



An Overview of the Green Dot Strategy

Green Dot Strategy/Philosophy

The Green Dot strategy is a comprehensive approach to violence prevention that capitalizes on the power of peer and cultural influence across all levels of the socio-ecological model. Informed by social change theory, the model targets all community members as potential bystanders, and seeks to engage them, through awareness, education, and skills-practice, in proactive behaviors that establish intolerance of violence as the norm, as well as reactive interventions in high-risk situations – resulting in the ultimate reduction of violence. Specifically, the program targets socially influential individuals from across community subgroups. The goal is for these groups to engage in a basic education program that will equip them to integrate moments of prevention within existing relationships and daily activities. By doing so, new norms will be introduced and those within their sphere of influence will be significantly influenced to move from passive agreement that violence is wrong, to active intervention.

Given the extraordinary human cost of failure, we must inform every aspect of what we do with the most current science, then divest personal ego and scrutinize our work with objectivity and scientific rigor, course correcting each step of the way. The Green Dot curriculum is informed by concepts and lessons learned from bodies of research and theory across the domains of violence against women, diffusion of innovation/social diffusion, bystander dynamics, perpetration, and marketing/advertising. Additionally, since the foundation of Green Dot is built upon the necessity of achieving a critical mass of individuals willing to engage in new behaviors, it is important that we strive to recognize and address anything within our efforts that might be limiting engagement including historical obstacles in the field of violence prevention and professional and personal obstacles we all face. Finally, in contrast to historical approaches to violence prevention that have focused on victims and perpetrators, the Green Dot strategy is predicated on the belief that individual safety is a community responsibility and shifts the lens away from victims/perpetrators and onto bystanders. The overarching goal is to mobilize a force of engaged and proactive bystanders.

The conceptual framework that underlies the Green Dot prevention strategy is the Butterfly Model of Influence, which provides a framework for maximizing influence across all levels of the social ecology. In order for individuals to forward their prevention efforts by engaging in a new behavior, they need to see their connection to the issue and feel competent to do their part. Embedded throughout the curriculum are elements to promote ownership and competence (skills and knowledge). This will in turn enable individuals to use their existing influence to re-set social norms – from apathy and inaction – to (1) active intolerance of violence, and (2) the expectation that everyone will do her/his part to ensure community safety.

The Green Dot Curriculum

The Green Dot curriculum is comprised of three primary components, each with an emphasis on particular elements of the Butterfly model:

Part One: Green Dot Persuasive Speech

1. Green Dot Persuasive Speech:

A short persuasive speech that can range from 5 minutes to an hour that introduces the basic elements of Green Dot while using persuasive and inspirational language to engage participants in immediate action. The

basic elements of this speech are used to introduce members of any given community to Green Dot, generate community-wide buy-in, and begin the process of behavioral change. The core components of the persuasive speech include:

- **Inspiration:** It's not so much that folks don't know that power-based personal violence is a problem. It's not so much that people don't realize they should do something. It is that people are simply hopeless. They just don't believe they can make a difference. However, beneath the externally imposed layers of indifference and inaction – people do care. It's our job to help peel back the layers of apathy and reconnect our community to the renewed possibility that violence is not inevitable. With renewed hope will come a resurgence of action.
- **Shared Vision:** The red dot/green dot map is not an after-thought, but an essential element to create a sense of shared vision. The map is a visible manifestation of each person's role and how their role fits into a larger movement. This allows for momentum - the sense of "I don't have to do it all. My green dot, in combination with everyone else's green dot, can make a difference."
- **Individual Acceptance:** No one does well on the defensive. No one is eager to join when they feel judged and criticized. Wherever someone is, in regards to this issue and their role in it, has to be an acceptable place to start. It is the educator's job to communicate this message.
- **Simplicity:** Red dot bad. Green dot good. Here are some green dots you can do today. Period.
- **Critical Mass:** The necessity and urgency of critical mass demands that our fundamental lens is one of inclusion – treating each person we encounter as if we cannot succeed without them - because, we can't.

Part Two: Green Dot Bystander Training

An interactive training designed to equip participants with the necessary connection, knowledge and skill to increase their proactive and reactive bystander behaviors. Length of the training can range from 6 hours to a weekend retreat. Though the training can include as many community members as resources will allow, priority should be given to members that carry the most social influence across sub-groups. Throughout the training video, role-plays, and other exercises are utilized to maximize the level of engagement of participants and help them apply the concepts in the curriculum to their own lives.

