



Disaster Recovery and Resilience

Natural disasters, domestic violence and the power of bystanders

Friday 15 May 2026



Australian Government



An Australian Government Initiative

CITY OF
GOLDCOAST.

Gold Coast Health
always care



Queensland
Government

An aerial photograph of a flooded residential area. The water is murky brown and covers most of the ground. Debris, including pieces of wood and metal, is scattered throughout the water. Some houses and trees are visible above the water level. The sky is overcast and grey.

DISASTER, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & THE POWER OF THE BYSTANDER

BE THERE GROUP



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Be there.
GROUP

Some of the topics we discuss and even the imagery presented over the next couple of hours may be confronting and challenging. While these conversations are crucial for enhancing our understanding of domestic and family violence, they may also serve as a painful reminder or be the first time you've encountered this information. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your EAP, 1800Respect, or me if you need additional support. Furthermore, feel free to take any steps necessary during this session to ensure your psychological safety.

SELF CARE



When disaster strikes, communities step up. People:

- check on neighbours
- fill sandbags
- cook meals
- rescue pets
- open their homes



Meet Sarah



A dark, moody photograph of a domestic violence scene. A person in a blue shirt and grey pants is lying on a bed, holding their head in pain. A person in a grey shirt and brown pants stands over them with a clenched fist. The background is a light-colored wall with vertical paneling.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

POWER AND CONTROL

Source: Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs | Duluth, Minnesota USA | www.theduluthmodel.org

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE

- preventing her from getting or keeping a job
- making her ask for money
- giving her an allowance
- taking her money
- not letting her know about or have access to family income

USING COERCION AND THREATS

- making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her
- threatening to leave her, to commit suicide or report her to welfare
- making her drop charges
- making her do illegal things

USING INTIMIDATION

- making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures
- smashing things
- destroying her property
- abusing pets
- displaying weapons

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

- putting her down
- making her feel bad about herself
- calling her names
- making her think she's crazy
- playing mind games
- humiliating her
- making her feel guilty

USING ISOLATION

- controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes
- limiting her outside involvement
- using jealousy to justify actions

MINIMISING, DENYING & BLAMING

- making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously
- saying the abuse didn't happen
- shifting responsibility for abusive behavior
- saying she caused it

USING CHILDREN

- making her feel guilty about the children
- using the children to relay messages
- using visitation to harass her
- threatening to take the children away

USING MALE PRIVILEGE

- treating her like a servant
- making all the big decisions
- acting like the "master of the castle"
- being the one to define men's and women's roles

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE SEXUAL

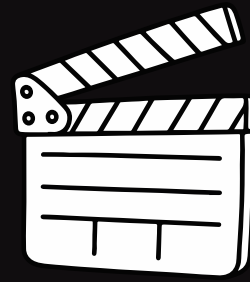
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE SEXUAL



WHAT DRIVES THE 'NEED' FOR POWER AND CONTROL

HA
HA
HA
HA

SEXIST
LANGUAGE
AND JOKES



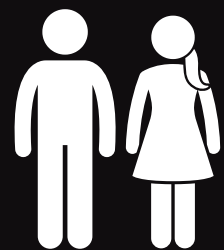
PORNOGRAPHY
THAT REINFORCES
DOMINANCE



COERCIVE
CONTROL



RIGID
GENDER
STEREOTYPES



OBJECTIFICATION
IN POPULAR
CULTURE



NORMALISING
CONTROL AND
ENTITLEMENT AND
VICTIM BLAMING



DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE



A woman with long blonde hair and two young children are sitting in front of a white brick wall. The woman is in the center, holding a blue pencil in her mouth. To her left is a young boy with red hair, wearing a red and white checkered shirt and a dark bow tie, holding a blue pencil in his mouth. To her right is a young girl with red hair, wearing a blue and white checkered dress with a white collar, holding a yellow pencil in her mouth. The scene is dimly lit, and the overall tone is calm and focused.

