

You Me and

the

**Structures
We Live**

In



You, Me, and the Structures We Live In

Power Dynamics and
Communication at
Global Learning Seminars

eFeF
Training
Program

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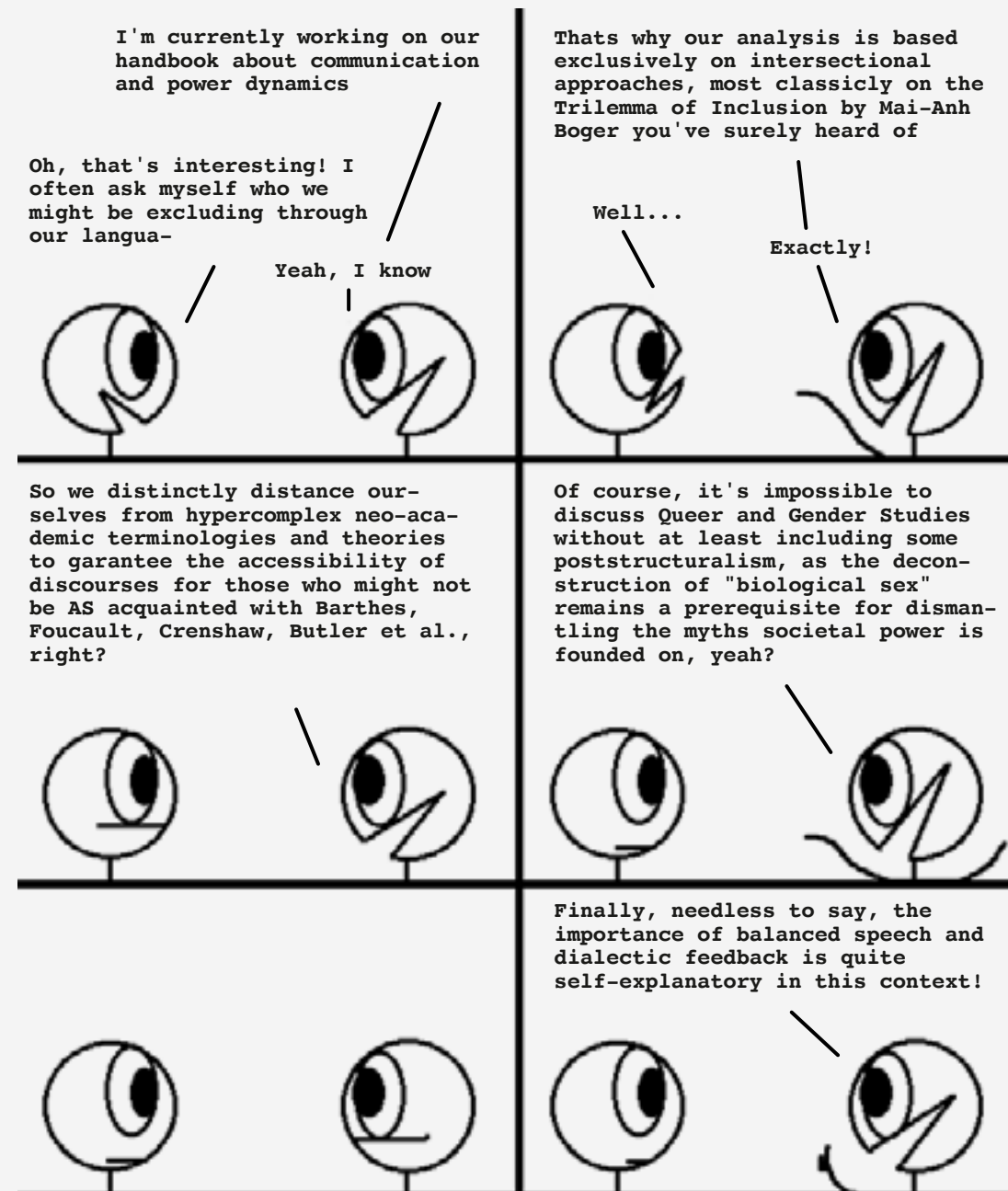
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Introduction

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Foreword

This handbook was written in 2023 (first edition 2022) by the instructors of the eFeF project “Multipliers for Global Learning.” eFeF (Protestant Forum for Voluntary Services in Development Cooperation) is a network of church and development organizations, associations and agencies in the protestant sector, all of which are involved in the funding of the international volunteering program “weltwärts.”

The project was originally designed to offer educational perspectives to international volunteers who returned home to Germany. Many young people return home after a year abroad feeling angry, bitter, and helpless about the world we live in. Volunteering can allow people to realize the effects of their own privilege and the injustice of global wealth disparities first-hand.

Today, the training project is open to everyone, not just former volunteers. People of all ages and educational backgrounds are welcome, with no requirement for affiliation with any particular religion or institution. For years now, we have been working to diversify our target group to include more People of Color, people with disabilities, older people, and people without formal education.

How the project works: Participants select 5 seminars of their choice from a catalog of options based on their own interests. The seminars cover topics ranging from climate justice to racism, migration, asylum, ableism, gender, classism, post-colonialism, and democracy. After participating in these 5 seminars and carrying out a practical project of their own, they certify as “multipliers of Global Learning.” This qualifies them to work in the realm of political education or otherwise spread the lessons of Global Learning within the German society.

In 2020, we, the eFeF trainers, decided to publish a sort of guideline for the communication we wish to see at our seminars. We hoped this might facilitate a learning atmosphere where everyone actively takes responsibility for their behavior. This is based on the belief that the dismantling of power structures, which we constantly advocate for, must first be brought to life in the actual spaces we occupy. What started out as a 10-page word document quickly became a 150-page handbook. It was picked up by all sorts of organizations and individuals engaged in political education and has become a “renowned” reference within this particular bubble.

We decided to put an English translation out there, and here it is. Note however that what you will read is specific to the German context. It’s up to others—maybe you?—to create new versions adapted to other settings.

You, Me, and the Structures We Live In

We're writing this handbook because we take part in seminars and workshops surrounding Global Learning, whether it's as organizers, trainers or participants. Global Learning is a transformative approach that views education as a key to social change, fostering a future that is socially, economically, politically, and ecologically sustainable. Our topics include various political issues, different forms of oppression, as well as the intersectional complexities of colonial and capitalist systems. To sum it up: We talk about society and global systems, ergo power dynamics.

What matters, then, is that the criticism of power doesn't remain an abstract concept or a merely theoretical process. In fact, it begins very practically with our own reflections, the space around us, and our positions within it. Ultimately, this boils down to the critical transformation of our seminars. Because just like any other space they are drenched in power relations and injustice. Of course, as participants and trainers alike, we want seminars that make everyone feel as safe as possible. After all, this is the baseline for us to learn together. It's this very challenge that drives us to ask: How can we live what we preach? And how can we best work together to get there?

This handbook is a result of many conversations held with participants and trainers. It's intended as

food for thought for organizers, facilitators, and trainers, but also for you as participants. We all are involved in processes that hold endless opportunities for us to learn. Our hope is that these conversations continue to grow, so please feel free to contribute.

In order to continuously reflect on our practices, we not only created this book, but also gather participants' feedback. After each weekend of training, the participants are required to fill out an anonymous questionnaire regarding their experience of power and safety during the three days. This way, we continue monitoring and developing our dealings with power and communication at seminars.

Neither this book nor our questionnaires can prevent unpleasant situations from recurring. There will be instances where a person might feel like they aren't being taken seriously, that someone might feel hurt by discrimination, that it seems like the same person always speaks or interrupts others, or where the same person always ends up cleaning the seminar rooms. These instances are bound to keep happening, because society is still society. Nevertheless, we hope to make a small contribution towards minimizing the sheer amount of these and similar situations! All the way through, we vow to be guided by the words of James Baldwin: "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it's faced."

Whom Are We Writing This Handbook For?

This book is meant for anyone who either hosts seminars or participates in them. It explicitly addresses everyone involved in the seminar process, as everyone has a role to play in the creation of a shared space. To make our seminars as pleasant and safe as possible for everyone, it requires effort from all of us.

Here is an important note on what we mean when we say “all of us.”

In our program, we have often experienced that some people contribute little to nothing to this goal of inclusion and take little to no responsibility for the group. Based on this experience, we were initially concerned that exactly those people will not read this handbook. We had many discussions on how to deal with this issue. Finally, we agreed on the strategy of opening up about these experiences and what we wished to associate with them.

We are not doing this to embarrass or shame the people concerned. But we haven’t found a better way to make sure that when we speak of “everyone” these people are specifically addressed. Frequently, the same categories apply to these people: white, straight, endosex, cisgender, male, non-disabled. Often, these people also experience neither classism nor belonging to a marginalized religion.

If these categories apply to you and you are about to put this handbook down for good: We explicitly and specifically invite you to keep on reading. If this applies to you, take a moment to consider how your place in society might influence the roles you assume in social contexts. This handbook is an honest, meaningful invitation for you to reflect, to ask questions, and to exercise putting what you learn into practice.

What we’d like to stress: “white,” “straight,” “cis,” and “male” are just examples of privileges that people can have. Such categorizations are merely tools to start important conversations—they don’t convey judgement and certainly don’t imply that anyone is a bad person! No matter which privileges you own, you’re just as valuable as any other individual in the world. The first piece of good news is that your privileges aren’t your fault. You didn’t choose them. The second: You’ve already read up till here. The third: You determine “who you are” by deciding over your actions—that’s all that matters.

How To Navigate This Handbook

This handbook is a mix of recommendations, wishes, experiences, and hopes that we have gathered for working and learning together at our seminars. Following this introduction to the topic, you will come across a glossary that contains clarifications of all the words we found difficult but are important. With the help of the glossary, we hope to ensure that everyone’s on the same page before we dive into the practical chapters.

The first large block (after the glossary) contains suggestions and guidelines for participants. It deals with the challenges involved in navigating a shared space. We will provide ideas on how to grapple with the challenges, address them, and give each other feedback.

The second large block offers suggestions for trainers/instructors/facilitators. Here, we’ll share ideas on how to create safer shared learning spaces—both in terms of the material, structural settings of the space, as well as with regards to the attitudes and actions of the trainers themselves. Many of us are familiar with both perspectives (finding ourselves in the role of trainers in some contexts and participants in others) and might therefore discover takeaways in both blocks.

The third block is titled “Background.” It begins with the theoretical introduction to four different

power dimensions. This is because the four forms of power distribution: **sexism**, **classism**, **ableism**, and **racism** are of great concern to us in our training program, as well as in political education as a whole. They continuously take up space in our conversations and were a decisive factor for the creation of this handbook. Following the introduction, you’ll find our reading and listening recommendations that can lead you further into learning about the four power relations we decided to focus on. At the end of this third block, we compiled statements from participants that encouraged us to work on this kind of handbook in the first place.

In the German version, there’s a chapter in the back that we left out here. It’s called “Backstage: A Glimpse Behind the Scenes” and is meant to provide insight into our processes of learning and decision-making. It sheds light on some of the long discussions we had throughout the process, which were partially detailed. It was exciting for us to keep track of our questions, reflections, and struggles—so we decided to present them transparently for readers as well. However, because many of our discussions ran along the (frankly, quite complex) contours of specifically German discourses, it didn’t make sense for us to translate this last chapter.

Now, here are a few words about the handbook’s structure to help you navigate: At the top of each page, you can see the five chapters (or blocks,

as we called them) in different colors. The block you're currently in is always **white**. At the bottom of the page, you will find the section within the block you're currently reading. To look up a term, click on the "?," and you will be sent directly to the glossary. Clicking on the three dashes next to the "?" will take you back to the table of contents. There, you can also click on each section individually to skip to its beginning. The same logic applies to the top of each page. Click on a color, and you will be taken to the block's title page listing the sections it contains. Some terms out of our glossary are also highlighted yellow in the text. If you move your cursor over such a term, the word's explanation will appear.

At some points of the handbook, you will come across content warnings. These warnings indicate that the following page includes depictions or descriptions of violence. In the case that a page's content isn't clearly visible from its title, depictions, and descriptions of violence will always be marked on the preceding page.

We encourage you to pay attention to these content warnings. When you see such a warning, pause, take a breath, and check in with yourself: "Do I really want to face this topic right now? What might I need to do so safely?" One idea might be to read the passage with someone you know, to read it at another time or to simply take a second to brace yourself for the next page.

We Are All Human, But...

Throughout this handbook, as well as in our seminars, and the world beyond, you will repeatedly come across certain categories. Examples of these categories include female, male, **black**, white, hetero, queer, poor, rich, **disabled**, and **abled**. Maybe you're wondering if it's really necessary to classify people that way. After all, we all are human beings and such labels only represent a fraction of our identities. We agree with you on that! We all are individual in countless different ways, including the ways in which we experience societal power dynamics. Some categories **privilege** and benefit us, while others oppress and harm us. The result of this is that all of us experience a very unique mix of social positions, letting us experience a various blend of powerlessness and power. This condition is called **intersectionality**.

The phrase "We all are human" is correct, but if it's not followed by a "but," it downplays our various social positions and their associated consequences (see "Leaving The Happyland"). To address this and to make these realities challengeable, we need a certain awareness of the underlying structures. An important first step is to name such structures of inequality. To name a few examples, these structures are **sexism**, **racism**, **ableism**, and **classism**. These power relations have different effects on us depending on our positions within them, which is why it's crucial to be upfront with where

we stand. These power relations are deeply rooted in global history and have permeated every aspect of our lives. In other words, they are everywhere. Consequently, they influence the ways in which we discuss issues such as climate justice, post-growth, migration, and peace. If you already have an approach to Global Learning and it seems unrelated to power structures, rest assured that any topic you deal with is nonetheless shaped by them –both historically and currently—as is our entire world.

This creates a responsibility for all of us to address these issues. Just as power structures are incredibly diverse, so are the possible ways in which we can address them. A first step is to check how you're positioned: "In what way do power relations give me **privileges**? In what way do they marginalize and harm me? In what way do these structures exert pressure on me? And how does this affect my relationships with others?" All four questions are worth asking, because societal power dynamics tend to push us into certain roles and thus influence how we move about the world.

Being privileged, and being marginalized bring about unequal costs for different people. For people who are marginalized and oppressed, the costs are linked to social devaluation. Whereas for those who are privileged, they are linked to an increase of social value. Patriarchy, for example, forces children who are assigned male at birth to ignore pain. This is highly valued in society and

useful for performing efficient wage labor and pushing one's limits as an adult. Children assigned female, on the other hand, are forced to learn **emotional labor**. This skill and its usefulness are socially ignored and often poorly paid, if at all. And children who don't fit into either of the two categories are constantly coerced into one of them by external influences.

These structures were already in place before we are born and they accompany us throughout our lives. Dealing with these structures is a lifelong learning process which we have to confront again and again. That is also because societal discourses around specific power relations keep changing and the ways in which we talk about them keep evolving! It's important not to dwell in merely abstract reflections or to concentrate solely on being "correct" around a topic. Knowledge and self-reflection change almost nothing if the things we learn aren't put into practice. For example, using sensitive language becomes nearly irrelevant if we forget to change the relationships we have with each other. Or fail to work on battling the structures. Ultimately, there are endless ways to roll up your sleeves and take action, so it can be helpful to recognize: "I may have already made progress, but there still is work to do."

