

# Awareness Konzept

Awareness Concept Contents:

1. What is Awareness?
2. Awareness-Raising Measures During the Action Weekend
3. Demonstration of Power and Partisanship
4. Intersectionality
5. Confidentiality
6. Practical Tips / Recommendations for Action
7. Dealing with the Police

## **1. What is Awareness?**

"Awareness" comes from English and means "being conscious, being mindful, being sensitive to certain problems." In our understanding, awareness also means acting from this perspective. It's about responding responsibly to discrimination and avoiding it from the outset. Fundamental to this is the realization that in our dominant society, there are no spaces—and therefore no parties, outings, group meetings, trips, or conferences—that are inherently free of discrimination.

Because in a society that creates inequalities and constantly reproduces and maintains oppressive conditions through its members, it is impossible to move freely free from power structures and relations of domination.

This awareness-raising concept is designed to help us actively combat discrimination during the weekend of action and deal constructively with its consequences. We want to raise awareness of discrimination, assault, and sexualized violence, initiate reflection on these issues, and ensure the safest possible environment by encouraging everyone to take responsibility.

For us, raising awareness is a collaborative process in which all participants of the weekend of action must participate. Therefore, when we write "we" in the following, we mean everyone. We want to support victims of assault and people who experience structural discrimination in particular. But we also want to be there for people who face difficulties for other reasons. We advocate for those affected by assault. This means that we act in the interest of the person affected and do not

question their perception and interpretation of the assault they experienced. You can find more information in the section "The Power of Definition and Prejudice."

We should always be aware of the extent to which our own position in society makes us part of discriminatory structures. Everyone makes mistakes, so we are open to feedback and criticism.

In addition to the primary goal of raising awareness and combating discrimination, we also want to promote positive interactions in general and ensure that people in difficult situations receive support.

## **2. Measures for Raising Awareness**

The following methods are used to implement the understanding of awareness described above:

At the beginning, all participants discuss the topic of awareness in an introductory session. In this workshop, we will explore the concept of awareness and, in a short session in small groups, discuss how our social position allows us to personally benefit from power structures (i.e., what privileges we enjoy). We also provide an opportunity to express specific wishes and demands regarding how we treat one another. The goal is also for participants in this introductory event to find allies they can turn to in the event of an attack.

There will not be a traditional awareness team solely responsible for handling awareness cases. This is because we do not want to (and cannot, due to a lack of resources and personnel) transfer the responsibility for dealing with attacks to an awareness team. Instead, we call on everyone to look out for one another and actively oppose discrimination.

We will hang a flip chart at a pre-arranged location where people can write their wishes and demands for how we interact this weekend. We encourage everyone to review it regularly and implement these suggestions. For those who found something awful and don't want to communicate it directly, we will provide a box where they can anonymously submit notes with criticism. These notes will then be taken out and read aloud during the debriefing. Please indicate on the note whether you only want it read aloud or if you want it discussed at length during the debriefing. We are doing this because a longer discussion might reveal who wrote the note.

During the debriefing session, each of you can also voice your criticism verbally, which we will then discuss. Everyone will receive a printed copy of this awareness concept. We will be posting flyers in the restrooms and other secluded areas explaining the principle of consent. These are intended as a call to action to ensure

consent is obtained before any sexual activity or "entering" the physical space/privacy or intimate sphere.

There will be a corner where materials (books, zines, flyers) on the topics of awareness and anti-discrimination will be available.

### **3. The Power of Definition and Partiality**

The concept of the power to define emerged as a supplement to civil law. It presupposes that it can be objectively determined whether or not an assault has occurred. However, this objectivity does not exist: The classification of assaults is always subjective. In civil law, people in positions of power (e.g., politicians who draft laws and judges who ultimately deliver verdicts) supposedly determine how the incident is to be categorized. Privileged people (especially white cis men) have increased access to this supposed objectivity.

#### The Power of Definition

The power to define acknowledges that the classification of assaults can only be subjective.

However, the power to make this classification does not lie with outsiders or the perpetrator, but with the person affected. Only the person affected can define when violence begins and boundaries have been crossed. Therefore, we do not question the affected person's decision to report violence/boundary violations. It is irrelevant how the assault was portrayed and perceived by others. Acknowledge the affected person's ability to assess the situation and ask about their needs.