SARAH'S STORY

THE GENDERED NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MOST VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOMICIDE ARE WOMEN

| Year | Women killed by partner/ex-partner | Men killed by partner/ex-partner |
|----------------|---|---|
| 2024-25 | ~10 | 0 |
| 2023-24 | ~8 | 1 |
| 2022-23 | ~8 | 1 |
| 2021-22 | ~6 | 1 |
| 2020-21 | ~7 | 1 |



2012
ALLISON BADEN-CLAY



2015
TARA BROWN



2020
HANNAH CLARKE
AND HER CHILDREN



2021
KELLY WILKINSON



DISASTERS CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT DISASTERS CREATE STRESS.

Disasters induce stress.

Examples of stressors include:

- **Financial strain**
- **Displacement**
- **Uncertainty**
- **Increased alcohol use**
- **Loss of control**

DISASTER EVENT



STRESS + FINANCIAL PRESSURE



ISOLATION + LOSS OF SUPPORT



INCREASED CONTROL



ESCALATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

SARAH'S STORY

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair, smiling, sitting at a table with two children. The child on the left is a young boy with red hair, looking down with a sad expression. The child on the right is a young girl with blonde hair in pigtails, smiling and looking towards the woman. The woman is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt and a green beaded necklace. The background is a white brick wall. The text 'SARAH'S STORY' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

The Impact of Disasters on Risk Levels

International studies reveal that:

- Domestic violence often rises after disasters.
- Reports have documented increases of 20–50% following major events.

Examples of such events include:

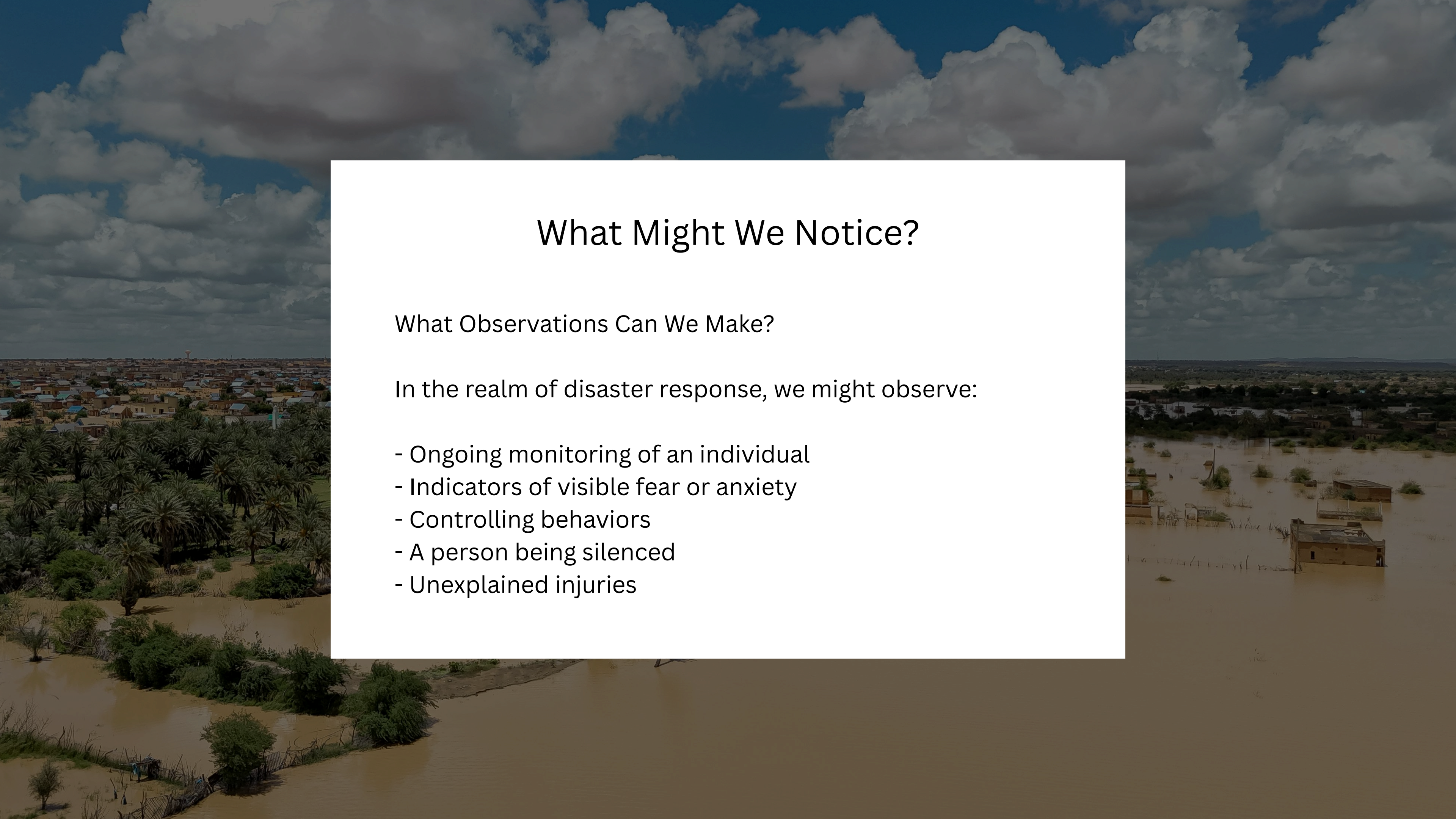
- Bushfires
- Cyclones
- Earthquakes
- COVID lockdowns