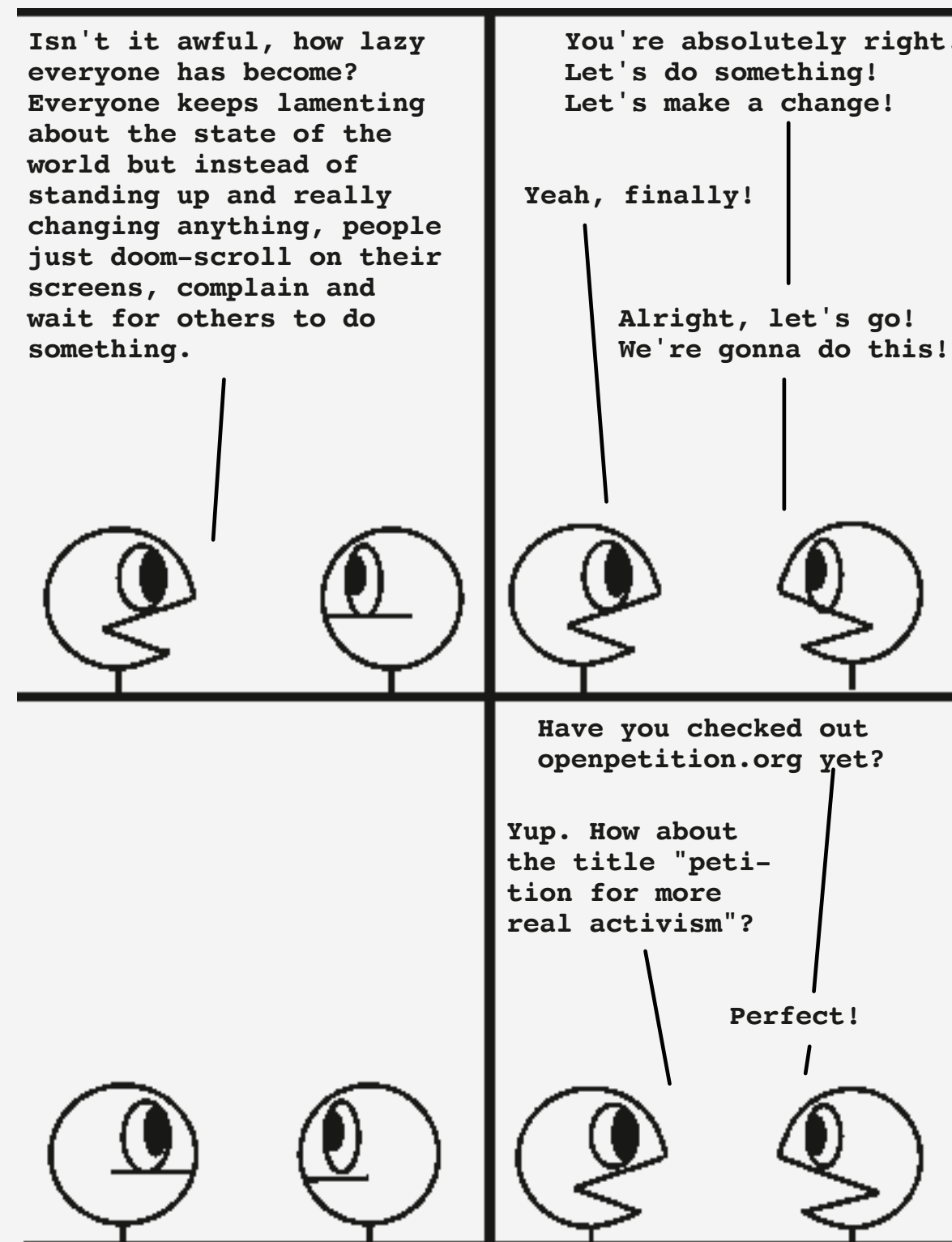


Illustration: Nadja Hermann / Erzählmirmix

Glossary

- racism
- antisemitism
- race
- Black, BIPoC, racialized
- white sexism
- trans, non-binary, agender, gender-nonconforming
- cis
- intersex
- endosex
- FLINTA
- -romantic, -sexual, LGBTQIA
- pronouns
- asterisk
- classism
- ableism
- disabled
- neurodiversity, neurodivergent,
- neurotypical
- abled, non-disabled
- intersectionality
- care work, emotional labor
- victim (note)
- privilege
- ally
- fragility

Glossary

In the following section, we will explain a few terms. We will sometimes use certain terms to describe a person's social position. These concepts are social constructs and not biological categories. It's important to name them, because they shape our social realities. The glossary is sorted by topic, rather than alphabetical order. In the "Background" section we will recommend additional glossaries.



Illustration: Mira Schönege

racism

is a system of discrimination, prejudice, and power inequality based on race or ethnicity that distributes power unequally among people worldwide. It serves to maintain the prevailing order of global economy, imperialism, and national borders. Racism has evolved rapidly through the ages with European colonialism in the 15th and 16th centuries noted as laying the groundwork for modern racism. To justify slavery, exploitation, and oppression, racism created the idea that people are of unequal worth based on external physical characteristics e.g. skin color. Racism privileges white people, while discriminating against BIPOC a state of affairs referred to as white supremacy.

antisemitism

is the historically rooted hostility towards Jews, the origins dating back to the Middle Ages. Within this context Jews are constructed as a secretly superior group which often leads conspiracy theories. In these theories Jews are not explicitly named as actors but their involvement is implied. In addition, the Shoah (mass murder of Jews by the National Socialists) is often relativized or even glorified. Antisemitism also projects the depreciation of Jews onto the state of Israel—or it manifests itself when Jews are automatically understood as representatives of Israel.

race

is a socially constructed term that was coined in the USA based on skin, hair or facial features over the course of struggles against racism and social inequality. In the US context, it's used rather as self-description, in contrast to the German term "Rasse," which is a foreign attribution and was mainly perpetrated in "racial theories" before and during National Socialism. It therefore reproduces the respective ideologies and violences of that time. It also suggests that biological "human races" exist, which is simply false. We use race to describe the reality of the experience of racism. This experience is

based on certain characteristics. They are quite diverse: A person's skin tone, nationality, religion, facial features, hair texture, name—among many others.

Black, BIPOC, racialized

are terms people use to identify themselves as experiencing racism. In German-speaking contexts, the adjective "black" (Schwarz) is spelled with a capital "S" to demonstrate that this is a socio-political category that has been fought for. BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and is an umbrella term for many different identities. The term "racialized" aims to make the construction of racism particularly clear. All terms describe a position within a racist society and not an inherent characteristic or biological trait.

white

describes the social position of being privileged by racism and white supremacy. In German, the word "white" (weiß) is written in italics to make it clear that it's not the actual color "white" (nobody's skintone is entirely pigment-free), but again, the reality of a certain experience. Another term used in Germany is "WC-deutsch," an abbreviation of "weiß-christlich deutsch" and literally means "white Christian German." This more specific term is intended to highlight the position of those who are privileged in relation to racism and antisemitism.

sexism

is a system based on the separation of all humans into one of two constructed gender categories, woman or man. Power is distributed unequally along the lines of this binary, resulting in a social order known as patriarchy. Straight cis endosex men are privileged through sexism, while women and queers are disadvantaged. Trans, non-binary, agender, and intersex people are not even allowed to exist within this logic. They often experience more specific forms of sexism, for example transmisogyny.

trans, non-binary, agender, gender-nonconforming

Trans is an umbrella term for people who don't exclusively or consistently identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Trans people can have either a binary gender (female, male), a non-binary gender (this can mean they are neither exclusively female nor male, or it can mean their gender lies entirely beyond the gender binary), changing genders, multiple genders or no gender. Agender describes the experience of not having a gender or not being able to do anything with the concept of gender.

All these terms are self-descriptions or self-definitions. In German-speaking communities, the word "trans*" is often written with an asterisk (a little star) at the end. This is to indicate that there are many other words people might want to use for themselves, like transsexual, transgender, transident.

Gender-nonconforming is a term to describe that one's gender expression doesn't fit into the stereotypes of either male or female, meaning that a person noticeably defies social gender roles and expectations. Gender-nonconforming people are not necessarily trans or non-binary, but often experience similar discrimination in everyday life.

cis

is the adjective assigned to people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. "Cis" is not a term that cis people come up with themselves, but it has an important function to make their privilege visible.

intersex

means that a person's body does not fit into the medical/Western construction of the two-gender norm (the idea that gender is something distinctly biological derives from European colonialism). Intersex is an umbrella

term and can be defined on the basis of various physical characteristics (chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, gonads and/or secondary characteristics). Intersex people are pathologized and experience structural discrimination especially within the healthcare system itself—frequently through non-consensual surgeries shortly after birth. The asterisk at the end of the German spelling "inter*" makes it clear that intersex is a spectrum, including all variations. Some intersex people are also trans.

endosex

The opposite of intersex is endosex. An endosex person has a body that fits into the constructed medical binary of female or male. Endosex people have privileges, even if they are trans.

FLINTA

is an acronym that is specific for German-speaking contexts. It will be used frequently in feminist and activist discourses to group all those who have marginalized genders in patriarchy.

The letters of FLINTA stand for the following categories: females ("Frauen"), lesbians ("Lesben"), intersex ("inter*"), non-binary ("nichtbinär"), trans ("trans*"), and agender ("agender") people. Basically, FLINTA refers to everyone who is not a cis, endosex man. It's a term sometimes used to label bathrooms and other safer spaces for people of marginalized genders.

In English, there seems to be no umbrella term for marginalized genders. Although the relevant categories could also be abbreviated to FLINTA in English. We find this term useful, because it means something different than "women and queers." Yes, it includes women and queers, but it does not include gay cis men for example. It enables discourses that don't speak only of "women" while excluding trans people, while enabling discourses that don't group "all queers" together at once. This can be meaningful when dealing specifically with questions around gender.

The letter L (for lesbians) hasn't always been part of the acronym but was added as a result of lesbian struggles for visibility—and because some lesbians refer to “lesbian” as a distinct gender.

-romantic, -sexual, LGBTQIA

are terms intended to highlight the difference between romantic love and sexual desire. For example: Aromantic/asexual: a person feels little or no romantic/sexual attraction. Alloromantic/allosexual: a person feels romantic/sexual attraction. Panromantic/pansexual: a person loves/desires another person without depending on the other person's gender. Biromantic/bisexual: a person can love/desire people of different genders. Homoromantic/homosexual: a person loves/desires people of the same gender. Heteroromantic/heterosexual: a person loves/desires people of a different gender. Hetero and allo describe privileged positions in society.

LGBTQIA stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual/Aromantic, and describes the experience of being discriminated against on the basis of one's marginalized sexuality or one's deviation from the gender binary.

pronouns

are what we use when we talk about a person, e.g., “he,” “she,” “they,” “dey,” “hen,” “mie.” Some people don't use pronouns. In this case, the person's name is inserted as a personal pronoun.

asterisk

is the official term for the little star that is often inserted into German nouns. The asterisk (or other symbols) are necessary in German to ensure that the language is anti-patriarchal. In contrast to English, where a tailor is always called a “tailor” no matter their gender, German tailors are either a “Schneider” (male) or a “Schneiderin” (female) or a “Schneider*in” (non-gendered). To reflect the social reality in which there are many gen-

ders, asterisks express a linguistic dimension of social justice. It not only “neutralizes” gendered nouns, but also holds a symbolic space for the infinity of gender identities. There are other ways of speaking and writing in gender-inclusive ways in German, for example by inserting an underscore.

classism

is a system that ranks people hierarchically based on their class background or the class background attributed to them. This determines their access to social resources, like education, housing, or leisure activities. Specifically, this means that the distribution of social resources depends on a person's income and wealth, as well as other factors such as their level of education, style, and social networks.

ableism

is a system that prescribes and enforces norms about what human bodies should look like, what they should be able to do, how people should think, and how they should feel. People who deviate from these norms are constructed as “sick” or “disabled.” Society prevents them from using their abilities and exploits or devalues them.

disabled

is a term people identify with when they don't fit into the medical and social norms of physical and mental “health.” Some disabled people say: “It's not that I am disabled, but that I'm being disabled.” This indicates that disability is not a “natural fact,” but rather an experience within an ableist society. One way to use the term is therefore to say that ableism has a dis-ableing effect. Disabled folks have coined many different words for themselves, examples being: crazy, mad, neurodivergent, deaf, fat or person with learning difficulties.

neurodiversity, neurodivergent, neurotypical

Neurodiversity is a concept that refers to the fact that cognition differs among people. When someone is neurotypical, it means their abilities to think, process stimuli, speak, and communicate correspond to what is considered “normal” in our society. Others might describe themselves as neurodivergent (as diverging from a neurotypical norm): for example, autistic individuals, people with ADHD, and some who have experienced trauma. The word neurotypical is intended to highlight a privileged position.

abled, non-disabled

are terms that describe people who are privileged by ableism. Since ableism does not only relate to the body, we find the term “able-bodied” inappropriate.

intersectionality

means the overlap, entanglement, and simultaneity of different social forms of domination that affect a person, such as sexism, classism, ableism or racism. For example if we take a Black trans man, his Black identity cannot be viewed separately from his trans identity or his male identity. Intersectionality suggests that we have to examine several categories together in order to be able to correctly analyze a person's involvement within power structures.

The term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw. She used it in 1989 to draw attention to the social situation of Black women and how they experience sexism differently to white women and racism differently to Black men. The term has evolved and now has different applications. It's meaningful for the analysis of privilege, but can also be formulated as a claim to work, activism, etc.

care work, emotional labor

are umbrella terms for all sorts of activities related to caring, such as looking after children, tending to sick or elderly people, keeping track of other people's tasks, and reminding them of these, or generally offering assistance to others. Just like housework, care work falls under reproductive work, because it serves the maintenance of natural (human) life. This also includes emotional work, i.e. providing support in the handling feelings, crisis situations, or difficult decisions.

This sort of work has long been socially attributed to FLINTA and is therefore largely performed by them. With the increasing "emancipation" of white, middle-class cis women, these jobs are now increasingly shifted onto FLINTA of Color—for example through care chains where Black nannies babysit white kids. This reflects a continuation of historical patterns where Black women were referred to as "mammies." Because it's often taken for granted, this work is usually devalued, hardly recognized as "work," and goes with little or no pay. As a result, people who do care work professionally are often additionally disadvantaged by classism.

victim (note)

In this handbook, we have decided against using the term "victim" to refer to a person experiencing discrimination and violence. The term constructs people as passive placing them into boxes from which they can hardly be seen as active or empowered personalities. Generally, it makes much more sense to see marginalized folks as experts and survivors. Learning from Mithu Sanyal, we're keen on choosing more precise descriptions for experiences of oppression.

privilege

is used to express how a person benefits from certain forms of discrimination against marginalized people and the advantages received in everyday life because of it.

ally

is someone who does not belong to a certain marginalized group, but shows solidarity with the people of this group and fights alongside them against discrimination and exclusion.

fragility

is a behavior that occurs when a privileged person is made aware of their own privileges or mistakes and reacts defensively to reject the accusation. Often, this reaction is quite emotional, containing hurt or even anger as a way to mask a deeper, underlying insecurity. Examples include "white fragility" or "male fragility." It is often an unconscious tactic to protect one's ego and prevent discussions about social power dynamics.

Participants

- Before We Begin
- Take Space /Make Space
- Exchange Perspectives
- Nonviolent Communication
- Pay Attention to Your Language
- Feedback
- Allyship
- Manipulation, Assault, Sexualized Violence
- Online Seminars

**“Individuality.
Complexity.
Ambiguity.
Flaws.
Mistakes.
All of these things are ‘privileges.’
Of course, individuality, complexity,
ambiguity, flaws and mistakes are not
actual privileges. They are part of being
human and no one can exist without
them. And yet these things
are not granted to people
who deviate from the norm...
[These people] are named
and viewed only collectively.”**

— Kübra Gümüşay

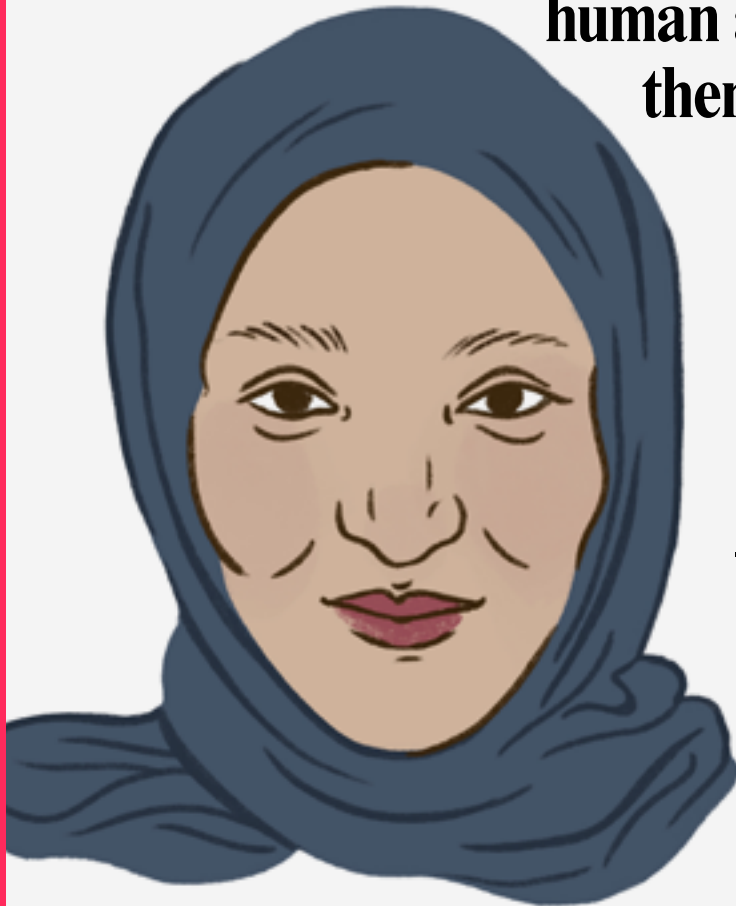


Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Before We Begin

In order to share our lives, but also quite specifically our learning spaces at seminars, we must be clear that:

- 1 Each person is intrinsically valuable.
- 2 Each person represents themselves and not a group.
- 3 Each person is responsible for their own behavior but will not be reduced to their behavior.
- 4 There is always more than one perspective.
- 5 Everyone can hurt others unintentionally.
- 6 It's important to treat each other with respect.
- 7 Feelings are always valid and allowed to take up space.

These sentences may sound banal, but it's precisely at these points that social interactions and communication often fail. For example, society **disabled** people are often expected to inspire others by overcoming their difficulties and leading a good life "in spite of" their difficulties. Or **Black** people feel they have to be "perfect," e.g., polite, composed, and eloquent, in order to fit in and not reinforce stereotypes. But all people have "flaws, mistakes, ambiguity." Here we can clearly see how individuality is denied to some people.