#### Support

Support is a guiding principle primarily aimed at strengthening the affected person's trust. This is especially important because trust is typically lost when boundaries are crossed. In addition to the loss of trust, a previously perceived safe space has suddenly been destroyed. This space must be rebuilt. To achieve this, we literally stand by the affected person's side. This means showing empathy and communicating this consistently and actively. A "neutral" stance is practically impossible in such a situation and is also not advisable. Ultimately, it only harms the victim and protects the accused. Any kind of questioning, even well-intentioned follow-up questions, forces the victim to justify themselves and calls their statement into question. This should be avoided at all costs!

#### Multiple Victims?

The principles mentioned above apply equally if, for example, two people have abused/discriminated against each other. We therefore take the side of both individuals, provided that one act of abuse cannot justify the other. More information can be found in the section "Intersectionality".

#### **4. Intersectionality**

Intersectionality means considering and taking into account different forms of discrimination. On the one hand, this raises the question of how we can all deal constructively with the fact that we can only draw on limited (experiential) knowledge of different power relations and forms of discrimination. For us, it is important to acquire knowledge, listen to one another, and reflect on our actions in the follow-up and to open up space for criticism. On the other hand, intersectionality means for us to be aware of multiple forms of discrimination and to consider the environment and context of acts of violence. This means that in an awareness case, we pay attention to who was hurt and by whom, and why. For example, were both people hurt within the context of different forms of discrimination? Furthermore, when dealing with the person who perpetrated the violence, we try to consider their context. For example, we work to ensure that no action is taken against persons without secure residency status that could jeopardize that status.

In the event that both parties involved have acted in a discriminatory manner towards the other person, the following applies to us:

We do not support responding to one's own experience of discrimination with discriminatory behavior. Defending oneself, protecting oneself, and asserting oneself should take place without discrimination. In this specific case, we believe that both affected individuals have the power to define and name for themselves what form of discrimination and violence it was and which terms they use. We approach both affected individuals with solidarity and partisanship and try to facilitate a negotiation process. Each affected person will be assigned at least one contact person who will advocate for them. The goal should be for both individuals to listen to each other and perceive the respective discriminatory situations. The discussions with the affected individuals should ideally take place simultaneously. If we are unable to reach a negotiation process, or if both affected individuals demand the removal of the other person, both may have to leave for the weekend.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

In a typical scenario where a small awareness team is handling awareness work at a larger party, it's usually clear that the team members will communicate with each other. This communication is important so that team members aren't left alone to cope with potential emotional overload.

Our situation is a bit more complex because a person who confides in someone might not want all the weekend's participants to know about it. Be aware of this and clarify early on who the person wants to confide in and who they don't. And don't turn what's been confided into mindless gossip.

## **6. Practical Tips / Recommendations**

1. To be able to respond appropriately to an awareness incident, it's important to pay attention to your own well-being. If you don't feel able to help someone, communicate this to others over the weekend. There will surely be someone who can step in or offer support. If you see someone intervening in a situation, offer your support.

2. Also, take care of yourself and your feelings. It can be very stressful to be confronted with other people's difficult situations and to have a supportive role. Both the fear of responsibility and the fear of specific situations need to be acknowledged (of course, not by the person directly affected!). Seek support and ask for it from others. If you notice that people have taken on the task over the course of the weekend, check in with them and offer your support.

3. If you feel emotionally overwhelmed, you can tell the rest of the group. You can then find a way to cope with your feelings together. If you want to tell others details about the incident, discuss it with the person involved beforehand. Under no circumstances should you promise confidentiality to the person involved if you cannot keep it later.

### **In conversation**

If you intervene in abusive situations, believe you have observed discriminatory behavior, or respond to a person who has addressed it, try to keep the following in mind:

1. Does the person affected agree to you having this conversation? Would they prefer to speak with someone else rather than you? If so, don't ask for an explanation, but rather arrange for appropriate support.

2. Can you and the person affected communicate well enough? If not, can another person from the group speak with them, or will they be accompanied by a trusted person who can translate and with whom they feel comfortable?

3. Find a quiet place where the conversation can take place (e.g., a quiet retreat).

4. Give yourself and the person affected plenty of time (slowing down is important in crises).

5. Be aware of your own emotional limits. Make it clear if you can't cope with the situation. In this case, ensure that other support is available (other fellow travelers, counseling services, perhaps trusted people from the person's social circle, or whatever else you can think of together).