What Might We Notice?

What Observations Can We Make?

In the realm of disaster response, we might observe:

- Ongoing monitoring of an individual
- Indicators of visible fear or anxiety
- Controlling behaviors
- A person being silenced
- Unexplained injuries



A woman with long blonde hair is looking down at a mannequin. The mannequin is wearing a red and white checkered short-sleeved shirt with a red bow tie and blue jeans. The woman is wearing a grey long-sleeved top with a white patterned band across the chest. To the right, another mannequin is partially visible, wearing a blue and white checkered dress. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

SARAH'S STORY

THE ROLE OF THE BYSTANDER

BE THERE NOW

BE THERE LATER

Be There.

GROUP

BE THE SWITCH

BE THE CHAMPION

BE THERE NOW

Step in safely when you see, hear, or sense something wrong. Act in the moment to interrupt harmful behaviour. Your response could be direct, like asking the person to stop, or indirect, like seeking help from others.

BE THERE LATER

Offer support after the incident. Check in with the person affected. Give feedback to the person responsible. Show concern and let them know they are not alone. This helps create trust and change over time.

Be There.

GROUP

BE THE SWITCH

Use a distraction to shift focus and de-escalate the situation. You could ask a random question, spill a drink, or start a conversation. A small action can break the tension and give someone a way out.

BE THE CHAMPION

Lead by example in everyday life. Speak up against injustice. Promote respect, safety, and equality. Be someone who does something. Encourage others to do the same. Your actions shape the culture around you.

SARAH'S STORY



A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are shown from the chest up, holding hands in a circle. They are wearing a variety of clothing, including a teal shirt, a grey suit jacket, and a red and white striped shirt. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an indoor setting. The overall mood is one of solidarity and mutual support.

