individual's lines of action are described later in this guide. However, we cannot expect individuals to intervene unless we also establish a clear industry norm according to which it is expected and acknowledged that people intervene when necessary for taking care of each other. That is the purpose of this action guide.

The action guide is aimed at everyone who has extended responsibilities in the industry, including employers, managers, health and safety representatives and union representatives. You have a duty of initiative and a special responsibility for the working environment and a crucial role to play in ensuring that an industry norm exists according to which we all

must intervene to take care of each other. The guide suggests how to take different courses of action to create a safe and decent work culture. Suggestions are provided at different levels: for the entire work community, for management, for groups and for individuals - and for both permanent and loosely organised work communities.

The action guide also comes with a handout that we hope you will help distribute to all employees in your workplaces. Read more about it in this guide.

Happy reading and acting.

Danish Producers' Association

BYSTANDER EFFECT

WHY DON'T WE ALWAYS INTERVENE?

Your colleagues don't always intervene, if they witness transgressive behavior. Why not?

This is because intervening in problem situations, conflicts, and crises in the working environment can in itself be perceived as transgressive. This is only natural. In fact, it is a well-known social-psychological phenomenon, meaning, among other things, that when problems arise in the world around us our reaction time drops or we even fail to react at all. This phenomenon is called the "bystander effect".

Work communities are about relationships, power, norms and unwritten ground rules. And the games industry is certainly no exception.

When people sometimes fail to intervene in problem situations it's often because it's hard to see what's at stake for others or what's the right thing to do. And if more people are present - especially managers, union representatives or other authorities - we tend to think that they will probably intervene. We also tend not to intervene if the context is unclear because of a lack of norms.

Recent research shows that there are several reasons why we do not intervene immediately against transgressive behaviour:

- **WE MAY OVERLOOK THE FACT THAT THE SITUATION CONTAINS A TRANSGRESSIVE ELEMENT.**
- **WE DO NOT FEEL IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO INTERVENE HERE AND NOW.**
- **WE DO NOT FEEL WE HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO INTERVENE CONSTRUCTIVELY.**
- **WE ARE AFRAID THAT INTERVENING WILL HAVE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE COMMUNITY AND INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE WILL JUDGE US NEGATIVELY.**

When we are involved in or witness transgressive behaviour, one or more of these reasons may be at play when we fail to act.

Those of you in charge must therefore firstly set a good example and intervene swiftly in problem

situations and secondly give colleagues and employees the courage to intervene. You can do so by enhancing a sense of security and being clear about the norms.

STRENGTHEN SAFETY IN THE COMMUNITY

As social creatures we human beings have a basic fear of exclusion. We are therefore afraid of being left out of the community, losing meaningful relationships, or appearing different.

Safeguarding against the “bystander effect” thus entails strengthening the community’s sense of security – which includes reinforcing a norm in the culture that intervention is legitimate and possible. And that it is also okay to be mistaken and per-

haps intervene in something that turns out to be unproblematic.

Reinforcing a norm to intervene is not entirely straightforward. Understanding the concept is not enough. A norm must be practiced and trained to become strong. This action guide should preferably help reinforce it.

Safeguards against the “bystander effect” exist in cultures where:

Norms and values are clear so that everyone knows what behaviour is desired and expected.

Managers, other authorities, and role models make it clear that intervening, speaking up, and acting on behalf of others is okay and even expected.

Managers, other authorities, and role models personally intervene in problem situations and follow up with support.

Work communities develop psychological safety by making it okay and natural to talk about concerns, mistakes, and problems - without anyone being sanctioned or ridiculed.

Individuals are acknowledged for intervening, asking for help, or following up on problems - and personally know what lines of action are open to them.

We share a work culture. A work culture is not created and upheld solely by management and others dictating it. Everyone can contribute to showing and practicing that it is okay to intervene and talk openly about experiences.

However, managers, other authorities, and role models have a particular responsibility to promote a healthy culture and a safer working environ-

ment. Those with formal and informal power play a crucial role in leading the way.

You are also best placed to take specific initiatives at your permanent or temporary workplace to make it safe to talk about desirable and undesirable culture, grey zones, and doubts. This guide contains plenty of suggestions for doing just that.