May I confess that I truly admire the way you live your life going grocery shopping and all that. You are such an inspiration, people like you are heroes. May I ask what led you to become a wheelchair user?

Thanks. Sure I was on my way to drown a bag full of newborn puppies in the river when I slipped. The damn mutts got away, the little fuckers.

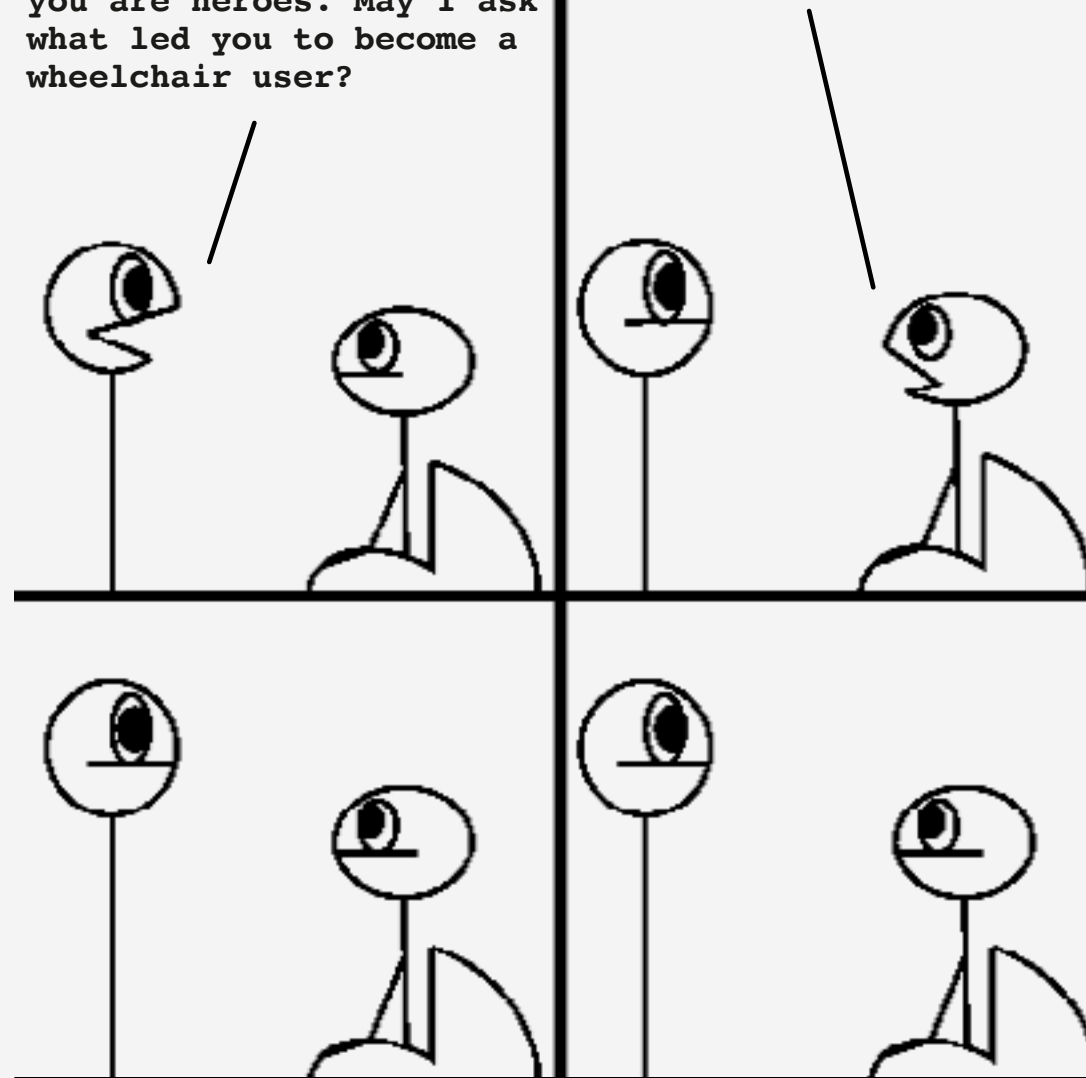


Illustration: Nadja Hermann / Erzählmirmix



Illustration: Caroline Pochon

How people feel in groups is naturally influenced by the group's atmosphere, individual mood, and the current situation. However, social power relations and the ways we are socialized within these power relations also play a significant role. Therefore, a good place to start is to ask yourself how you're positioned within the context of **privilege** and discrimination:

Am I female, male, **non-binary**, **cis**, **trans** or **intersex**? Am I heterosexual, homosexual, asexual, aromantic, or pansexual? Am I white or **BIPoC**? Am I Jewish, Muslim, Christian, religious in another way or areligious? Am I young or old? Do I have a lot of money or not much? Do I come from an academic family or not, and what access to education do I have? Is the language being used my first language and how well do I speak it? Can I always formulate my thoughts clearly? Do I find it easy or difficult to learn, to read or write? Am I physically **disabled** or restricted, e.g., due to illness or pain? Do I have any mental illnesses? Am I thin or fat? What other categories can I think of? How do all these categories affect my life simultaneously and in different ways? How are they interconnected?

James Baldwin



if you're treated a certain way
you become a certain kind of
person. if certain things are
described to you as being real
they're real for you wether they're
real or not.

4

How we see the world, what seems normal to us and when it began to feel that way is shaped by our answers to all these questions. Our positions also affect how we interact with our environment. They have a direct influence on our behavior in seminars and on the ways we communicate. In this chapter, you will find various ways of dealing with this "baggage."

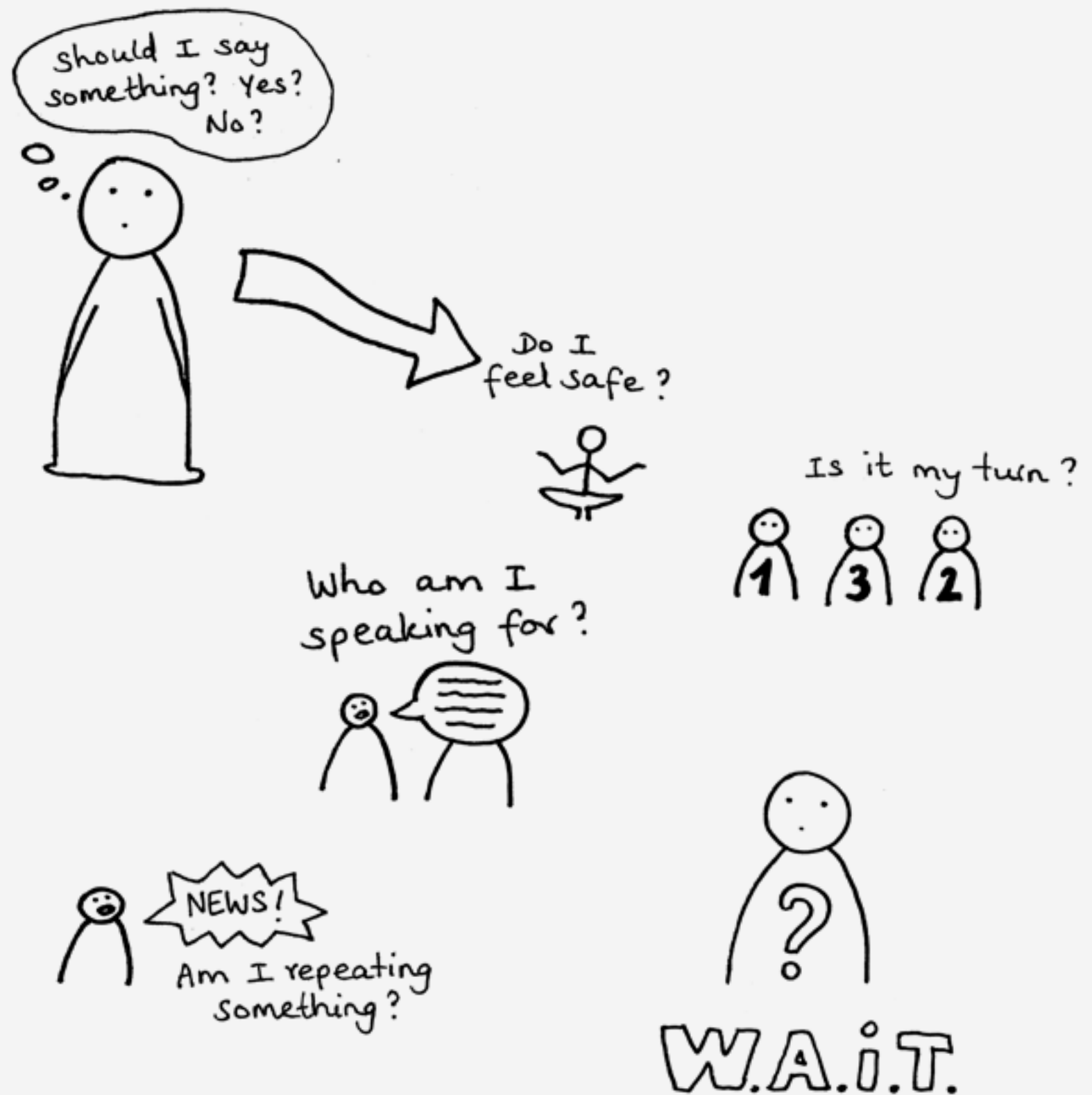
Illustration: Ellen Gabriel

Take Space / Make Space

- Listen to others with empathy, interest, and attention.
- Be grateful to others for their contributions and ideas as well as their willingness to share them.
- Pay attention to who speaks how much, and keep the distribution of "talking time" as balanced as possible.
- Use first person statements, speak for yourself, and tell your own stories.
- Feel free to take a break or leave the room at any time.
- Continuously check-in with yourself using the "WAIT" approach (Why Am I Talking/Why Aren't I Talking?). Reflect on your behavior in the group by repeatedly asking: Am I mindful and centered when I start talking? Do I just want recognition or attention? Am I speaking on behalf of others who are not speaking here? Is there a question that can help me understand what another person is trying to say? Is it my turn to speak now? Am I perhaps just repeating what has just been said? Do I get more attention when I repeat something than the person who originally said it? And if so, why?



Illustration: Caroline Pochon



Let Others Finish

- Is the person who just spoke really done?
- Wait before you start speaking.
- Take a breath before doing so.
- Every debate can do with a short break (for thought).

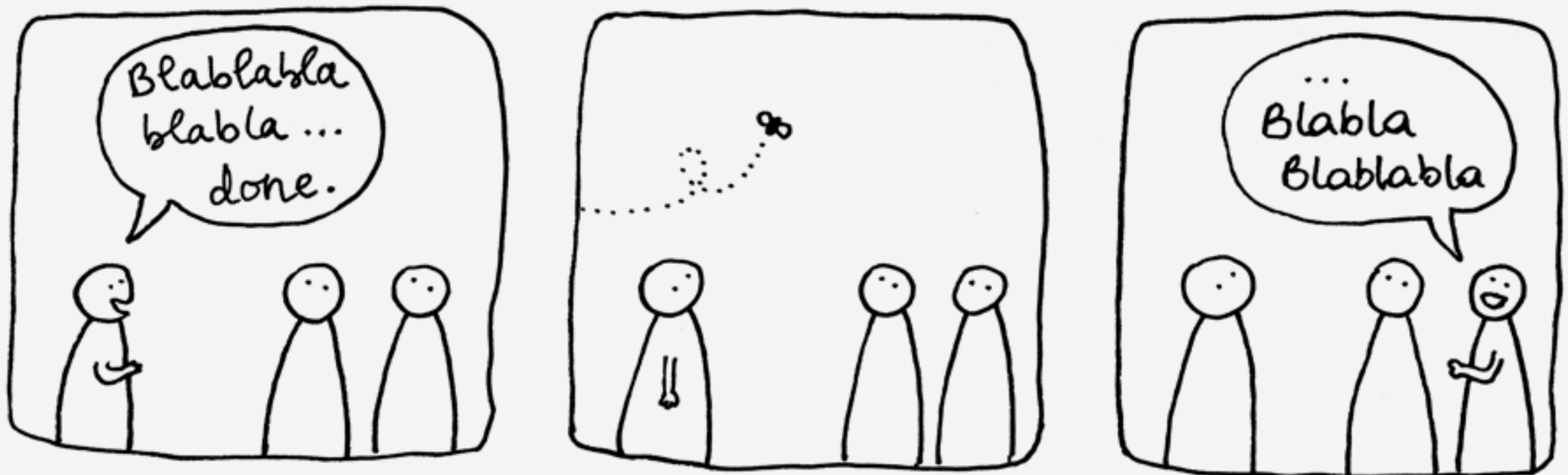


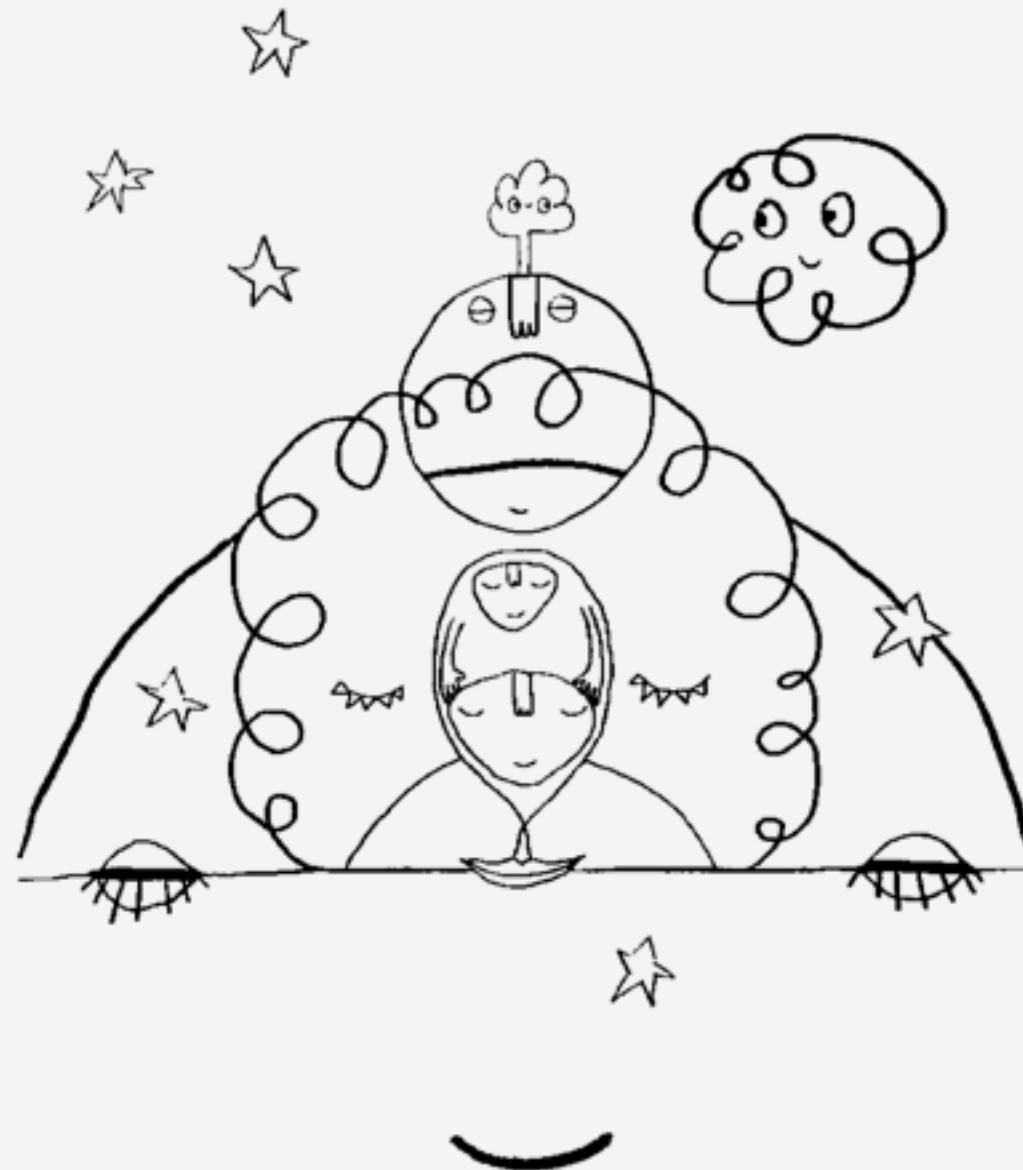
Illustration: Caroline Pochon

Make Space

- 1 Pay attention to how much or little you say (so that everyone can speak if they want to).

Observe what's happening in the room. Deal with silence. Sometimes others need silence to think. If you've already said a lot, look around to see if another person might be pondering whether to speak.