**DISASTER RECOVERY GOES BEYOND
SIMPLY RECONSTRUCTING HOMES; IT
FOCUSES ON SAFEGUARDING
INDIVIDUALS.**

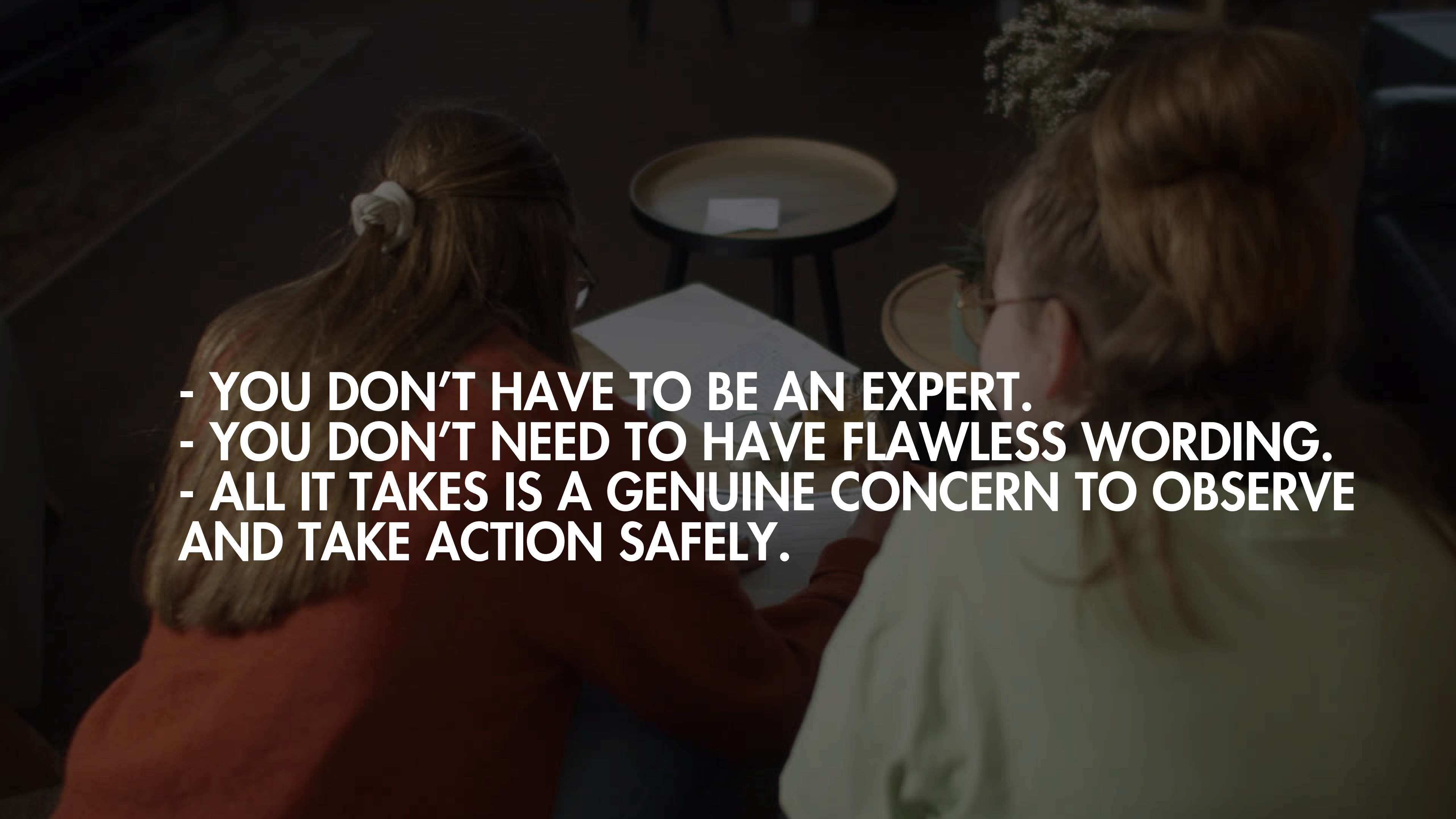
An aerial photograph of a vast agricultural landscape that has been completely inundated with floodwater. The water is a murky, brownish-grey color, covering the fields and surrounding areas. In the center of the image, there is a large, dark green island of trees and vegetation that remains above the water level. The text is overlaid on this central island. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font, arranged in four lines. The background image is slightly dimmed to make the white text stand out.

**WHAT ROLE CAN YOU
TAKE ON AS A
BYSTANDER DURING
DISASTER RESPONSE?**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE THRIVES IN:

-
- **SILENCE**
 - **ISOLATION**
 - **FEAR**

COMMUNITIES CAN INTERRUPT THIS.

- 
- A dimly lit photograph of two women sitting at a table. The woman on the left has long blonde hair tied back with a white flower. The woman on the right has blonde hair and is wearing glasses. They appear to be in a meeting or discussion. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.
- YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT.
 - YOU DON'T NEED TO HAVE FLAWLESS WORDING.
 - ALL IT TAKES IS A GENUINE CONCERN TO OBSERVE AND TAKE ACTION SAFELY.

IN TIMES OF DISASTER, COMMUNITIES
DEMONSTRATE REMARKABLE BRAVERY.

AT TIMES, BRAVERY MANIFESTS AS SANDBAGS.

OTHER TIMES, IT TAKES THE FORM OF ASKING:

“ARE YOU OKAY?”