ENTIRE WORK COMMUNITY

Change works best when addressed in broad forums **as well as** in small groups. Some types of action are good and obvious for the entire work community, including all managers, employees, freelancers, etc., to work with. **Develop a policy**

for a safe work culture, making it clear what kind of culture or working environment you want and stress that transgressive behaviour, sexual harassment, bullying, and abuse of power will not be tolerated. The policy should include:

- **Knowledge of what constitutes transgressive behaviour, sexual harassment, bullying, and abuse of power. See, for example, the Danish Working Environment Authority's guidelines on transgressive acts.**
- **Information on what preventive measures you take and where employees can go if they have problems with colleagues, managers, or business partners.**
- **Information on how cases are handled and investigated and what initiatives management can take if boundaries are crossed.**
- **Information on who decides about any consequences and what consequences the employer can apply.**

By developing a clear policy, you avoid employees thinking they can decide what happens to their colleagues. A good policy also ensures a fair process, makes norms known, and sets out how indi-

viduals are protected and how cases are handled.

NOTE: The policy must be known to have any effect and become a natural part of the work culture.

Share knowledge and views on the culture and behaviour you want and what you expect from colleagues. This can be done orally (and possibly in writing) for example at staff meetings and gatherings and can also be done in writing through

employment contracts. Explain what you expect, such as respect, open dialogue, equality and constructive communication and say what you disapprove of and intervene against. For example, you can clearly speak out against:

Bullying, slander, and exclusion from professional and social communities

Hurtful remarks, being shouted at, or derogatory comments

Discrimination

Unwanted touching, flirting, and invitations to sexual relations

Dirty jokes and comments

Unwanted digital messages of a sexual nature etc.

Make it natural to talk about the behaviour you want. An effective way to prevent unwanted behaviour is to incorporate messages about your expectations into existing meetings and evaluations. The seeds of a good work culture are sown particularly at the start of a working relationship.

Clarify where individuals can go for help and support if problems arise in the working environment. Make sure there are people to turn to for advice and exchange of views, but also for support in a conflict or serious matter. Make clear what managers, union representatives, and well-being workers can do to help. It is easier to turn to people you know and trust. Introduce the various contact persons when collaborations and projects start up and preferably let people explain personally who they are and how they handle enquiries. Contact persons can have various roles. For example, management can support, act, and decide in specific cases while union representatives can provide a space for exchange of views and reflection - and pave the way to management.

Pay particular attention to the work culture during periods of high work pressure. When deadlines are tight and everyone work fast, it is particularly important that everyone knows and understands the common ground rules.

Put knowledge about culture, power, well-being and “bystander effects” on the agenda. This will promote dialogue about taking care of each other and drawing a line in the sand if problems arise. You can also do this at already existing meetings.

Ensure managers and union representatives are equipped with knowledge on how to support a safe and decent culture – which includes supporting colleagues, intervening, acting, and addressing specific cases. Ensure that expectations are aligned and responsibilities clearly allocated before new projects are started. Talk to each other about who does what to prevent and deal with poor work culture and about how to make this knowledge known throughout the workplace.

Activate your policies and guidelines by ensuring that everyone has received them and discussed and reviewed them with colleagues. The policy can be sent as an annex to contracts and can be referred to at joint meetings. You can also re-activate the policy together with colleagues if conflicts or issues arise that need to be addressed.

Explore the culture together. One way to examine the culture is to do mini-evaluations, have daily check-in/check-out conversations, or hold weekly meetings where you can jointly discuss the work

culture. You may choose to appoint a coordinator or a small group to facilitate these examinations. Questions such as these may be used:

- **What do you find works best in your work community?**
- **What do you find difficult?**
- **What worked well today? What can we do better tomorrow?**
- **To what extent do you feel that you can express yourself freely and talk about concerns and problems in the work community?**
- **What do you think we as management and union representatives should focus on to support a positive, safe working environment?**
- **What do you think about the three lines of action:**

INTERVENE GET HELP FOLLOW UP

Contact a certified occupational health and safety consultant for assistance if necessary.

If your workplace faces challenges in preventing or dealing with specific cases, a number of specialists certified by the Danish Working Environment Authority exist to deal with preventing and handling complex working environment problems such as conflicts, bullying, sexual harassment and other transgressive behaviour.

These consultants can help to develop policies, conduct sessions with managers and employees, and facilitate cases and investigations.