To put it in Paul Goodman's poetic words: "Not speaking and speaking are both human ways of being in the world and there are kinds and degrees of each. There is the mute silence of slumber or apathy; the sober silence that comes with a serious, animal face; the fertile silence of consciousness that feeds the soul and from which new thoughts emerge; the living silence of alert perception that is ready to say, 'This... this...'; the musical silence that accompanies absorbed activity; the silence of listening to another speak and helping him to be clear; the loud silence of resentment and self-accusation that speaks loudly and subliminally but is sullen to say it; the confused silence; the silence of peaceful agreement with other persons or communion with the cosmos."

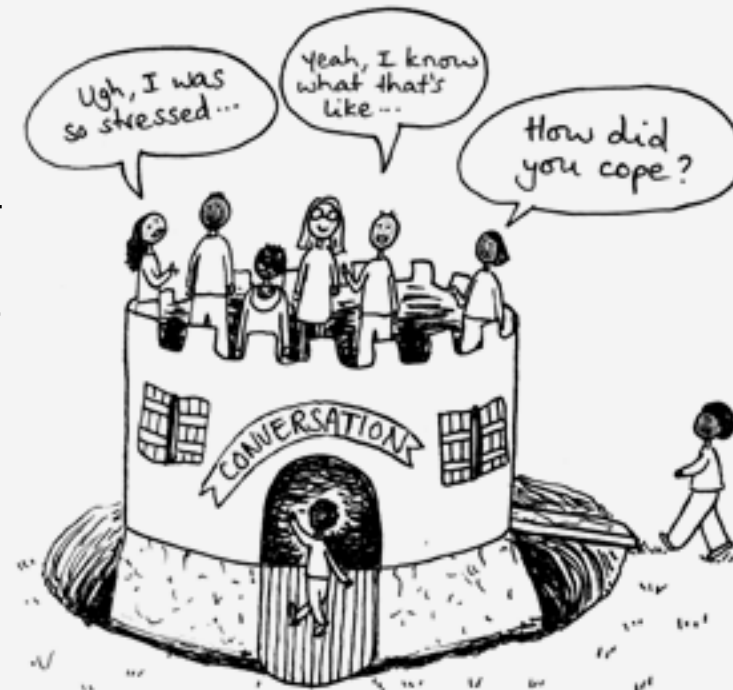


Silence

Illustration: Mira Schönege

2 Also pay attention to how you speak and who you discuss certain topics with.

Ask yourself: Who am I excluding with my choice of topics to discuss or with the way I talk about them? What bridges might I need to build for others to feel addressed and invited to join in the conversation? It's great if you are passionate about the topic of conversation and want to share your knowledge with everyone. But remember that it can be intimidating for others if you use nerdy, specialised terminology or refer to academic theories that are unfamiliar to everyone. Try to avoid the phenomenon of "splaining": This is when a **privileged** person starts explaining things to a marginalized person as if they were the expert on something the other person actually knows far more about. An example would be when a **cis** man explains **sexism** to a woman (mansplaining), or when a white person explains **racism** to someone of Color (whitesplaining). Another thing to keep an eye out for is the phenomenon of "manterrupting" (the constant interruption of others by cis men). Depending on your position, try to avoid or address this behavior.



!!! Note !!!
Manspreading, manterrupting, and mansplaining are all named after men because they are behavioral patterns culturally characteristic to males. However, this does not mean that only men or all men behave in this way. Regardless of your gender, try to recognize, and avoid these phenomena.



Pay attention to how much space your body claims, how you sit, and move through the room. The amount of space we take up physically is often influenced by our rank within a group and the ways in which we were socialized. Because our body language typically communicates unconsciously, it requires active effort to notice and be mindful of it.

Try to avoid the phenomenon of "manspreading" (this is when cis men lounge in their seats with their legs wide apart, lean into other people's spaces or express other physical forms of dominance). Such gestures matter—they reinforce what we say and the emotions we express. Depending on the context, displaying one's body in an expansive, room-filling fashion can be off-putting to others.

Illustration: Caroline Pochon



Take Space

1 Pay attention to whether you tend to talk less and consider what the reasons behind that might be

Maybe you're simply fascinated by the discussion, and you're listening with interest because the topics are rather new to you. Perhaps you're good with participating passively, and you just enjoy being present. That's nice for you! If you're very quiet, and silence is your preference, you can mention it briefly. Then others will know what your silence means. However, sometimes we have other reasons to be very quiet. Perhaps you'll recognize yourself in some regard or another when reading on. A general reminder that might be encouraging: Your thoughts, and contributions are valuable to the group, because they offer a unique (and thus new) perspective. Also: Not everyone has to share the same opinion. Dissent is fruitful!

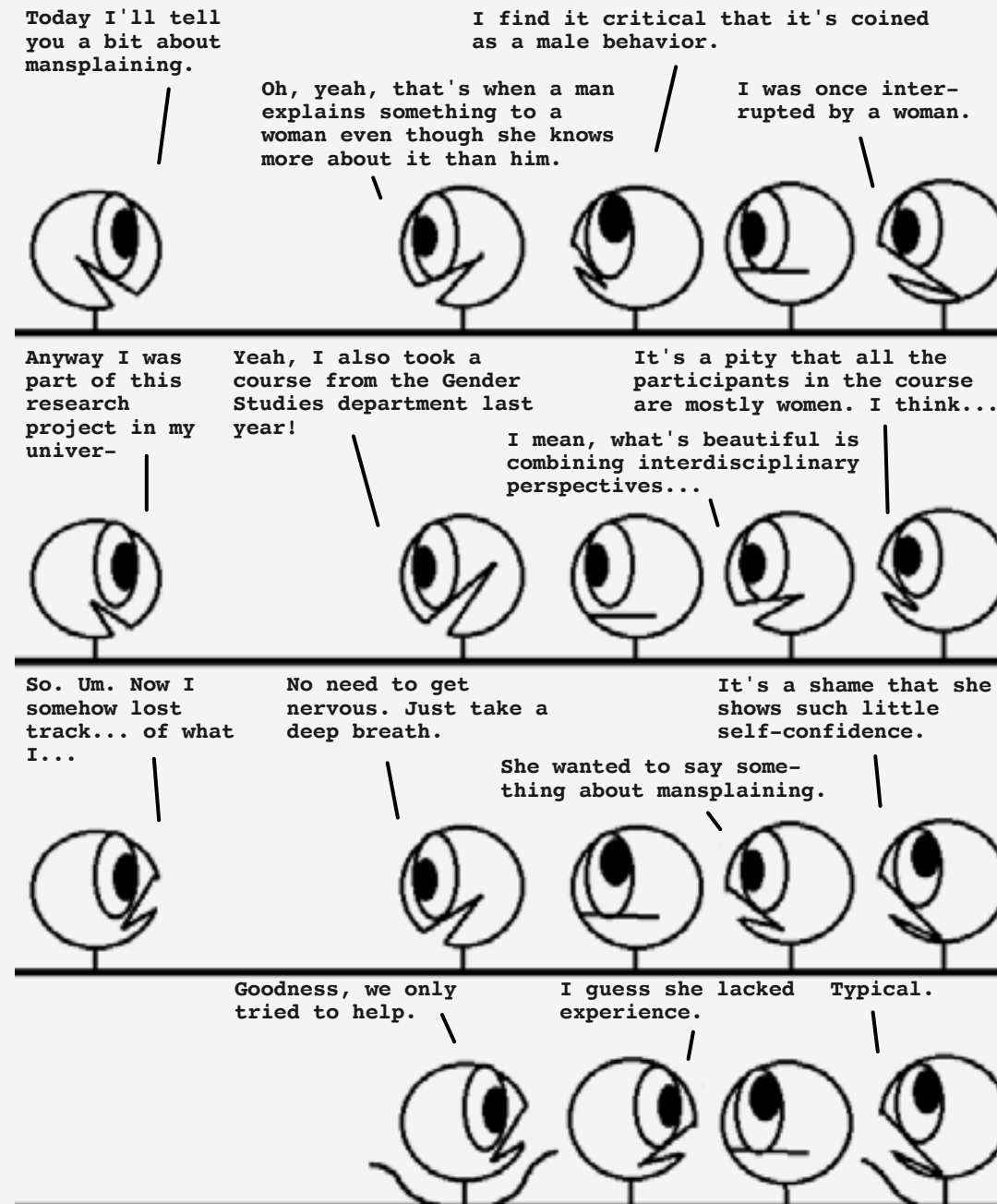
Do you feel like you can't contribute because the topic is over your head, you have no ideas or don't understand something? Is there something you'd like to say but you lack the courage or can't find the right moment to speak up? Do you find the discussion boring or has it strayed from the original topic? Is the pace of the discussion so fast that you can't speak without interrupting someone? Are you afraid of being rude by talking back?

Do you feel insecure about expressing an opinion that you think differs from others? Are you worried about how others might perceive you if you make a mistake, do you fumble finishing your sentences or if you don't find the "right" words straight away? Are you afraid of saying something "wrong," for example by using words that are not "politically correct"? Do you need a moment to think, and to sort out your thoughts?

Our conversational culture is shaped by how we were raised and socialized—be it in our families, peer groups or other social environments. Do your hesitations, insecurities, and self-image have anything to do with how you were brought up or what you were taught? To what extent have you internalized the importance of values such as “politeness,” “being quiet,” “holding back,” “toning down,” “being careful” or “putting others first”?

We’d like to put it out there that our personal patterns of how we behave in conversation are not merely individual issues. Rather, they are shaped by structural societal systems and tend to reproduce roles we are stuck in. Sometimes, our reasons for not speaking up in a conversation are a direct result of negative experiences like mansplaining or maninterrupting. Which cause many of us to feel cut off, belittled or like we know nothing.

Example: A woman is constantly interrupted by men who believe they know better. This makes her feel insecure, self-conscious, maybe frustrated. She has to put in a lot of effort not to lose her train of thought and to fight for moments to speak. In the end, she might actually end up confused because she wasn’t able to direct the conversation where she wanted it to go. It takes practice to say things like “I want to finish speaking first” and to overcome intimidation. It can help to recognize that these experiences have a name (e.g., mansplaining) and that such oppressive behaviors are unacceptable.



2 Ask yourself what you might need to grow your confidence.

What does your gut instinct tell you? Should something (a term, a concept) be explained to you more clearly because you haven't fully understood it? Do you need a moment of silence to think? Do you need a break? Or a bit of courage? Oftentimes, our concerns of being judged are unjustified. Our fear that our contributions might not be "clever enough" or "well worded" is usually disproportionate to the reality of how others see us. If the room is filled with tension or pressure to prove oneself by saying "Really Important Things," it may be because those around you have similar fears of inadequacy and judgment. Taking up a lot of space or acting overly professional are common strategies to compensate for feeling the opposite. If these people were truly confident, they wouldn't feel the need to overcompensate by behaving this way. Do you need a learning environment that holds more space for mistakes and for true learning?



Illustration: Caroline Pochon

3 Share your discomfort with the group or the trainers.

Speaking up about your needs can ease the tension, making you feel more comfortable with being yourself and effectively improving your access to the conversation. In addition, there may be other participants who have similar needs but are afraid to express them. Every expressed need is an opportunity for the other participants and the trainers to become aware of the diversity of needs and to sharpen their sensitivity in how different needs can be anticipated and met.

If you feel insecure about your language, you can also open up about your insecurity and tell the group. No one is born with a perfect vocabulary, not everyone feels equally comfortable in every discourse, and everyone has concepts they still have to learn. The important thing is to think about your language and be willing to change it, rather than focusing on using the "correct" word. Dealing openly with insecurities benefits everyone because it opens up space for yourself and others to learn directly. Ask for feedback and information. Educate yourself on your own. It's often difficult to speak up, take up space, and put your words out there, don't feel bad if you don't always succeed. The more you dare, the easier it becomes! Meanwhile, take good care of your boundaries when sharing parts of yourself to others, e.g. by asking yourself "Am I ready to share this with others? Will talking about this trigger me? Do I have everything I need to share this information or story?"

Joining In on Community Care

Being passive and not taking on responsibility for the group is also a form of exercising power, because it doesn't address the existing power imbalance. Here are a few examples of what we mean, based on our observations from the last three years. These examples are intended as encouragement to reflect on your own behavior. Of course, there have also been exceptions to these situations. This handbook has been created in the hope that the exceptions will become the rule.

At the beginning of the one-year training series, the coordinator often has to ask participants to voluntarily switch a few of their seminar choices. This is because free seminar selection usually results in some seminars being overcrowded and others lacking participants. At this point, the coordinator writes an email asking who is willing to give up a certain seminar of their choice. Most of the time, it's almost exclusively women, queers and/or BIPOC who write back first, offering flexibility.

Another moment where power dynamics reveal themselves is after the seminars, when the participants are all obliged to fill out a "Power and Communication" questionnaire. Usually, only women, queers and/or BIPOC provide detailed feedback that exceeds the ticking of multiple-choice questions. The people who apologize and explain why they missed a deadline or why they didn't respond to a request are almost exclusively women, queers and/or BIPOC too. It's often necessary to follow up with the others several times, which of course consumes time and energy. Spontaneous words of appreciation for a paper/seminar come almost exclusively from women, queers and/or BIPOC. When asked to help tidy up at the end of the seminar, it's again almost only women, queers and/or BIPOC who seem to feel compelled to step up and assist.



Illustration: Viktoria Cichon

Exchange Perspectives

There is never one, absolute “truth” to anything, but always many different perspectives from which to see things. Some of these perspectives can co-exist and stand side by side, without us having to choose one over the other. When people report or describe their own lived experiences (e.g., of discrimination), these should be respected, accepted, and not questioned or denied. Sometimes, personal experiences and identities are invalidated and reduced to “opinions”—based on the principle that we may all “agree to disagree.” This can be very hurtful, and it abuses what our right to self-expression should mean.

With no doubt, our freedom of expression is a principle that should be defended. However, it does not mean we’re allowed to say whatever we want, nor does it mean we must accept everything that is said without challenging it. Rather, this freedom comes with the responsibility to challenge dangerous assertions and, if necessary, to set clear boundaries against oppressive ideologies. Opening up in a group, and being vulnerable in front of others can be challenging.

The process can be made easier and safer with an explicit agreement that everyone will only share their own experience, rather than those of others, outside the group. All participants deserve equal access to the conversation, regardless of their prior knowledge or their linguistic abilities.

I support mass murder.

What? That's horrible!
I am against murder.

Okay, I see we have different opinions. Maybe we can find a compromise? Like... say we don't murder *all* people but only *some*?

No! We're not murdering anyone!

Wow. Jeez. It's impossible to have a conversation with you, you're way too extreme.

Nonviolent Communication

If we aim to treat each other with respect during the seminars and remain mindful of one another, then this must also be reflected in how we communicate with one another. There are many concepts, theories, tools, and ideas that can guide us in practicing good communication. We would like to introduce you to Nonviolent Communication (NVC), an approach developed by the psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. It's renowned as a key to human interactions and commonly praised for being helpful in many different situations, particularly in resolving conflicts.

Conflicts are an integral part of our interactions with others and occur every day. Disputes are also a good thing, as they hold potential for growth, promote necessary change, and can deepen mutual understanding. In the end, how we communicate is oftentimes more relevant in our relationships to one another than what we communicate about. When communication doesn't work well, it can intensify the subject-matter conflict or even cause new conflicts and harm. Nonviolent communication offers a way of resolving conflicts constructively.

NVC assumes that all our actions serve to fulfill needs. We eat to fulfill the need for food, we sleep to fulfill the need for rest. In conflict situations, the fulfillment of one or more needs is disrupted. This results in emotions and feelings. But be careful! Sometimes we perceive something as a feeling when it actually contains judgments and interpretations. Rosenberg coined the term "pseudo-feeling" for this. Examples of "pseudo-feelings" include

"threatened," "exploited," "accused," "let down," "provoked" or "ignored." These always involve a perpetrator who is responsible for the feeling and is therefore to blame. The actual feeling experienced in the body often remains unspoken. This could for example include "anxious," "dissatisfied," "overwhelmed," "sad" or "lonely."

This distinction between pseudo-feeling and actual feeling is not so easy to make. To access your real feelings, it's helpful to start a sentence on how you feel with "I am..." and to place that in front of your emotion. In contrast pseudo-feelings can only be formulated with "I feel..." or "I have the feeling that..." There are lists online that can help you differentiate between the two.

Here are some feelings:

active, affectionate, alert, amused, angry, annoyed, anxious, astonished, balanced, benevolent, blissful, bored, calm, charged, cheerful, clear, comfortable, comforted, confident, confused, courageous, creative, curious, depressed, delighted, determined, disappointed, disillusioned, distressed, elated, empty, encouraged, enriched, entranced, enthusiastic, excited, exhausted, fascinated, focused, free, fulfilled, funny, gentle, glad, grateful, happy, harmonious, heavy, helpless, hurt, in love, indignant, inspired, interested, liberated, lively, melancholic, moved, motivated, numb, open-hearted, optimistic, out of tune, passionate, peaceful, powerful, proud, quiet, relaxed, relieved, sad, satisfied, self-confident, sheltered, spellbound, stressed, strong, stunned, surprised, tense, tired, trustful, warm, weak, worried...