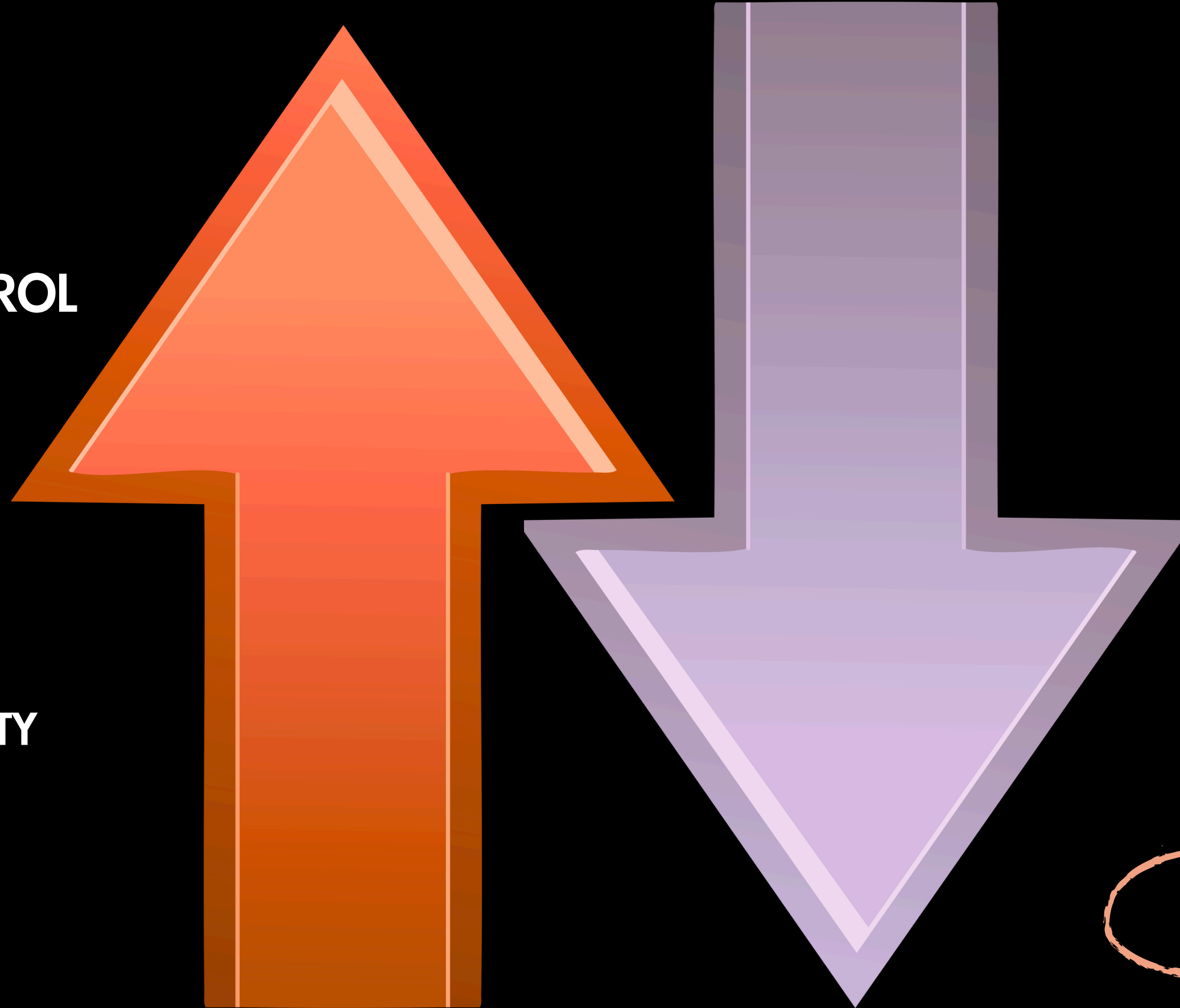
**ESCALATION
OF VIOLENCE**

INCREASED CONTROL

**ISOLATION +
REDUCED SUPPORT**

STRESS + UNCERTAINTY

DISASTER EVENT



BYSTANDERS NOTICE

CHECK IN

SUPPORT

**CONNECTION TO
HELP**

HELP

**BE SOMEONE WHO DOES
SOMETHING.**

BE THERE.

Be there.
GROUP