You can find a list of the Danish certified consultants here:

<https://at.dk/arbejdsmiljoearbejdet/arbejdsmiljoeraadgivere/autorisation-paa-det-psykosociale-omraade/>

Contact your industry association or union. If you are a member of a union, the union can help you along and advise you on what to do. If your workplace is a member of the Danish Producer's Association, the Association can advise your workplace management.

HOW TO MAKE A POLICY TOGETHER

The most important aspect about a good workplace policy is that everyone knows it – otherwise it will not work in practice.

Managers and union representatives play an important part in ensuring that all colleagues know

and understand the work community's expectations, policies, and guidelines. The policy is useful to attach to contracts and to refer to when onboarding new employees or groups.

Although it is the employer's responsibility, you are most welcome to make your policy together – it is a preventive activity in itself when employees and managers develop the policy together and talk about themes, norms, and ideas in small groups.

Talk about the culture you want and familiarise yourself with the legislation in the area - a mental health and safety policy might, for example, be called a well-being policy or a cooperation policy. The important thing is to deal with what is important to you and to comply with current legislation - see the Danish Working Environment Authority (www.at.dk/en) for good policy advice.

Make sure you describe how incidents will be fairly investigated and how policy breaches will be handled. In cases of transgressive behaviour, employers can introduce sanctions such as reprimands, warnings, termination of employment, and summary dismissal depending on the situation - including the severity, frequency, and duration of the behaviour concerned.

Describe in your policy what preventive measures you take in the work community - and preferably also describe the culture and behaviour you want, not just what you don't want.

It is also a good idea to describe the three lines of action:

INTERVENE - GET HELP – FOLLOW UP

Share the policy with all employees and colleagues when completed and adjust it as you learn more about your culture and working environment - for example, after a case or a new investigation.

MANAGEMENT AND UNION REPRESENTATIVES

In addition to what is being done across the work community, employers and day-to-day management can do much on a daily basis to promote a safe and decent culture. Everyone with responsibility should work together and engage in ongoing dialogue about well-being and working environment, so as to:

Create an environment that feels safe and gives people the courage to approach you. Stand up and communicate clearly that people can come to you for support and exchange of views - and tell them how you deal fairly with difficult issues. Psychological safety in a work community is about employees daring to be themselves, making their views heard, and talking about their concerns without fear of consequences. Set the scene for your colleagues and employees by telling them that it's okay to make their views heard and talk about their concerns.

You can encourage the inclusion of different perspectives and you can respond respectfully and constructively when an issue is brought up. In

this way, you enhance the sense of security that makes people dare to raise difficult issues.

Act as role models on a day-to-day basis by signaling your views, referring to the policy, and calmly intervening in problems.

Provide multiple channels for expressing doubts, exchanging views, and acting. In difficult situations, we turn to those we trust which is why it is a good idea to have several managers, union representatives, and others in the work community to whom individuals can turn.

Cooperate on difficult cases. Use each other so that, for example, management and union representatives cooperate on handling specific cases fairly and equitably. This is also a source of shared learning as well as trust and confidence building.

Follow up. After a conflict, do not assume everything has been resolved all at once. Sound out the situation later to follow up on the status and preferably acknowledge positive developments.

SPREAD AWARENESS OF LINES OF ACTION:

INTERVENE

GET HELP

FOLLOW UP

HOW TO DEAL WITH SPECIFIC CASES

Even in the best work communities, colleagues may find that their boundaries have been crossed or that conflicts have escalated. That's why it's

important to have planned how to handle specific cases. Here is some good advice:

Be sure to intervene calmly and swiftly if a potential case or conflict arises.

If a person feels offended, you need to take it seriously and find ways to take action.

Tackle conflicts impartially and support both sides.

Try to resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level of conflict, and assume that both parties are capable of cooperating and solving a problem.

Provide support and opportunities for exchanging views – and always have the option of independent investigations and sanctions ready in the event of serious cases.

Make your policies, guidelines and procedures clear to the parties to a case at an early stage and explain how cases are handled and by whom.

When investigating cases assess them in terms of how “serious”, “frequent”, and “persistent” the negative acts have been and whether they were carried out by someone with more power. Serious, frequent, and prolonged transgressive acts are an aggravating circumstance. Protect and support the parties during the investigation process by exercising discretion and involving each person. Preferably involve witnesses and make it clear to everyone that management, not the parties to the case, decides on the outcome.