Marshall Rosenberg outlined NVC into four steps:

1 Express your observation

Describe what happened as objectively as possible. Imagine you're looking through a camera. What do you see? Leave out any evaluation, interpretation, instruction, judgement. Avoid using phrases that include words like "always," "again," "never," "all" or "none."

2 Express your feelings

How did the situation affect you emotionally? What did it trigger or unleash in you? How did you feel in the situation? Avoid "pseudo-feelings" that already imply statements about others.

3 Express your needs

What needs do your feelings reveal? What are you lacking? These needs might include very general things like security, understanding compassion or clarity.

4 Express your request

Tell the people or person you're addressing what specific action or behavior you wish for, either in the future or right now. What do you want them to do, stop doing or to change? Avoid negative formulations, demands, and sanctions (for example "Be more respectful" is a demand and not a wish and is not very specific).

Here are some needs:

ability, acceptance, accuracy, acknowledgement, action, affection, affirmation, aloneness, appreciation, authenticity, autonomy, awareness, balance, beauty, belonging, celebration, clarity, closeness, comfort, commitment, communication, community, compassion, comprehension, consistency, contribution, continuity, creativity, detachment, development, discovery, effectiveness, equivalence, experience, expression, fitness, freedom, fun, generosity, gratitude, happiness, harmony, healing, health, help, honesty, humanity, independence, integrity, intensity, intimacy, joy, justice, knowledge, learning, listening, loyalty, love, meaning, mindfulness, movement, nourishment, openness, order, orientation, participation, peace, play, predictability, privacy, progress, protection, recovery, respect, responsibility, rest, rhythm, security, self-determination, seriousness, sincerity, solidarity, stability, stimulation, structure, support, tenderness, touch, tolerance, transparency, trust, understanding, wholeness...

The goal is for everyone involved to feel understood, respected, and connected as partners in a shared process to find a solution that takes everyone's needs into account. The aim is always to create a win-win situation. You're not responsible for other people's thoughts and feelings, but you're responsible for how you react to them and how seriously you take them. There are three general principles that may guide you through NVC:

1 Self-understanding (or also self-empathy)

This is when you reflect on your experience in the situation and try to clarify which feelings and needs are activated and alive within you. Self-understanding requires you connect your own experience to the real facts (observation) and take concrete steps towards a solution (request).

2 Self-expression (or also sincerity)

This is when you express what is in your heart and what is important to you. Self-expression requires that you are honest about how you feel about other person actions. While you talk about yourself, your point of view, your values, your possible solutions (beginning your sentences with "I"), you should remain open and flexible to other people's points of view.

3 Compassion (which is more than active listening)

This is when you are able to step out of your own position for a moment and briefly put yourself in other people's shoes. Compassion requires try to understand what another person feels, needs, and experiences and what solutions they would like to see. This means being present while listening, giving the other person space to explain themselves and respecting their experiences and feelings, even if you're not experiencing them yourself.

When using these strategies, your communication is less hurtful, less confrontational, and more focused. Escalations can be avoided, there is less talking past one another, and everyone involved can achieve their goals better and faster, based on empathy, openness, honesty, and appreciation.

The NVC model is a complex method. But it's worth diving into: What are feelings? What are needs? What does empathy actually mean? Also note that NVC is only a method. It's a tool for constructive communication, but not a "recipe" that always works.

“The ways in which we talk and give feedback shape our ideas and perceptions of the world around us. And how we think about the world has a direct impact on how the world is.”
— Louie Läuger



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Pay Attention To Your Language

1 Comprehensible Language

Try to keep your sentences short. Don't speak too quickly. Where possible, avoid complicated terminology and words borrowed from foreign languages. If you need to use them, explain their meaning. Be open to constructive feedback about the accessibility of your language. If you don't fully understand something (a word, an idea), ask. Preferably immediately. You can't know everything. And others may not be familiar with the word or idea that was mentioned either. Tip: If you hear a complicated technical term that you already know, you can ask for an explanation anyway or explain it voluntarily. Everyone benefits from that.

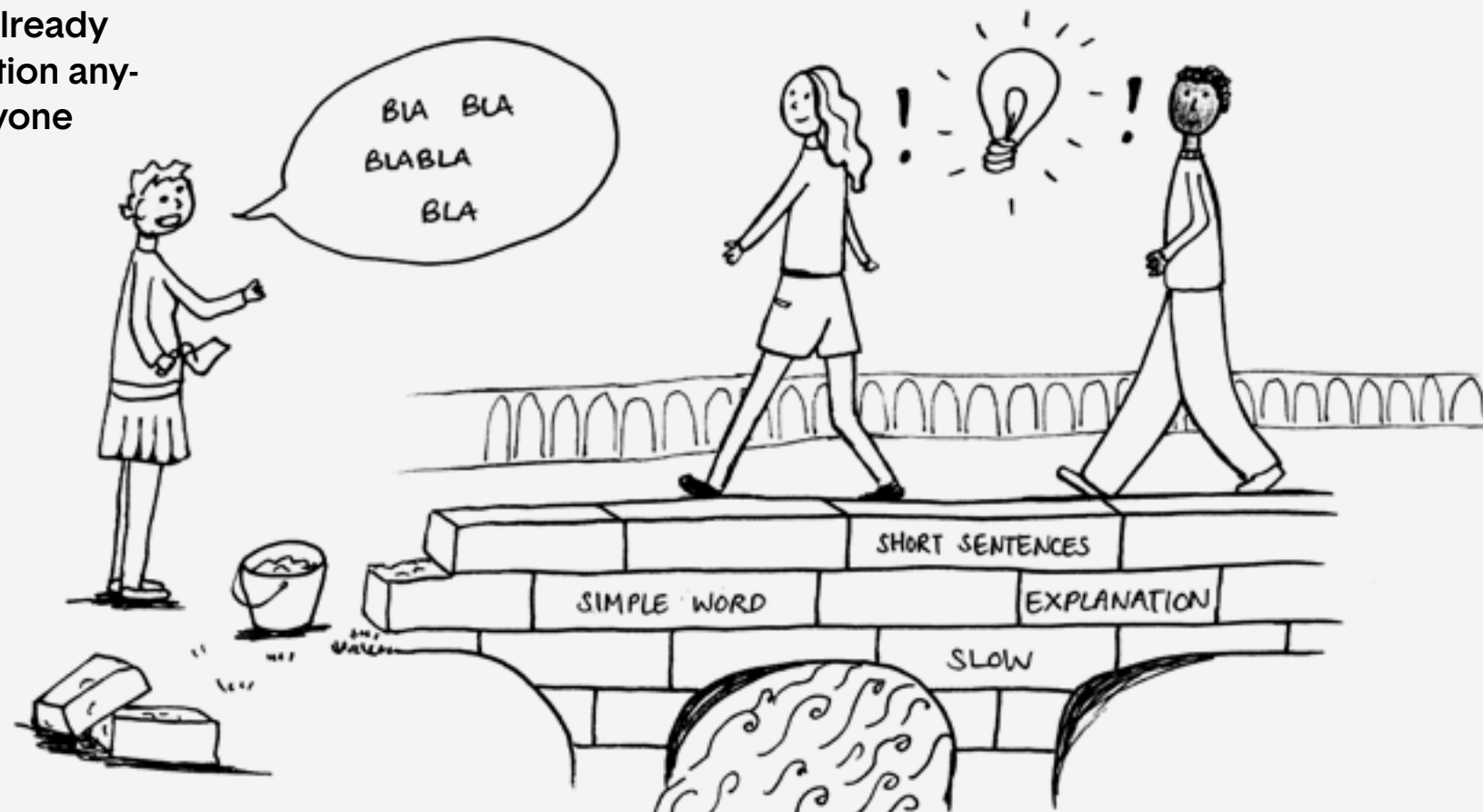


Illustration: Caroline Pochon

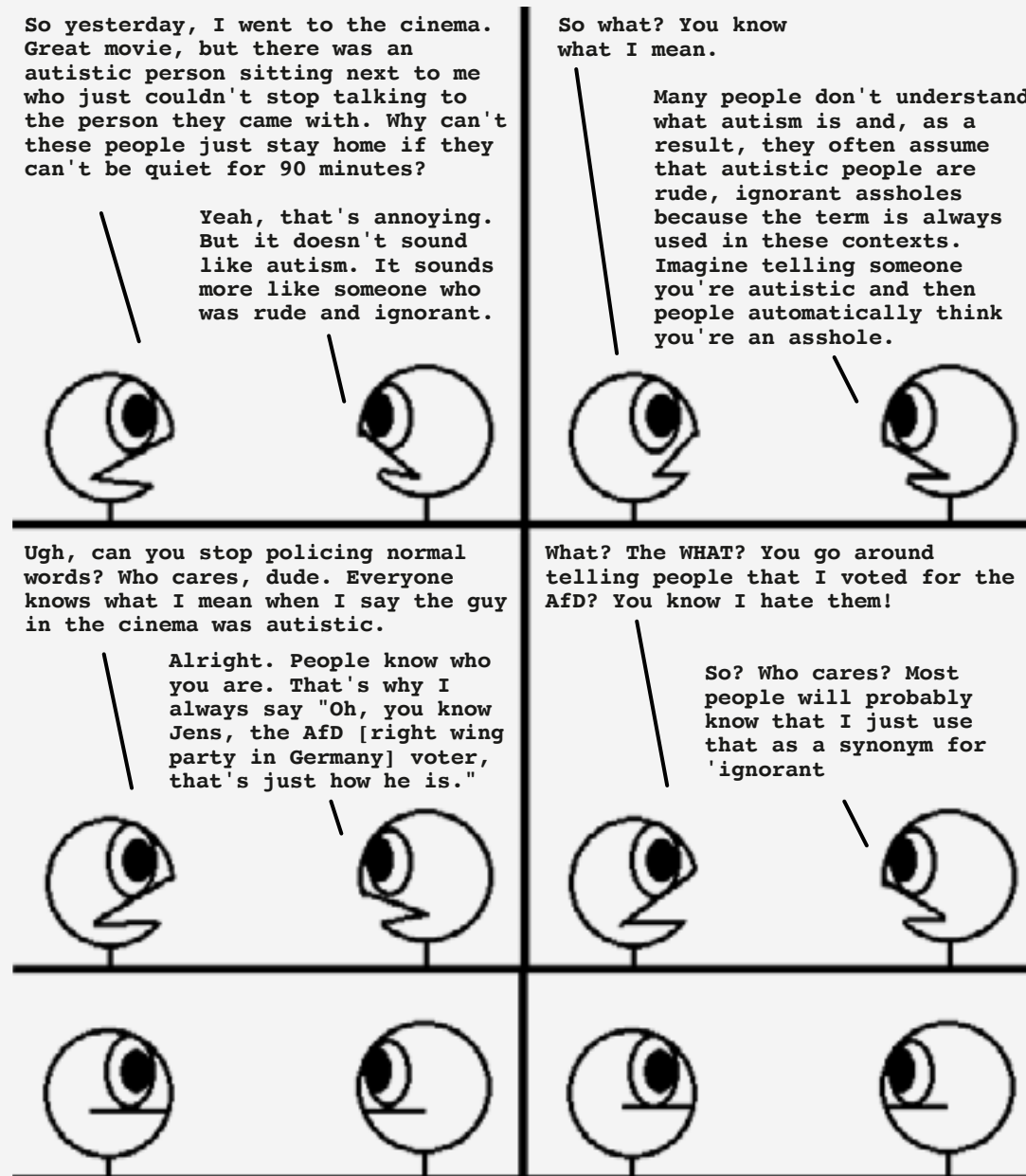


Illustration: Nadja Hermann/Erzaehlmirnix

2 Politically Sensitive Language

Language is crucial because it fundamentally shapes the way we grasp reality. However, it's just one tool for bringing about social change, and it's never perfect. Even the most thought-through "solutions" or "politically correct" expressions must be continuously reviewed critically. That's why it's not necessarily the crafting or policing of answers that's important, but the consistently asking reflective questions.

We don't believe in single, fixed, and unchanging linguistic solutions to how we communicate without reproducing discriminatory language. But we believe that language is and remains fluid and that tuning in on active debates is sometimes more important than adhering to uniform "policies." Discourses on politically sensitive language are never final, they are alive, curious, and inviting. We should take them seriously and pay attention to how we verbalize them, while bearing in mind that there are institutional and material societal structures to tackle as well.

!!! Content warning: The following page(s) contain racist, sexist, classist, and ableist terms !!!

Review your own language, and consider the effects of the words/expressions you use. Here are a few key points that matter to us:

Antiracist Language

The way **racism** is reflected in our language is greatly informed by the use of terms that were historically created to devalue and humiliate People of Color. They are directly related to racial theories, colonization and/or the slave trade. More generally, they are white attributions and constitute facts that are simply false, e.g. by bundling, merging, and confusing completely different groups. For many **BIPoC**, these terms are linked to pain, violence and/or trauma. In any case, they are never the correct term for any true reality, because these realities are white inventions. One step is to ask yourself what exactly you want to say and who you want to talk about. Then you can use the exact self-descriptions of the people/societies you are referring to, for example Inca, Inuit, Sinti, Roma... Alternatively, you can use self-descriptive umbrella terms that people describe themselves (e.g. **Black** people, First Nations, etc.).

In educational contexts or when discussing racism, you may find yourself in situations where there's no other option but to make references to problematic words. Many people then opt to say the first letter of racist words followed by "-word." However, such abbreviations may also be triggering for some, so think carefully about when, where, and why you choose to use them. You can also give a content warning beforehand. Sometimes, you may want to raise awareness about why not to use a certain word, and your counterpart may have no clue what word you're talking about (or what its first letter stands for). Then, it may seem unavoidable to actually utter a racist word in all its discomforting ugliness. At a seminar, this can be done discreetly during a break—not in the large group!

There are many diverse and more subtle forms in which language can be racist. For example, a word might be applied only to certain contexts and not others, making its use unequal. Terms like "tribe," "indigenous," or "chief" are used solely to reference societies from non-European continents and not, say, Bavaria or Wales. Other words might appear "neutral" when in fact they stem from the colonial era or are characterized by it. This includes words such as "bush" (instead of "undomesticated land") and "jungle" (instead of "rainforest"). It's better to describe the specific form of vegetation you want to talk about.

Some words also gloss over or trivialize realities, such as "protectorate" for "colony." Many terms serve to place Europe at the center of the world and set up European ideas and lifestyles as universal norms. This way, everything non-European is marked as "different" and "deviating from the norm" (a process known as Othering). One example is the distinction between the familiar as "civilized" and the far-away as "exotic," from a European perspective. We strongly encourage you to engage further with this, to research and scrutinize your vocabulary. Most importantly, make a habit of asking yourself: "What do I actually want to talk about?" Because really, our goal is not only about stop saying certain words, but also stop thinking them.

Antisexist Language

The German language is—like many other Roman languages—characterized by its separation of nouns and adjectives into male and female forms. In German, whether a teacher is male or female teacher is evident from the word's ending. And as patriarchy goes, plural form for "teachers" is oftentimes summarized under the plural male ending of the word—rendering any women that might be part of this group invisible. Sometimes, even exclusive groups of females are referred to using the male term. An ongoing part of feminist movements in German-speaking contexts has been the fight for more gender-inclusive language and its establishment and normalization throughout institutions and society.

The fruits of these queer feminist discourses are a wide array of creative ways to modify words such as endings of nouns, including the use of little stars (asterisks), colons, and underscores. These are meant to not only bridge traditionally “male” and “female” endings, but to symbolize all nonbinary genders as well. In the original German version of this handbook, we provide information about the diverse strategies to make language more gender- inclusive.

Addressing all genders in one’s language is important, but it’s by far not all it takes for one’s language to be antisexist. We can’t delve too deeply into this topic here, because the field offers endless food for thought. One example: In many languages, numerous insults are derogatory terms for the vulva, queerness or sex work. This stems directly from patriarchal ideas, e.g. the notion that it’s problematic and shameful for a woman to enjoy sex, whereas it’s a good quality in men. These idea’s affect people of all genders. Insults directed men often imply that men should never be weak, “feminine” or incapable of achieving an erection. It’s also worth examining how these terms impact our self-image, by influencing how we identify with certain roles or professions. For example, the phrase a “one man show” originates from the assumption that a single performer on stage is usually a man. In a subtle way, it discriminates against those who have not been culturally invited or historically given access to stages.

As we question our everyday vocabulary, it’s important that we not only censor certain words and replace them with others, but also to dismantle the concepts, ideologies, and lessons that lie behind them. Another example: the term “hysterical” conceals a violent history of the pathologization of people with uterus. “Pathologization” refers to the act of, declaring characteristics or behaviors as ill. Throughout your journey of grappling with antidiscrimination, there will be painful moments when you realize that you can no longer watch your favorite movie the way you used to, or laugh at certain jokes. But we promise: you will discover new ones.

Anti-Ableist and Anti-Classist Language

Did you know that words such as “stupid,” “dumb,” “idiotic,” “crazy,” “mad” or “sick” or were categories used by National Socialists to justify the murder of thousands of people? These folks included people with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, people with mental illnesses, neurodivergent people, women, lesbians, queer people, homeless people, people with no fixed employment, Sinti, Roma, anarchists, and many others. To avoid these terms, you can ask yourself what it is you actually want to say. Sometimes, we’re inclined to call something “stupid” when the precise word would be: mean, discriminatory, unpleasant, unfriendly, problematic, poorly thought through, inattentive, clumsy, etc.

!!! Content note following page:
transphobia !!!



Illustration: Tristan Marie Trotz



Illustration: Nino Bulling

Self-Defining/Self-Labeling

- How a person chooses to call or describe themselves is entirely their own decision. Everyone can make this choice freely, based on their lived experiences and personal realities.
- Respecting the ways in which people speak of themselves and the names they claim is important. Acknowledging their self-descriptions allows for the strengthening of their right to self-determination.
- In our society, it's considered normal and common practice for **privileged** people to speak about those they marginalize in whatever ways they choose. The terms they use to speak of oppressed groups are often violent, hurtful, and part of systemic discrimination. Accordingly, opposing these discriminatory terms used by the powerful is part of the struggle for resistance for marginalized people.
- The power to define how people are spoken about, and what counts as violence is called the power of definition. It's a core belief in our anti-discrimination education work that people who are "experts" in their own experiences should wield this power of definition. Thus, it's crucial that those who experience a certain form of discrimination have the authority to determine how they label themselves and also how the privileged people are labelled.

"Hi, I'm Nino."
 "Hey, my name's Selina."
 —
 Saying one's name is easy, right?
 —
 Unfortunately, not always.
 —
 "Hey, do we know each other from somewhere? Did you play in the Tüslü musical? And weren't you at Goethe Uni?"
 ... Oh no ... "Oh, yeah!"
 —
 Sometimes I wish I lived somewhere where nobody knew me.
 —
 "But wait, aren't you called something else? Is Nino your REAL name?"
 —
 It's strange how many people phrase it exactly like that. The word "real" won't leave my mind. The opposite of "real" is "false", and to say something false on purpose is to lie, no? But my name isn't a lie, neither is yours.
 —

What happens on a daily basis is that we see someone in a room or on the street, and our brains immediately come up with speculations and interpretations about their **race**, gender, age, health, and class background. This is what we call the “reading” of someone. It’s a very automated process that we can never quite turn off, but we must be clear that we can never actually know who someone is, where they come from and how they identify until they’ve told us. When we “read” people, we categorize their identities into boxes based on terms that are not their own. This is an act of defining them from the outside without the person’s consent, undermining their power to self-define.

Sometimes, a well-meaning person might try to avoid defining someone else and end up doing the same thing with other words. Then, interpretive terms are replaced with other expressions that convey the exact same interpretation. In queer German spaces, for example, it has become common to avoid labeling someone as a “woman” when the person’s identity is not known. So far, so good. But then they call said person a “person read as female,” which serves the exact same result. In such cases, it’s worth asking oneself: “Must I really guess this person’s gender to make my point and say what I want to say? Does it add relevant meaning to my sentence?”



Illustration: Caroline Pochon

Sometimes, describing how we “read” a room can help to make power relations visible, e.g., when we want to critique the absence of certain groups in specific spaces. However, there is a fine line between pointing out instances of exclusion that you witness and inadvertently making certain people within the room invisible because you haven’t seen them for who they are. It’s important that our phrasing avoids making definitive claims, but rather emphasizes what was communicated and what wasn’t. Additionally, our language should hold space for the potential of unsuspected exceptions, e.g., by speaking about “majorities” instead of absolutes. For example, when we can’t identify a Person of Color in a room at first glance, we might call this room a “white-dominated space”—after all, it’s not always evident for external eyes whether or not a person experiences **racism**. Similarly, we might refer to a “space in which no one openly mentioned having a disability” instead of an “ableized space.”

People prefer different words to identify themselves. For example, an **intersex** person is not necessarily a **trans** person or vice versa, though the two can overlap. People may choose to call themselves inter, intersex, **trans**, transgender, genderfluid, bigender, omnigender etc. For some, this broad diversity of terminology may be confusing or unsettling at first. However, understanding this diversity and taking time to learn the right terminologies is essential for a respectful and sensitive approach. Intersex and transgender represents different categories and different lived realities. The diversity of ways to self-label also points to the broad spectrum of inter and trans identities, lifeworlds, and self-perceptions. Inter and trans people who feel less connected to the labels can also decide for themselves whether they want to accept them or not. Ultimately, everyone decides for themselves what labels they feel comfortable with.

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, or **BIPOC** for short, has become an established self-designation for people who experience **racism** in our society. But here too, there are different terms that different people feel comfortable or not so comfortable with. While some may refer to themselves as “Black,” others may prefer “Afro-German” (in the German context).

Sometimes we want to highlight the discrimination against specific groups and might use umbrella terms to mark these, e.g., “Sinti and Roma” or the “I” in BIPOC, which stands for “indigenous people.” However, not all people from these groups identify with the terms they might be grouped under. For example, many Indigenous people prefer to specify the exact group they belong to, e.g., the Great Sioux Nation. It therefore always makes sense to ask, listen, and pay attention to the terms people use to call themselves.

Some terms are discriminatory but may still be okay as self-designations. In other words, they are okay when a person who is being discriminated against uses them for themselves. For example: some **intersex** people have fought to reclaim terms that were considered offensive and now use them to empower themselves. However, just because one individual chooses to reclaim a term, this doesn't mean that you can go around using it to refer to other members of the group—a term that is considered offensive should never be applied to the entire marginalized group!

Not only can word preference vary, but also the importance of an identity in general can differ greatly from person to person. For some, being black, homosexual, female or from a poor family feels fundamental to who they are, for others it may be less existential.

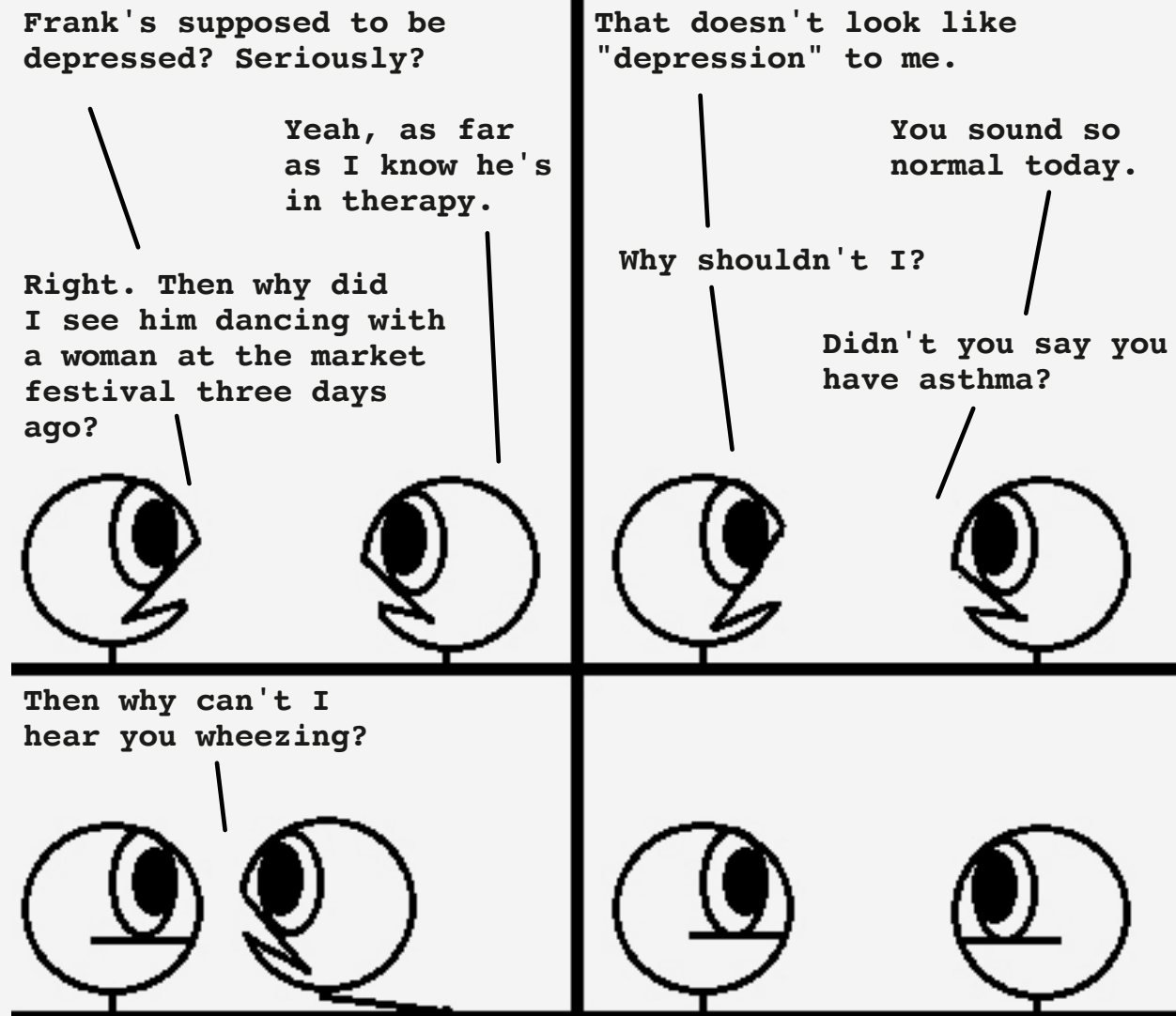


Illustration: Nadja Hermann / Erzählmirmix

Pronouns

Ever since we were born and started learning language, we were taught which pronouns to use to refer to others. To guess which pronoun to use, we often guess a person's gender. We do this quite automatically, based on physical appearance, voice, behavior, clothing, etc. But we make mistakes. Some people are ascribed the wrong gender identity on a regular basis. This can be hurtful and painful, because it means that their true gender identity is constantly denied and attacked from the outside. Some compare this feeling to the sensation of being constantly pricked with a needle—one prick doesn't hurt very much, but after being pricked a hundred times in the same spot, it really hurts.

There are many pronouns that people choose for themselves: he, she, they, hen, and many more. Some people prefer to be addressed without any pronouns and using only with their name. The pronouns someone chooses (in some cases it's more than one) should always be respected and never questioned. We suggest: Let's add our pronouns on our name tags and normalize saying them when we introduce ourselves. An example of how to use a "self-made" pronoun: Let's say Anna uses the pronoun "fay." Don't say: "Her pronoun is fay." Instead say: "Fay's pronoun is fay." Or: "Anna's pronoun is fay." When someone is misgendered, they are often left alone with the burden of having to correct the other person. If you notice someone being misgendered, it's helpful to step in and mention the correct pronoun, for example by saying "[name] uses [...] pronouns." Then, the person who made the mistake can then simply repeat the sentence, correcting themselves. This way, the responsibility for ensuring that everyone is acknowledged and that people respect the self-designations of others is shared and does not lie solely with **trans** people.

Illustration: Nadja Hermann/Erzaehlmirnix

You don't like chocolate?
Haha, bullshit, everyone likes chocolate.

Nah, it's not my case.

Well, maybe you haven't tried the right kind yet?



Nah, it's generally too sweet for me.

Huh? Even babies like sugary treats! It's an evolutionary trait of ours, which is why chocolate is so popular. Everyone loves it

Well, I prefer savory.



Have you ever considered getting treatment for this? Cause it's not normal.

No, I don't mind.



But you're really missing out on something. I can't imagine not having my delicious bar of caramel chocolate... hmm. You should at least give it a try!



Just drop it, okay? You don't have to care about what I eat.

Wow, I just wanted to help.



The way you helped me because I'm asexual.



Feedback—What It Is and What It's For

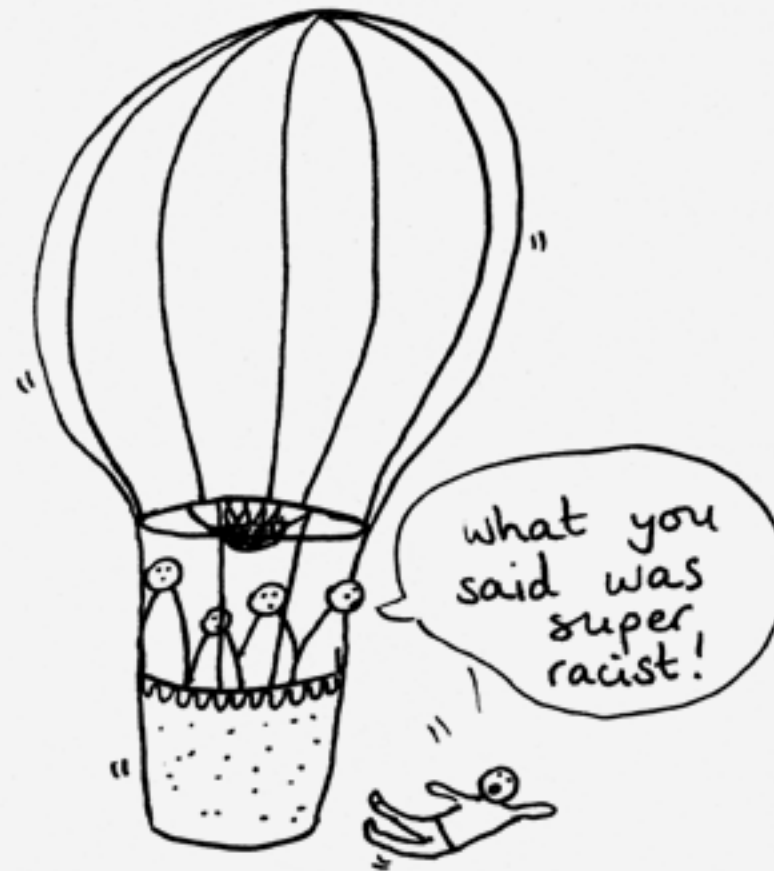
By feedback, we mean the personal feedback about the perception of a certain behavior from one person to another. It's an opportunity for meaningful, open appreciative interaction and a chance to learn something. This requires honest criticism of behavior and beliefs, not of individuals. It's an opportunity to break down assumptions and prejudices. However: Feedback alone is not necessarily immediately "effective" or "productive." The person addressed may not necessarily (want to) change their behavior immediately.

Illustration: Viktoria Cichon



Holding Space for Mistakes

Nobody is perfect. Neither you, nor the other participants, nor the trainers. Failures, mistakes, and mishaps happen to everyone and are explicitly allowed. Especially if they are acknowledged and used as opportunities to learn something. That's why it makes sense to point out certain behaviors, word choices etc., to people in a friendly—or as friendly as possible—way, without offending them. It happens to all of us that we hurt others unintentionally or that we don't know something. We are all **privileged** on some dimension while others are less privileged in that regard.



Saying “That’s totally sexist or racist” does not help the person who has said/done something discriminatory. When phrased this way, there’s no explanation of what exactly was racist or sexist about their behavior, sentence or choice of words. We can’t assume that they will understand why they were wrong simply because we said so—or because they believe us. Offering a precise observation or explanation is therefore an important part of “learning from each other.” However, the task of explaining is best taken on by a person who is privileged in the dominant power structure—so that the person already enduring the discrimination doesn’t have to justify their experience. We think it’s important that all feelings are allowed to exist. This also applies to feelings whose underlying mechanisms we reject. This could be the case when a person says something out of “white/male **fragility**”—i.e., out of hurt, insecurity or a feeling that their own identity is under attack. The feelings themselves are okay and allowed to exist. However, the internalized ideologies and their consequences should be pointed out, challenged and dismantled..



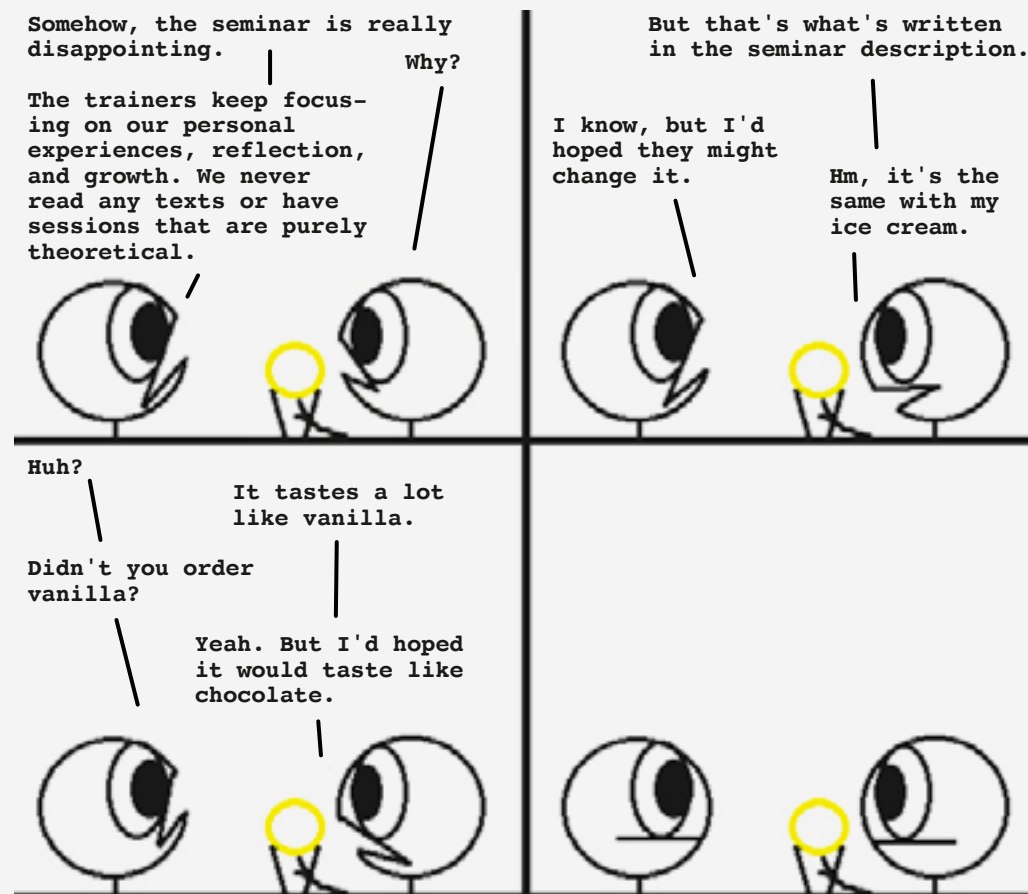
Illustration: Caroline Pochon

Giving Feedback

When? Feel free to give feedback when there was something you particularly liked! Ideally, critical feedback should be given early enough in the seminar so that the person addressed has the opportunity to change their behavior or can clearly remember the situation.

If something is bothering you and the situation is still ongoing, it's best to address it directly. This way, the situation can be resolved immediately. If the situation has already happened and you would like to give feedback, it's best to ask the person beforehand if they would like feedback and when would be a good time to share it.

The following applies: Asking for and providing feedback should both rely on the consent of the other person. This is easier said than done: What if it is urgent? Am I allowed to interrupt the process? Problems have the unpleasant tendency of arising at inconvenient times. Addressing them at such moments can be difficult. But problems can accumulate, get worse, and produce increasing harm when left untouched, which is why it's important to address them. In our experience trainers are often grateful for such contributions. If you're unsure whether your feedback is appropriate, you can wait for a break, and ask the team for advice, and support. You can also ask the trainers to pass on the feedback or give feedback in pairs. Note that receiving feedback in front of a group can make it much harder to accept.



How? You can structure the feedback as follows:

- 1 **Perception:** Give a brief, non-judgmental description of the specific behavior you observed ("I noticed..."/"I saw, overheard, perceived...").
- 2 **Effect:** Describe the emotional effect this behavior had on you ("That made me feel...").
- 3 **Resulting need/wish:** Express a request or wish that is as specific, and achievable as possible ("I wish you would... This would make me...").

Your counterpart may not immediately understand the criticism. Make sure that you're referring to the behavior and not the person. Avoid generalizations: It's best to illustrate your point by referencing a specific situation. Use first-person statements ("[...] had this effect on me."). Try to use encouraging, constructive, and appreciative language ("I would like it better if...", "In order to feel safe/comfortable/able to work well, I ask you...", "Continue doing...", "Show more of...", "Show less of...").

Be clear about the aim of the feedback: Do you want to encourage the person? Do you want them to change a specific behavior? If you are unsure or unable to formulate the feedback constructively, get support. Other participants or the trainers can help you formulate the feedback in a way that the other person is more likely to accept. You can also practice the feedback situation by enacting a short role-play and having your support-buddy take on the role of your "counterpart."

Receiving Feedback

Feedback is very valuable. Encourage others to give you feedback when it suits you: Invite the group to give you feedback. Approach individuals: "Could you give me feedback for [...]?"

Sometimes courage simply means being able to say...



Accepting Feedback

If you're offered feedback, think about whether you're open to receiving it now or later. When listening, do so actively and patiently. Let the person finish articulating what they have to say. Feedback generally works like a one-way-street—it is not meant to be a moment of discussion. No one needs you to justify or explain your behavior (unless they are explicitly asking you for your perspective). Making statements like "I didn't mean it that way" or expressing similar gestures doesn't help. It is likely that you never intended on hurting anybody, but what matters is the effect your behavior had. You can acknowledge this without defending yourself.

If you don't understand the criticism, think about what element you might be missing. Do you need more details about which part of your behavior bothered someone, or a better idea of the feelings it caused, or a clearer definition of the desired outcome? Remember that feedback is about opening up space where emotional expression is allowed. Don't label the other person as "too emotional," but rather ask yourself: "Am I paying attention to the content of what they're saying (and not just the tone)?"

When the other person is done giving feedback, remember that you are not—ever—a bad person. It's enough to simply say "Thank you for your feedback." Think about how you want to personally deal with the feedback you receive. You may decide to share your thoughts or keep them to yourself—it's your choice.

Illustration: Mira Schönege

Saying something like “Thank you for your feedback, I won’t change anything now” is of course a no-go in the case of discrimination, but it can sometimes make sense or be helpful in certain situations. There are times when we don’t have (immediate) alternatives to offer someone. For example, someone might tell you “I’m stressed and distracted by the noise your fidget toy makes,” but the toy feels indispensable to you at the moment. In that case you could respond “Sorry, I need it right now. I’ll try to find a different toy later.” Or someone might give feedback that they feel uncomfortable with the anger you are expressing towards the world. Then you might want to say “I can’t suppress these feelings right now. Could you maybe find a way to shield yourself?” Solutions can be found together. Let the feedback sink in and then take time to really think about what parts of the feedback you want to (or should) accept.

Feedback for Discriminatory Behavior

1 If You Experience Discrimination

If a situation or word is hurtful and you’re unable to immediately explain why, that’s completely okay. You’re allowed to simply say “Stop” or give feedback later on. There is no perfect formula for successful feedback, no right or wrong. There are many factors that you can consider in order to transform the situation for yourself:

Ask yourself, in what context did the situation happen, so you can understand why it was hurtful. How do you feel about the person you want to give feedback to? What are the different power dynamics between you? What kind of feelings or emotions can you sense? What’s your motivation or aim for giving this person feedback now? Lastly, think about what kind of setting you need for your feedback to fulfil the desired outcome?

Illustration: Johanna Eisl

You don’t have to be the person who gives the feedback and if you choose to do so, you can decide when and how you do it. Find allies. You can speak to others you trust and ask them to speak to the trainers or participants on your behalf. Remember it’s not your job to comfort the person or people who might now feel guilty or ashamed. You don’t owe anyone your **emotional labor**. In fact, you are not obliged or expected to say anything. You can also remain silent about injustices that harm you. You are allowed to speak up and give feedback when it feels right.

As encouragement we give you these words from Audre Lorde:

“My silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every real word spoken, or every attempt I had ever made to speak those truths for which I am still seeking, I had made contact with other women while we examined the words to fit a world in which we all believed, bridging our differences.”

**— Audre Lorde,
The Cancer Journals**





Illustration: Tristan Marie Trotz

2 If You Receive Feedback for Discrimination

All the rules on “accepting feedback” still apply here. When faced with criticism, it's important not to react defensively, but to listen, apologize, take responsibility, and work on changing your behavior. If you don't understand the problem, think about where or with whom you can seek information. Don't expect the offended person to explain it to you. People who experience discrimination are often tired of always having to explain why something hurts them. In this case, it's highly advisable to connect with other people who can help you understand why the situation was problematic.

If a person points out a behavior of yours that reproduces societal power mechanisms, take it as a sign that the social structures have unfortunately caught up with you again. And take it as an opportunity to question these structures anew and critically examine yourself and your social position. Don't expect people who are hurt by your actions or words to prioritize respect for your feelings.

!!! Content note following page:
white supremacy !!!

If you feel uncomfortable with the way in which a person is giving you their feedback, resist the urge to focus on that. Don't tell the person to be more polite or less emotional. "Tone policing" is a common tactic to divert attention from the actual subject matter and silence marginalized perspectives. It allows you to end a discussion by making the other person angry and then saying "I won't talk to you if you're angry." This tactic denies and undermines the content of what the other person is telling you.

Everyone has learnt forms of discrimination ("-isms") and **privilege**. Honor, value, and use the feedback you receive as an opportunity to ask yourself (again): How does the **racism**, **sexism**, **classism**, and other biases that I have learned my life manifest themselves in my behavior? When feelings of **fragility** arise, take good notice of them! Fragility often stems from a feeling of not being recognized as an individual. Maybe you feel reduced to being white or male or hetero or something else. Remind yourself that you simply have certain privileges, no matter how much you identify with the corresponding categories. Or maybe you feel hurt because you're being called racist even though you didn't mean to be racist? When receiving feedback about discriminatory behavior you reproduced from a position of power, try to activate your "fragility radar" and pay attention how this feeling moves through your system.

Why do you feel this way? Which fears, worries, or feelings of shame are taking over inside you? You should seek support from others before you burden the person who pointed it out to you with these questions. Maybe you first need some peace and quiet to process what you've heard?

Illustration: Ellen Gabriel



What does tone policing mean?



Tone policing is a subconscious avoidance strategy where a person criticizes the tone of their counterpart while ignoring their arguments in order to control the discussion. This shifts the topic and implies that experiences of discrimination are invalid if they are tied to emotions.



For people affected by discrimination, experiences can be tied to emotions and pain. This does not mean that their experiences are less credible. When tone policing takes place, this protects and upholds the privileges of the person who can "choose" to stay calm.



To sum it up: What matters is not how a person gives their feedback. Don't tell someone to be more polite or less emotional. Tone policing is a weapon of silencing, for it enables the termination of a discussion by making the other person angry and then delegitimizing what they are saying.

What's white fragility?



May I present: white fragility. This is a defense mechanism that white people may use when confronted with information about racism. This is often wound up with denial, justification and the passing on of responsibility. What can you do instead as a white person in such situations?

Questioning why you said something racist should be more important to you than not being called racist.



When someone tries to bring attention to something racist that you have said, this is not the moment to prove your discussion skills.

You can carry internalized racism within you despite having friends of color. Your BIPOC friends are not there to justify your racist behavior.



Don't search for approval from your BIPOC friends. Most likely there's a reason why they don't feel like discussing racism with you.

You can carry internalized racism within you despite having friends of color. Your BIPOC friends are not there to justify your racist behavior.



Don't dump your frustration and sadness onto those affected by something. Look for a suitable time and place to manage your feelings.

It's not racist to distinguish between Black and white per se. Acknowledging that we encounter different experiences based on race is a fundamental principle in antiracist thinking.



Actively pushing away conversations about discrimination, is white privilege. Cut out slogans that don't reflect, instead think about the motivation behind them.



Illustration: Viktoria Cichoř

3 If You're There as a Third Person

Being non-discriminatory is never achieved by being passive or neutral. "If you're neutral in situations of injustice, you have sided with the oppressor. If an elephant had its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you're neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." — Desmond Tutu.

It's important to give feedback on discrimination that happens when you're an observer and not directly involved. Be careful not to take up too much space, though. Feel free to take part in the necessary educational work that might be needed, but don't act against the interests of the person who was discriminated against.

Far too often, people who have the courage to speak up about moments of discrimination or assaults they've survived will receive responses such as: "I didn't mean it like that!", "Don't react like that!" or "Well, it wasn't discrimination/assault in my eyes." As an **ally**, you can remind them of the feedback rules.

If it's necessary to explain to a white perpetrator why something is racist, for example, it's best for other white participants to do this, preferably in a one-on-one setting. Be aware of your own **privilege** and which roles it facilitates.

It can be helpful to ask yourself why the person who was hurtful said what they said. Are they simply uninformed about linguistic terminology and need a heads-up about how to best express something? Or is there a discriminatory belief or judgement lying underneath their choice of words? In one case, giving feedback might be easier than in the other. If there is significant resistance to understanding or accepting the feedback coming from the other person, it may be helpful to ask: "We both agree that the goal is to avoid discrimination where we can, no? Why do you find it so difficult to accept a linguistic change and unlearn words that are hurtful?"

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant had its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

— Desmond Tutu



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

We have summarized what we can do as allies on the following pages.

Allyship—“Ally”: How Can We Show Solidarity and Form a Coalition Against Discrimination?

Lilla Watson said, “If you have come here to help me, then you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” In other words, the **Black** activist said that she doesn’t need white people to be her protectors, helpers, or saviors. What she needs are allies who will fight alongside the oppressed and work to abolish harmful power relations, until we all are free.

What’s the best we can do when we are in a situation/position of **privilege**? On the next pages you will find eleven principles for forming coalitions of allyship. Don’t be intimidated by facing such a long list; it’s not as complicated as it may seem.

The most important thing is: You want to dismantle oppressive systems together. That’s great! This attitude already serves as a solid foundation to build on. If this is your first time dealing with the topic in depth, take your time. You can start by reading through some of the headings in this book and letting them sink in. The next step could be to spontaneously select specific

topics that you have questions about or that appeal to you. Perhaps you will come back to this chapter after a few hours, days or weeks and continue reading. Questions on how to be a “good” ally can bring about some uncertainties. Our aim is not to set up fixed rules or give you step-by-step instructions. Our aim is, rather, to present you with possibilities, thoughts, and tips on how to deal with these uncertainties. And above all, to encourage you.

Lilla Watson



*if you have come here to help me,
then you are wasting your time.
but if you have come because
your liberation is bound up
with mine, then let us work
together.*

22

Illustration: Ellen Gabriel

1 Listen and Learn to Be Quiet

When people talk about their personal experiences with discrimination, listen to them and don't interrupt. Their stories should always be handled with care and respect, not shared without consent.

Be careful not to monopolize the conversation. It's not your "showtime" to unpack your own stories. You can participate in the conversation and ask relevant questions; however, your primary task is to acknowledge and validate the feelings, testimonies, and ideas for solutions that are shared. Be appreciative and empathetic. If a topic makes you feel uneasy, it's okay to step back and let the people who experienced the discrimination take the lead in discussing it.

When people share their experiences with discrimination, they often face reactions that cast doubt on these experiences. Or others might try to understand, explain or justify the perspective of the perpetrators, which is very hurtful. You have no say in defining how awful someone else's experience was. Instead, honor what is shared with you as an expression of vulnerability and trust.

Providing **care work** for people around you who regularly face discrimination, making it about you, can help them feel seen and supported. At the same time, this is a way of recognizing the emotional and mental work that they are constantly performing by being involuntarily confronted with discrimination.

2 Educate Yourself

Allies should continuously educate themselves and not expect others to do the educational work for them. It's important to do your own research and avoid exhausting or retraumatizing those who experience the discrimination with your questions. Read books or articles, listen to audiobooks or podcasts, watch videos or films, follow activists on social media, and learn from the lived realities of those involved. Internet search engines can also help you with this.

To deepen your understanding of how a certain forms of discrimination operate, it is often helpful to become familiar with its historical background. You can also pay attention to the terms and expressions activists use and adopt their language.

It's not enough to simply consume information. Work towards sharpening your consciousness and become more aware of the discrimination that is being fostered, sustained, reproduced, and normalized in your social environment and within yourself. Don't just focus on discrimination in the sense of direct interpersonal violence, but also pay close attention to mechanisms of discrimination on structural and institutional levels. Examine your own **privileges** and the discriminatory thinking that you may have internalized.

3 Accept Criticism

When criticized, it's crucial to not give in to the urge to defend yourself, but rather to listen, apologize, be accountable, and shoulder the task of improving your behavior. Receiving criticism can trigger feelings of shame. This also applies to self-criticism—for example shaming yourself for not having acted differently in a certain situation e.g. not intervening in a case of discrimination. However, shame and self-blame are unhelpful, they prevent you from taking responsibility for your actions. In the book "Embracing Shame" by Sannik Ben Behler, you can find specific tips on how to process this feeling. The book also speaks about how shame and self-blame are forms of self-oppression that must be addressed to work toward a better world. Only when we stop having negative feelings about ourselves do we gain space for true accountability and for addressing our actions.