The Green Dot Bystander training consists of four modules:

Module One: An Introduction to Green Dot

In this module an overview of the Green Dot strategy is provided, key definitions are discussed (e.g., power-based personal violence), and the role of the bystander is introduced. In addition to introducing the role of the bystander, this module connects participants to the role we all play as bystanders. Module one wraps up with an activity that helps participants identify how they want to be in the world, how they self-define, and their personal creed. This personal creed is then the foundation they will use throughout the rest of the training as they examine the choices they want to ultimately make as bystanders.

Module Two: Recognizing Red Dots

The first step to becoming a green dot generating bystander is learning how to recognize red dots. The curriculum goes into depth reviewing the observable behaviors associated with each of the major forms of power-based personal violence (depending on the emphasis of the trainees, could include: sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and/or bullying) Each form of violence is examined through the lens of a bystander, with the goal of cuing to earliest possible warning signs so that their green dots can reduce the likelihood that the violent acts ever manifest. Specifically, this module helps participants learn to recognize behaviors that have the potential to be imminently high risk, or more commonly, behaviors that could be early pre-cursors to a high-risk

situation. Throughout this module a realistic discussion is held regarding the challenge of differentiating between behaviors and patterns that are normal within relationships and those behaviors and patterns that may be indicative of a potentially problematic situation. When faced with an ambiguous situation, bystanders are encouraged to: (1) take a second look as there are often subtle, visible signs to notice, (2) “check in” when a situation is unclear, and (3) ask themselves “If it were someone that I love in this situation, would I want someone to check in or to intervene?” Through the use of video and workbook exercises participants learn to cue to potential red dots.

Module Three: Identifying Self-defining moments and Overcoming Obstacles

In order for bystanders to increase the likelihood of intervening more often, they have to take an honest look at what has kept them inactive in some situations. This module is about understanding the “obstacles” that keep individuals from doing green dots. The first step is to understand the obstacles that inhibit action, the second is to determine ways to make behavioral choices that are consistent with our personal creeds – despite the obstacles.

Three main categories of obstacles are discussed and participants do exercises to recognize the influence these obstacles have had on their own behavioral choices. The 3 major categories of influence that can impact the likelihood of action are: 1) Bystander Dynamics (e.g., diffusion of responsibility, pluralistic ignorance, etc.), 2) Peer Influence, and 3) Personal obstacles (e.g., “I’m shy,” “It’s not my concern”, etc.). After a discussion of these factors, we examine ways that someone can make the behavioral choices that they want despite their obstacles. The focus is not on getting over obstacles, rather it is on getting around them. To help participants come up with realistic alternatives we present the 3 D’s of bystander intervention: Direct (directly interact with the potential perpetrator or victim and address your concern), Distract (create a diversion to diffuse the potentially problematic situation), and Delegate (ask someone else to help in the situation). The green dot strategy doesn’t say what to do; it just says to do something. The emphasis in this section is on helping participants see that they have a range of options. This module wraps up with a discussion of “self-defining moments.” A self-defining moment is when an individual recognizes a potential red-dot, and then is challenged by one of his/her obstacles. The choice someone makes in that moment - to act or to walk away – is their self-defining moment.

Module Four: Proactive and Reactive Green Dots

The final module focuses on skill building and generating confidence in actually performing green dots. The module begins by helping participants generate a list of realistic green dots they would commit to performing, and emphasizing that any intervention must first be considered through the lens of safety.

There are two categories of green dots: reactive and proactive. Reactive green dots are done in reaction to seeing a concerning behavior or a potential red dot. Proactive green dots are done to promote two cultural norms: 1) violence will not be tolerated, and 2) everyone is expected to do their part to contribute to community safety. Participants start by generating reactive green dots in response to a variety of scenarios. This portion of the training focuses heavily on skills practice and through the use of progressive role plays and videos participants are given the opportunity to get comfortable doing reactive green dots. This section is designed to build on the knowledge they have gained and help increase confidence in their skills so they feel competent to take action.

In the last section focus is on proactive green dots and discussing ways participants can re-set the norm from bystander passivity to bystander action. The role of social influence is discussed, and how norms are easily set by our words and actions. We are not asking people to begin to influence their friends and family because we know they already do. We are simply asking people what they want that influence to be. Moreover, we emphasize that they don’t have to influence the whole world, just those already in their daily lives. This helps the challenge of re-setting cultural norms to feel manageable. Participants generate a list of proactive green dots that will commit to, engage in

skills practice, and are invited to sign a bystander pledge.

Part Three: Social Marketing Campaign

A broad range of social marketing strategies are utilized to increase basic awareness and mainstream social acceptance of the core language and principles of Green Dot. Green dot symbols that are associated with socially influential individuals or groups increase the social desirability of the targeted bystander behaviors.