In serious cases, sanctions may be considered. It is wise to describe the sanction options in a policy everyone knows as this makes cases less complicated and personal for all parties. Sanctions can range from mediation to reprimands, warnings, termination of employment, summary dismissals, suspension, and filing of police reports.

Never assume that a behaviour or culture has changed because you handled and closed a case but follow up after the case has been concluded.

Remember that you can always contact the Danish Producer's Association or your union for advice and guidance.

GROUPS AND TEAMS

As a workplace, you should make it natural to talk openly about well-being, power, status, and safety at work. Make it the norm for groups and teams to talk with and not about each other. Groups often have their own subcultures and dialogue can help create a group culture where supporting well-being and intervening against problems are natural. Actions that small groups can initiate include:

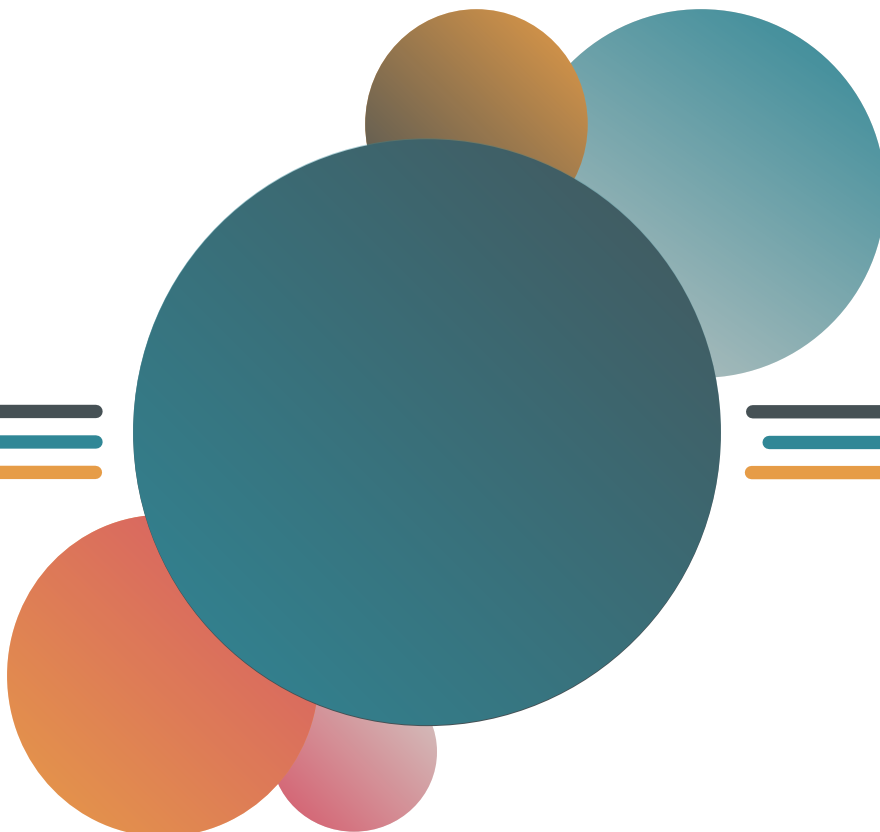
Meetings focused on well-being, including the team's experience of creating safe and strong cooperation. Where has this been done before? How did it come about? Talk about DOs and DON'Ts focusing on situations and actions and avoid talking about specific persons. Talk about what people find burdensome or exciting about their work.

Small start-up meetings and dialogue before new projects set the norm. Here you can talk about expectations, good and less good experiences with cooperation, well-being, and work culture. Be sure to involve everyone in the dialogue.

Ensure that groups and teams are familiar with guidelines, values, expectations, and contact channels. Although a policy has been distributed or is referred to at a joint meeting, make sure to repeat the message when a group gets together.

Ensure good onboarding for new colleagues or partners. Make your values and expectations for the group clear. Ask new colleagues what they understand by a good working environment and what they personally expect in terms of cooperation, management, and relations.

Building psychological safety. Make sure groups and teams build a safe culture that allows open dialogue. Prioritise social activities that create a sense of security - for example shared moments when you are not under pressure and can talk about things other than work.



HOW TO FACILITATE AN EVALUATION

Dialogue-based evaluation is a group discussion that can be used at the end of a project to evaluate the cooperation in terms of purpose, process, outcomes, and well-being. This could take place, for

example, after a period of extreme pressure and overtime. An evaluation can provide learning for future cooperation - and thus promote a safe and decent culture in the industry.