6. Inform the person affected that the conversation will remain confidential unless otherwise requested. Clarify whether, and if so, to whom else the person affected would like to confide.
7. Make it clear that you are biased and on the side of the person affected. Only they decide what they need. Nothing will be done that they do not want (see >Power of Definition and Bias).
8. When using physical contact for comfort, always ask for permission first! Even touching the shoulder can be intrusive. And asking for permission can also be inappropriate. Consider whether you have a good rapport with the person affected.
9. In the conversation, your primary task is to listen. Therefore, give the person affected plenty of space to talk and ask open-ended questions: a. "What is your concern?" b. "How can I help you?" c. "What might help you right now?"
10. You don't necessarily need to ask or know what happened. The person shouldn't feel pressured to tell the whole story or any details. It's important to give the person the space to share what they want.
11. We are not psychologists! Psychologically in-depth questions about what happened to the person affected can be triggering and you won't be able to handle them. Questions like "How does that feel?", "Where do you know that from?", "What situation does that remind you of?", and similar questions should therefore be avoided.
12. If you want to make a suggestion, make sure the person affected is even open to suggestions and, if necessary, offer several concrete options right away. Such a suggestion shouldn't be presented without alternatives.
13. Towards the end of the conversation, it can be helpful to explore alternative support structures, such as friends, that the person affected can turn to. If necessary, the person can be given several advice centers or contact details, or contact can be established.

#### Confrontation with the perpetrator

It is possible that the victim feels the need to confront the perpetrator about the assault without wanting them thrown out. This can take place, depending on the victim's needs, either in their presence or in their absence. It is important to always act in the victim's best interests (see >Power of Definition and Impartiality).

Therefore, before the confrontation, it should be agreed upon what role the victim and you will play:

1. What message should be conveyed to the perpetrator?

2. Who should say what?
3. Which reactions of the perpetrator should be sanctioned (and how)?
4. At what point should the conversation end?

It is important to have a second conversation with the victim after the confrontation to reflect together on how the confrontation went. Of course, the confrontation can also take place without you. Alternatively, she might want to visit the perpetrator perhaps with someone else.

#### Expulsion

1. It is possible that the person affected may want the perpetrator to leave the event. This must be communicated to the perpetrator calmly but firmly. If necessary, other people from the group and/or other responsible parties can be called in for support. Whether the person affected wants to be present or not is entirely up to them.
  2. Help the person who was expelled pack and organize their departure together. Discuss how you will stay in touch and contact each other after the weekend.
- Termination of the Event Should it be determined, by mutual agreement, that continuing the event is not possible under any circumstances (e.g., due to an abusive atmosphere within the group), the weekend of action will be terminated immediately. The person affected/group of people is not at fault/responsible in this matter.

### **7. Dealing with the Police**

This scenario deals with options for action as a witness to police violence, especially racist violence. It was largely adopted from KOP Berlin. For options for action as a direct victim of racist police violence, see here: <https://kop-berlin.de/schritte-gegen-polizeigewalt>

1. Ask the police officers for their badge numbers. Refusal to provide a badge number is unlawful; in this case, demand to speak to the officer in charge.
2. If plainclothes officers claim to be police officers, insist on seeing their police identification.
3. Request to be recorded as a witness on the spot! Offer your services as a witness to the victim as well. Ask bystanders to do the same. In the event of an arrest, be sure to ask for the name and address of the person taken away!
4. If you wish to file a complaint, do so with the public prosecutor's office. You can file a complaint regarding official conduct with the Berlin Police President at Platz der Luftbrücke 6.
5. If you become a victim or witness of an arrest or a racist police assault, write down the incident as precisely as possible in a written record of events:

- a) Location and time of the incident
- b) Actions observed
- c) Descriptions of the individuals involved
- d) Contacts with other witnesses
- e) Badge numbers of the officers
- f) Helmet numbers of the officers
- g) License plate numbers of the police vehicles

6. The person affected, or you as a witness, should immediately call the emergency criminal defense hotline: 0172 325 55 53. It is available 24/7, including weekends.

(<https://www.strafverteidiger-berlin.de/notdienst/>)

Important numbers: