

TIPS FOR AWARENESS

Awareness-Guideline
For Events



*awareness = attention,
consciousness; attentiveness;*

*to be aware = to be informed, to be
sensitized for certain issues*

At events (parties, demonstrations, festivals, camps, conferences, etc.), a bunch of unique people with different life orientations, experiences and stories often bump into each other/meet. We would like to do more justice to this diversity in events we organize. This requires an awareness of one's own position and privileges, as well as openness to positions of others. In the context of the regular Libertarian Days (LiTa) in Dresden, we as an organizing team

thought about how we want to deal with the topic of awareness within our event series and what structures this requires. This resulted in the impulse to bundle our texts, thoughts, ideas and concepts and to make them visible in a zine. The zine should inspire people to think about awareness structures in their events so not everybody needs to begin at the complete beginning and has to reinvent the wheel over and over again. :-)



The term „*awareness*“ could also be explained as „*consciousness*“ or „*mindfulness*“. It means that we treat each other with appreciation and respect. The goal is to minimize discriminatory, violent conditions and to take responsibility for ourselves and for others. When it comes to awareness, everyone has different situations in mind. Some think primarily of sexual violence, others of racial assault and admissions control to spaces and events. It also includes barriers that make it difficult to participate in events. For example, no barrier-free access, language barriers, lack of child-care, expensive admission or emotional backgrounds. Different groups and people have different approaches and concepts of awareness, which can change and adapt to different situations.



1.

FORMATION OF AN AWARENESS WORKING GROUP

We formed a working group Awareness in advance, which developed a concept, exchanged ideas within the group and then decided which tasks could be taken over by external people.

Our first meeting served as a preliminary discussion of the content of various topics. The following questions played an important role for us:

1.1.

WHAT DO WE THINK OF WHEN WE SAY "AWARENESS"?

- What is the power of definition? How do we position ourselves?
- What does prevention work mean to us, for example: education, public relations, announcements...?
- How do we deal with requests in advance for exclusion of people from our events?
- What does on-site intervention look like? (Support for those affected, talking to discriminating/violent people).
- What does transformative work with discriminating/violent persons mean?
- What is (in our case) the connection between awareness concept, awareness working group & awareness shift team?
- Do we want to provide post-event support for those affected?

As part of LiTa, we only do part of the prevention work with public relations and announcements about awareness and intervention on site (awareness teams shifts).



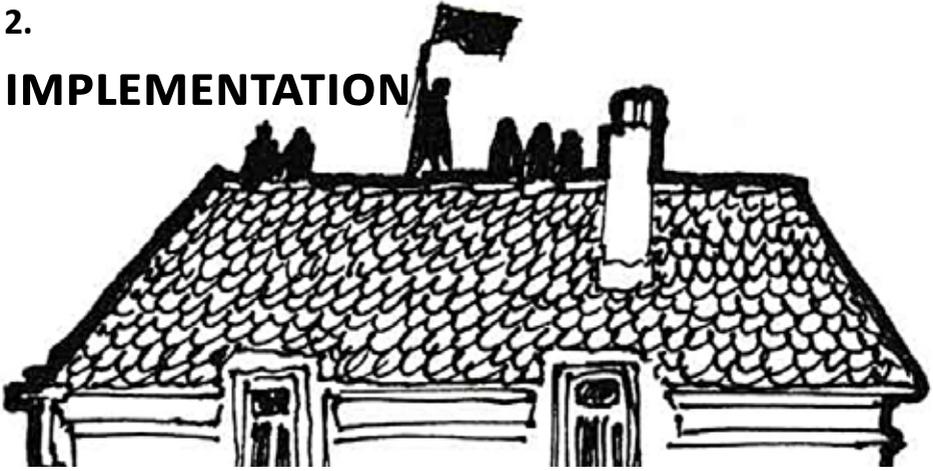
1.2.

WHAT IS THE AWARENESS TEAM LIKE AT THE EVENT?

- We wanted a team in which many different perspectives are represented, because this has better conditions to recognize discrimination and to support affected persons. We wanted to create a climate in the team in which people with different experiences of discrimination can feel comfortable.
- It was important for us to provide diverse teams if possible. That means: one FINTA* person per team (women, inter, non-binary, trans* and agender), if possible multilingual, not only white people, people with disability, people with different age...
- A fundamental question for the awareness team was: How do we live awareness? Question the composition of the team - are there only FINTA* people who do this care work? Why is the gender distribution in our group the way it is? Who does the cooking, cleaning, awareness and who speaks on stage?
- In addition, we had to question our own positions and be willing to offer to talk to the affected person about what they experienced with another person (e.g., possibly not talking to cis men about sexual violence, not talking to white people about racism, etc.).
- People doing awareness shifts have to be sober.
- First aid knowledge (physical & mental) is helpful.
- At the events, we wanted our team to be visible and approachable, so we had to think of a good place/position in the room/at the event and mark people well.

2.

IMPLEMENTATION



After the Working Group Awareness had thought about a concept, external people were now actively sought and invited to take over awareness shifts during the period of the events. The following call was used for this purpose:

“Dear companions, dear supporters, dear people, in the week of (date) the Libertarian Days will take place once again. We are busy preparing and looking forward to spending time with you. We have a well-filled program that you can look forward to.

However, a few things are still open and need people who are willing to support us. We would like to make the Libertarian Days as inclusive as possible and also make sure that an awareness team is available on site. Making this ful-

ly possible will not be easy, so we want to involve you and ask for support. Feel free to contact us by e-mail (e-mail address) if you can imagine being a contact person on one of the days for people who are not doing well and need support. The interaction with people who are acutely affected by discrimination will be in the foreground of the awareness work. We would like to build a team that is briefed by our Awareness working group about the awareness concept and can be approached on site at least two people per shift. You are welcome to visit one of our Awareness-AG-meetings beforehand, to exchange ideas with us and to get to know our concept - the date XX-XX.XXXX.”

2.1.

MEETING WITH PEOPLE TAKING OVER AWARENESS SHIFTS

Afterwards, we invited the people who volunteered to take over the awareness shifts to present our concept and to talk about awareness in general. The following questions were in the foreground:

- What is for us awareness?
- How much capacities (time, people, infrastructure...) do we have and what can we achieve?
- What are our boundaries?
- How do we deal with people who are a danger to others or suicidal?
- Who has the decision-making responsibility? How can we distribute responsibility? How much personal responsibility does everyone in the team want to bear themselves?
- How do we deal with exclusions of violent | discriminatory people?
- What does the retreat room (de. Rückzugsraum) look like and how is it used?
- What is the composition of the awareness team on site?
- For which scenarios do we want to be prepared and how?
- How do we deal with drug use (including alcohol and smoking) and people are using it during our events?
- Who takes over which (care) activities/work
- How do we want to be visible to participants?

We discussed these questions together with the awareness shifters and supplemented and updated our awareness concept.

2.2.

PREPARATION OF AWARENESS SHIFTS

Persons should have been present at the awareness meeting or should have exchanged ideas about awareness.

We talked about boundaries in the awareness team. The central question was: Are there things that trigger us and that we cannot accompany?

We talked about terms and agreed not to use terms like “victim” and “perpetrator”. The term “perpetrator” conjures up associations of an intentionally and deliberately “bad” person who needs to be punished. This gets in the way of constructively addressing how we can create change and prevent the repetition of violent acts. Instead of “perpetrator” we can use “perpetrator/discriminator” and instead of “victim” (which stigmatizes people and makes them unable to act) we can use “affected person”. It was also important for us to pay attention to self-care when supporting. In addition, awareness people should not have other tasks so that they can focus on awareness.

We marked a place where contact persons stay and are approachable.

Awareness people should be well marked with armbands, vests or anything that is easily recognizable in the dark (e.g. fluorescent or glowing things).

We obtained an awareness cell phone, which can be used to reach awareness people.

We tried to have a person available on each shift who was not currently on shift, who could advise or give a third opinion in case of an emergency.

We agreed that we would not forcibly hospitalize, i.e. also that shift members would assess for themselves, e.g. to call an emergency doctor (suicidal intention, etc.).

2.3.

HOW DO I SUPPORT AFFECTED PEOPLE?

Process

Note: The focus should be on the affected person, the support and their needs. We do not offer transformative work with the perpetrator of violence/discrimination. Do not put yourself in danger in violent situations.

Initial situation: The Awareness Team is approached by a person who is either affected by violent or discriminatory behavior of others or who has observed such behavior. Possibly the team itself perceives problematic behavior and addresses this. We wanted to take responsibility and at the same time not be watchguards, so we were approachable but not looking for problem behavior. It was important to be sensitive to the situations, to listen and to ask affected persons about their needs and wishes. We were careful to support the person concerned and not to act in a patronizing way or to push them into a subordinate role.

We offered to go to the quiet place/retreat room and talk about what we had experienced, actively listening.

If the person did not want to talk about it, we did not ask any further questions. Affected persons are always experts of their own experience and know best what they need and what can help. The conversation is and remains confidential.

If the person did not want to talk about it, we asked if the person wanted us to be present. If so, we simply stayed around in case the person needed help. In this way, we also conveyed the feeling that the person would not be left alone. It was and is important to avoid diagnoses, evaluations and attributions and to reflect on oneself in this regard. Keep in mind that we are only outsiders.

The central task was not to find the truth, but to recognize an individual experience.

In terms of attitude, the awareness person was always on the side of the people who experienced an assaultive situation.



AWARENESS-SPACE/RETREAT

It has often been helpful to create a physical separation from the stress-inducing situation. This could be an awareness room. This would need to be discussed with the venue in advance. At each venue, we looked at how a retreat/quiet/safer space could be implemented. In this room, those affected could rest, talk to the team in peace, etc.

We also had to decide if the affected people could use the room independently or if there would be access only with awareness people.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EQUIPMENT OF THE ROOM:

- plush animals, blankets
 - handkerchiefs
 - a possibility to lie down
 - relaxing music and audio books for distraction
 - cozy light
 - kettle, hot water bottles, tea, cups
 - 1st aid kit, strip plaster, ibuprofen
 - chocolate, chewing gum, dextrose (glucose), vegan gummy animals
 - Stress ball
 - Tampons, pads
 - Paper, flip charts and pens for short notice announcements
 - Numbers to refer to after the fact/lists of places to go for affected individuals
 - Brochures/books on awareness, other informational brochures
 - List of phone numbers for cab services
- 



FURTHER REFLECTION FOR SUPPORTING PERSONS

- Examination of one's own boundaries, different forms of discrimination, levels and their overlaps (intersectionality), violence and experiences of violence, trauma, privileges and shame.
- Paying attention to language and formulations (gendering, racism-critical language...)
- A clarified relationship with the rest of the crew: what authority do you have over whom? What if the discriminating/violent person is from the team?
- Where do you draw the line between support and therapy?
- Own position of power
- Own concern vs. objectivity
- How do we deal with exclusions or wishes for exclusion?

Sources: based on fanzine *“Awareness - Umgang mit Diskriminierung und Gewalt bei Veranstaltungen”*



2.4.

THE END OF A SITUATION

Our central questions:

- What is the affected person doing now?
- Is the discriminating person still around?
- Where is the affected person going? Are there people who can accompany them? Can friends or flatmates be contacted to accompany them?
- Regarding the controversial question of accompanying the person, we decided not to take the person home unless we knew them personally and we feel it is a good idea to do so.
- If necessary, we wanted to ask for the person's contact details and give them our own contact details (small pieces of paper with the anonymous e-mail address), as the situation often has an after-effect and it is then good to have the mutual contact possibilities of the awareness shift and the person affected.
- We let the shifts end with the events (+30 min), because it can be important to define a clear end of the shift.

AFTER THE SHIFT

After 2-3 days we wanted to contact affected people again and ask how they are doing and if further support is needed (depending on situations and capacities).

After the awareness shift it seemed important to us to create space for exchange with other shifters in case something happened. This creates transparency, learning from the situation and the shifters can get emotional support if they want it. This also means that when a difficult situation has happened and awareness people are feeling bad, they can build up a support structure.

2.5.

REFLECTION AFTER THE EVENTS

After a few days, we met with all the shift participants to evaluate together:

- What went well?
- What could we do differently?
- Are the people from the awareness shift available for future requests about the situation/topic?

3.

INFOS & PREVENTION WORK BEFORE THE EVENT

Before each event we notified people who attended the event about different topics:

- Corona/hygiene
- announcing Awareness and Awareness Team on-site
- Dealing with drug consumption

4.

ACCESSIBILITY

REMARKS AND QUESTIONS

For barrier-free events and announcements for them, it is very important to describe the events or venues in detail, e.g. it is best to write at each event or venue:

- is there a wheelchair ramp?
- Are there accessible restrooms? How big are they? Give measurements so people can decide on their own if that's enough!
- What language is the event/ lecture in? Is the language plain/ simple/easy or difficult and academic?
- Is there a sign language translation?

OTHER QUESTIONS

- Can the thesis papers or summaries from the workshop/ conference be offered to make it easier to follow?
- can what is said also be shown/ expressed visually or shown with visual material?
- Is the language too academic and complicated? Can it be simplified and made more accessible?
- Do flyers have enough contrast between text and background? Is the text at least 12 pt in size? For example, for people with visual impairments or dyslexia it helps to have a big enough text and enough contrast between characters and the background.

5.

ANNOUNCEMENT TEXTS FOR HOMEPAGE & FLYER

To make it easier and faster for future events, we have put together a set of announcement texts that can be used for different events. They cover topics such as awareness, accessibility, drug use and so on.



ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

„AWARENESS

to be aware = to be informed, to be sensitized to certain issues.

There will be a bunch of unique people at the events (parties, demonstrations, festivals, camps, conferences, etc.) with different life orientations, experiences and stories. We'd like to do a little more justice to this diversity. This requires an awareness of one's own position and privileges as well as openness to positions of others. We, the organizing team, think it is important to think about the topic of awareness, because we want everyone to feel comfortable at the Libertarian Days. Awareness is not the task of the Orga-Team, but of all participants, which means for all of us, also for the participants of the LiTa, that we are attentive:

Be aware of your limits and those of others. It means dealing consciously with your own privileges and existing power structures and reflecting on your own prejudices and stereotypes. In discussions, no matter how heated they are, pay attention to a balanced participation. There will be an awareness team on site at some of the LiTa events to raise awareness and be available for you in case needed. The awareness team will be recognizable for participants by visible armbands. Feel free to come up to us at any time and talk to us!"





„DRUG CONSUMPTION

The topic of awareness also includes dealing with drugs. This is a sensitive topic. We are aware that it can be fraught with prejudice and stigma. On the other hand, in our society there is often a very uncritical consumption of alcohol, which is declared to be a private matter for the individual. Like the vacation of the worker, alcohol serves as an outlet to let off steam while maintaining the system that produces it. One of the problems of alcohol is the central role that drinking currently plays in socialization, through which drinking is virtually reinterpreted as the prerequisite for social interaction and social occasions. We have the claim to form a respectful, non-violent and solidary society and want to start for this with our-

elves. The private sphere is political, and this also applies to the consumption of the individual. We do not want to pronounce any prohibitions or commandments here, but at this point we would like to point out the power-dynamic level of drug and alcohol consumption. Especially in the context of the frequently shared experiences of violence and border transgressions among FLINTAs and various marginalized groups, the consumption of psychoactive substances plays a very central role. Therefore, we would like to remind moderate and considerate consumption.”



„CHILDCARE

We want to make events as inclusive as possible and also make sure that people of all ages have opportunities to occupy themselves on site and that parents can also participate in events. To that end, we provide various materials that children can use on their own or organize childcare.”





„ACCESSIBILITY

We understand barriers as socially created structures that disadvantage people because of certain physical, cognitive or psychological characteristics or because of their age. Barriers are an expression of social power relations. We see breaking down these structures as part of our emancipatory practice, so we want to contribute to making our events as barrier-free as possible. We understand this path to inclusion and accessibility as a process in which we can and must still learn a lot.

In our planning for the events, we try to take into account possible restrictions in terms of mobility (wheelchair, walking difficulties), language (translation), age hierarchy, etc.

Unfortunately, our capacities are already limited due to the space and we are absolutely dependent on your cooperation. Please contact us early if you have any needs, questions, comments or if you want to let us know what kind of support you need on site. We can then look together what still needs to be or can be organized.”





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