Find one or two managers and preferably an external consultant to facilitate the discussion.

Allow two hours for the discussion.

Create a good framework for the discussion by sending an invitation well in advance and setting out your common goals.

Limit the discussion to groups of 10-12 participants as this can create a common sense of security.

Set yourself the task of exploring what was difficult as well as what worked particularly well.

Open the discussion by repeating the purpose and fostering a safe space where perspectives, experiences and ideas are welcome. Tell participants that it is up to them to decide what issue(s) to raise but also that their input is important. Point out that it is better to talk about events than about people. Explain that vulnerable issues can come up and that taking care of each other is a shared responsibility.

Spend 30 minutes on involving all participants with by asking “open questions” such as “For me, this project meant in particular...”

Spend 60 minutes on a constructive group discussion bringing different perspectives into play. It may be a good idea to ask participants questions that open up the discussion and to give them time to reflect in silence. Ask, for example: “If we were to do it all over again what would we do differently?” Or: “If we were to pass on important experience from this cooperation, both professionally and creatively, what would that be?”

Spend 20 minutes at the end on a constructive wrap-up. Thank the participants for the experiences and knowledge they shared - and summarise some clear patterns and key points. Make it clear how you intend to use the learning from the discussion going forward.

As a facilitator, you should encourage participants to give different perspectives and respond constructively to the issues raised. Thank participants continuously for their input. If someone in the group becomes emotionally affected during the discussion, you should remain calm and ask if a break is needed. Follow up on the person concerned during the break or after the evaluation and ask if a personal conversation is needed.

INDIVIDUALS (ALL EMPLOYEES)

An employee or individual colleague alone cannot create well-being and safety at work. But it is important that the individual knows the norms of the workplace and his or her lines of action and how to obtain support and help. As a person in charge or employer you cannot rely on people to read this

action guide. It is your job to spread the knowledge about the individual's lines of action.

When communicating with employees you can encourage them to:

- **Intervene, set limits orally, seek help, and follow up if they experience problems transgressive acts.**
- **Actively seek knowledge about the workplace's attitudes to well-being and working environment.**
- **Seek information about whom to contact if they need to discuss a matter or require support or help in a specific case.**
- **Make it okay for others to speak up, propose ideas, or raise concerns.**
- **Keep their focus on the case or the specific incident rather than the person if they see a conflict escalating.**
- **Treat all colleagues, managers, and business partners with respect.**
- **Urge others to speak up immediately if their boundaries are being crossed.**

HOW TO USE THE HANDOUT WITH CONTACT PERSONS

In addition to the action guide, a handout with contact persons has been prepared. As an employer, a manager, a union representative, or the like you can help create a safe and decent work culture by distributing the handout with contact persons.

By distributing the handout you make sure everyone at your workplace knows how to intervene, get help, or follow up later if they experience transgressive behaviour. You also personally signal a clear position.

One of the industry's major problems is that people don't know whom to approach if they have experienced a transgressive situation and would like advice or open a case. Therefore, before distributing the handout it is important that you fill in the form on the front page with the names of two contact persons that people at your workplace can contact.

Here are five tips for those distributing the handout:

1. First fill in the form on the front page with the names of two contact persons whom employees, volunteers, freelancers, or others at your workplace can contact if they experience transgressive acts.
2. Send the handout as a PDF file to all involved employees and freelancers as part of your onboarding process. Attach the document to formal contracts and make it clear that you expect everyone to read and live up to the contents of the handout.
3. Refer orally to the handout, the three specific lines of action, and the two contact persons whenever you get the opportunity, for example, in connection with workplace assessments [APV] or at joint meetings.
4. Also introduce the handout at start-up meetings to establish a context for discussions about people's responsibility as good role models and their shared responsibility for the working environment.
5. It is a good idea to display the handout at your workplace physically or digitally, for example, in the same place as the health and safety instructions.

**AS A PERSON IN CHARGE IN THE INDUSTRY,
YOU MUST KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DESCRIBE
THE LINES OF ACTION TO OTHERS.**

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FOLLOW UP

- TELL THOSE INVOLVED HOW YOU EXPERIENCED THE SITUATION.

REACH OUT TO US!

Don't hesitate to reach out to us at the Danish Producers' Association if you have any questions. You can find our contact details at the Association's website.

- Danish Producers' Association