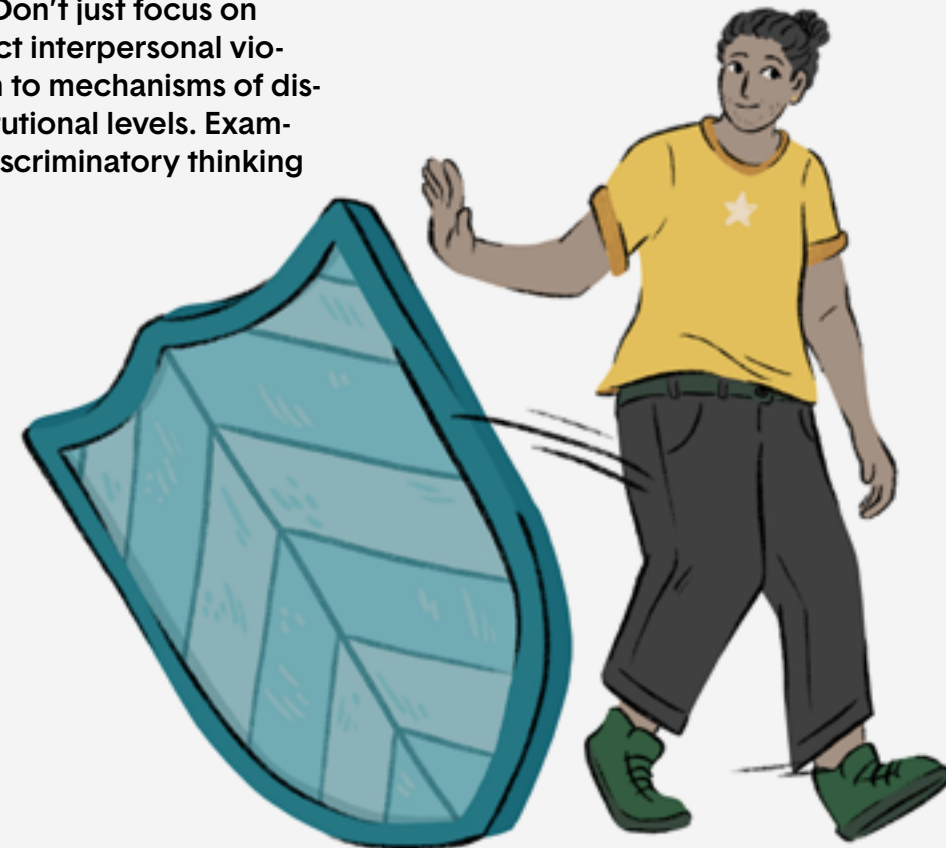


Illustration: Johanna Eisl

4 Hand Over the Microphone and the Money

“Just hand over the microphone.”

Being an **ally** is not about putting yourself center stage, shining bright as an activist or beaming in satisfaction because you're such a great, open-minded person. If you're invited to speak about a form of discrimination, ask yourself: Who is truly qualified to speak about the subject? Are there people besides you who are better suited to speak about it? Who has real expertise on the topic? Recall WAIT. It's always better to let people speak for themselves instead of speaking on their behalf.

People who experience discrimination should not be reduced to anecdotes, used as examples or pressured to provide personal stories. They are the ones to decide what they want to share.

When you're **privileged** and you hand over the microphone to someone who is marginalized and usually “off-screen,” pay attention to the way in which you do this. In such situations, the privileged person is often once again at the center of attention—in the role of the generous rescuer.

Another concrete and uncomplicated way to pass on the microphone is to share the work of people who experience discrimination, especially those who face multiple forms of discrimination at once. This can be done by reposting their content on social media, linking, and tagging their work, referencing your sources, and giving credit to those who deserve them. Share calls for donations, petitions, and demonstrations. If you have the capacity, donating, signing petitions or going to demonstrations are direct activities you can take on as an ally. If you don't have the capacity, it's also valuable to share these calls with others who may have access to more resources than you.

Especially when it comes to money, allowances, and

paid jobs, try to pass along opportunities you receive or hear about to people who experience discrimination. This isn't limited to people who experience the exact form of discrimination related to the job. For example, **BIPOC** have expertise in many areas besides talking about **racism**, and **disabled** people have knowledge about issues other than disability and so on.

5 Talk to People Who Share Your Privileges

Your role as an ally includes fighting oppression by engaging in dialogue with your privileged relatives. When talking to your white relatives about racism, talk about how racism affects white people (as in, how it benefits them, how it shapes their thinking etc.).

When you are privileged in a certain context, be careful not to fetishize or sensationalize the violence others experience. Avoid reproducing discrimination or reinforcing power mechanisms. For example, when talking to people who are new to these issues, refrain from sharing shocking stories of violence that you have heard or witnessed from other people. Instead, explain the issue as objectively as you can. Practicing different ways to frame arguments can help with this.

Usually, people feel less lectured or policed when we share from our own experiences, motivations, and mistakes. You can emphasize that no one is born anti-racist/anti-sexist because discrimination is a norm we were already immersed in as babies. It takes an active effort to unlearn it, as it is the norm rather than the exception. What is your personal motivation to care about certain power structures? How did you get to where you are now? What mistakes have you made along the way? This approach allows for an equal footing, both with people who experience discrimination and with other privileged people who are just beginning to address certain issues.

In case of doubt, it's already a good first step to address the fact that something was an expression of discrimination. You can make sure it doesn't go unnoticed by simply saying “Stop!” or pointing it out, even if you lack the time/tools for a deeper discussion. A significant part of the power structures we live in is the silence surrounding the injustice. Simply breaking this silence by refusing to allow discrimination to exist as something “natural” is what matters. Naming truths is integral to combating them.



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

6 Remain Capable of Action

People who experience **racism** have to deal with it every day and have no escape from it, **FLINTA** are constantly exposed to **sexism**, both in their work and often in their homes. Showing solidarity means confronting oneself with the struggles such realities impose and not leaving them solely to those who are disadvantaged. Having **privileges** means having potential, opportunities, and possibilities (for action). They can be seen as powerful tools for taking on responsibility and making changes. For example: As a white person and/or a **cis** man, you're more likely to be listened to and taken seriously by others. The same applies when you are rich, well-known and/or connected. It may be easier for you to obtain positions in which you can make effective decisions, decide on money, and also influence institutions on a structural level. Use these opportunities to correct power imbalances, redistribute resources, and empower others.

Many privileged people are deeply afraid of being perceived as discriminatory. In fact, fears of being criticized for mistakes often cause people to freeze, preventing them from showing up for people who are discriminated against. For those who want to be allies, it's important to deal with this fear: "What exactly am I afraid of? How likely is it that this will happen? How can I allow myself to make mistakes? If I can't, why not?" For **white**, it's also worth noting that the ideal of perfection and flawlessness is a colonial construct in itself, imposed on the shoulders of white people's, as part of white supremacy's starter-pack. You might then want to ask yourself: "What does my whiteness have to do with believing that I must be perfect? Which self-images and inherited identities make it feel impossible and unacceptable to be wrong about something, or to do something wrong?"

It takes practice to give yourself the same room for mistakes you would give to others. Note that if you can't allow others to make mistakes, this could be an indicator that you can't grant yourself such permission either.

This is where you can begin. Learn to be patient, appreciative, and accepting towards your own imperfection. And remember what motivates you in your intention to be an **ally** and to fight against systems of power.

Sometimes, it can be tricky to recognize when it is the "right" time to remain silent and let people speak for themselves and when it's better to intervene and speak up. This can, for example, be the case when observing a situation of discrimination or assault in public. There are no clear or safe instructions for these moments, because you can't guess (and you can't always ask) what the affected person might wish for. It may very well happen that you intervene and as a result, the situation escalates further or the person who was discriminated against is unhappy with your actions (there can be a million explanations for this, such as shame, irritation about you "sticking your nose into things," feelings of being paternalized, infantilized or over-protected, uneasiness about drawing attention, sensing a loss of control etc.).



However, this risk or uncertainty should never be a general argument for not intervening! Rather, it's an encouragement to be as active as possible while owning the acceptance that your actions may not have the desired effect. A situation of discrimination is not the time to start pondering "right or wrong," because it's already wrong that discrimination is taking place at all.

Another thing to bear in mind if you're afraid of making mistakes in stressful public situations: When you're silent, no one can understand why this is the case. The person experiencing the assault may believe that you're passive because you support the perpetrator or agree with the discrimination taking place. Other bystanders might also think "Well, if no one around me is bothering to help, it can't be that bad."

A good first step might be making eye contact with the person experiencing the assault or speaking to them. If possible, check in and assess what is needed in the situation. If it doesn't feel safe to address what's happening, one option is to simply sit/stand next to the person being harassed and start a random conversation (for example, about where to get off the bus). If the situation seems too dangerous to address. It may also be advisable to first speak to other people nearby who can then approach the situation with you. Part of being an ally is acting to the best of your abilities and continuing to learn, accepting that you will make mistakes and that not everyone will be happy with your actions. And finally: Yes, mistakes will happen, but you can always learn something from every experience of intervention you make. Not doing anything for fear of making mistakes is definitely the worst mistake you can make.

Illustration: Johanna Eisl

7 Keep Moving

Being an **ally** is a goal that is never fully achievable. You will never “get there” and be able to check a box, as there are always things to learn and ways to improve. It’s neither a process that ends at a certain point, nor is it a title we can give ourselves. Believing that we’re allies does not free us from things that we have said and done in the past, nor does it protect us from messing up in the future. Holding space for failures, dealing with contradictions and enduring uncertainties are important parts of being an ally.

As a matter of fact, many things are contradictory. On the one hand, we don’t want to speak for others, and yet we want to intervene at the right moment and speak up in the face of injustices we witness. We want to hand over the microphone, and yet we want to avoid standing at the center of attention for being “generous.” We want to stand in solidarity with people who experience discrimination, and yet it can feel wrong to raise the topic. We don’t want to burden or retraumatize people, and yet we don’t want to make decisions on their behalf. These ambivalences are part of the contradictory world we live in. A lot of uncertainty comes with that.

This uncertainty is not a bad thing. It encourages us to constantly reflect on what we are doing, continue learning, seek feedback and so on. However, we should make sure that this insecurity isn’t dumped onto people already experiencing discrimination. Instead, talk to other **privileged** people about it. Endure, acknowledge, invite, accept, share, and embrace your uncertainties. It doesn’t make you a worse ally, it makes you a better one.

Staying in the process also means doing so sustainably. Just because people who experience discrimination can’t escape it doesn’t mean that your own needs and boundaries don’t matter. Especially if you experience other forms of discrimination, you may feel exhausted at times. In principle, ignoring your own needs and boundaries is, in itself, a form of oppression. Sometimes, when we’re about to start a new project, it’s worth asking:

“Are there ways I can further break down discrimination and barriers in the spaces and places where I’m already active? Which forms of activism suit me, and what do I enjoy? What small things can I do when I’m low on energy?” Often, it’s a good idea to join an existing collective or group instead of starting something new or soldiering through a project on your own. This allows you to get involved at a lower threshold, benefit from existing resources and networks, and also quickly access the support and empowerment of others.

8 Allow Experiences of Discrimination to Differ

Just because you have a friend who experiences a certain form of discrimination, that doesn’t mean you have generalized knowledge of the experiences of all people facing that form of oppression. Knowing one person’s story or perspective by no means justifies holding it against another person. This is especially inappropriate when someone shares an experience you haven’t heard of or can’t quite grasp. Those who experience the discrimination are always the main actors. Believe them.

Allow marginalized people and their realities to be heterogeneous. No marginalized group ever owes us uniformity, not in behavior and not in experiences. Be open to every story you hear, even if it differs from what you’ve previously heard from others.

9 Don’t Compete in the Olympics of Oppression

You’re in the middle of a conversation about disability? This is not the time to talk about some other form of discrimination you experience. Being oppressed in certain regards does not free you from being an ally on topics that don’t affect you. Don’t hijack the conversation. It’s not always about you.



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

10 Don't Monopolize Energy and Care

You may be deeply saddened by a conversation about an experience of discrimination. However, as an **ally** to people sharing their personal experiences, you can't expect them to wipe away your tears or comfort you. Nor should you exhaust them by telling them about all the situations of oppression you've witnessed before. The person you're talking to knows about these oppressions, experiences them on a daily basis and doesn't necessarily need you to constantly remind them of these truths.

When a person shares an experience of discrimination with you, you can connect with the feelings they are displaying, for example, by being solemn or frightened or angry with them. You can't dictate which feelings they "should" be having, so respect whatever it is that they're expressing (and don't try to cheer them up). Because experiences of discrimination are so frequently doubted and relativized by society, many people find it difficult to take their own hurt seriously. What you can always do is validate that you're taking their feelings seriously and that you are there to support them.

11 Continue

For inspiration, we give you the words of Emma Dabiri: "I very much hope that my book ["What White People Can Do Now—From Allyship to True Coalition"] awakens a sense of community rather than charity. [...] The key is to break away from the sense of superiority encoded in the category of "whiteness." The best way to begin this process is to recognize the fictitious nature of this category. [...] I am not suggesting this because I am appealing to your better nature. Nor am I asking you to "give up your **privilege**," "amplify my voice" or use any other buzzwords. Instead, I am suggesting that you "put an end to your own oppression" and "listen to the quiet voice within" that you may be silencing. [...] Why, despite all your "privilege," do you still feel overworked, underpaid, exhausted, and most likely mentally constricted? You can take comfort in the fact that you're

not oppressed by **racism** in all of this. But I contend that you're being fooled by "whiteness" that tells you that you're superior to "**black**" people in order to distract you from all of its harmful effects. I want you to think about who "**white**" people were before they became "white." What could they be afterwards?"

The road to abolishing injustice is long and sometimes painful. At times you'll feel exhausted, sometimes you'll feel insecure, sometimes you'll feel helpless and stuck. Remember to take care of yourself. And always remember that your commitment is worth it.



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

11 Continue



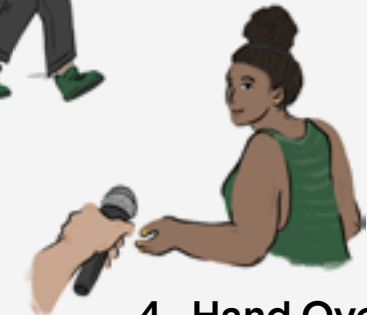
1 Listen and Learn to Be Quiet



2 Educate Yourself



3 Accept Criticism



4 Hand Over the Microphone and the Money



5 Talk to People Who Share Your Privileges



6 Remain Capable of Action



7 Keep Moving



8 Allow Experiences of Discrimination to Differ

What, that term is discriminatory? I have a **disabled** friend who doesn't find it problematic at all!

What did you say? I haven't done enough, even though I've shown my support for the LGBTQ+ community at Christopher Street Day?

I totally believe that that wasn't your intention. The thing is...

I didn't mean it in a racist way!

10 Don't Monopolize Energy and Care



I may not be queer, but I recently had a wild experience regarding discrimination! So I was in the train...



9 Don't Compete in the Olympics of Oppression

Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Manipulation, Assault, Sexualized Violence

As the MeToo movement has underlined, sexualized violence pervades every corner of our society. Anyone can (unintentionally) harm others in this sense, regardless of milieu or social position. That is why it's important for us to address it here too. So far, we're hardly aware of any cases from the training program—which is no surprise because these experiences are hardly ever spoken about. We therefore endeavor to create a framework in which these experiences can be addressed.

In our training series, every seminar is followed by a questionnaire that invites participants to feedback on power dynamics, including the explicit opportunity to speak about experiences of assault. However, the first challenge is always admitting such experiences to oneself. Addressing the issue is tough, and categorizing one's experience as assault is often just as difficult. We would therefore like to give these topics space here, hoping that this will make it slightly easier to deal with possible experiences when they happen.

Sexualized violence is a broad and multifaceted term. It can be used to describe a wide range of sexualized offenses and assaults. It covers all sorts of ways that sexual boundaries can be crossed, from lustful looks, inappropriate words, unconsensual gestures, and unwanted touch to physical rape. Sexualized violence can be enacted by participants as well as trainers. And it can have a range of very different effects on each person. Manipulation can be a part of sexualized violence. However, it can also create an atmosphere in which sexualized

violence can take place more easily, which is why we also talk about manipulation in this chapter.

Instead of supporting people who experience manipulation, assault or sexualized violence, society often reacts as follows: 1. **Victim** blaming means blaming the person who experienced/survived the assault and excusing the person who caused the harm. 2. Relativization means downplaying the experience or not taking it seriously. 3. Tabooing means that it's rarely talked about openly and that attempts to discuss it are blocked. Relativization and tabooing are often at work when people react to experiences of sexual violence as if it were invented, overexaggerated, delusional, the product of a psychological problem etc.

As a result, it becomes more difficult to address experiences of sexualized violence. When a person experiences sexualized violence, they often feel insecure about whether or not their experience "counts" as such. They often (structurally) blame themselves or don't know what to do or whom to turn to. It's often very difficult to name what they experienced as sexualized violence and to classify it as such. One reason for this is that no one ever wants to experience discrimination or violence, as it comes with a loss of control. But if you have a queasy feeling and these self-doubts arise: Take your feelings seriously and look for manageable ways to deal with them. When in doubt, it's better to act too much than too little.

Suggestions on how to deal with sexualized violence, depending on your position in the situation:

1 If You Experienced It Yourself

Only do what feels right to you. Trust your gut feeling. It is a good radar for manipulation, assault, and sexualized violence. Seek support. This could be a trusted person who you'd like to have as an ally, it could be the coordinator of the training series, it could be a safer/braver space with other survivors, or an anonymous hotline. But it can also be all four of these options and many more. Try to take care your health and safety. What do you need to cope with the situation? This can range from rest, sleep, comfort food, human touch, and self-regulating activities to shouting and exercising. Another option is always to share the experience—with those responsible, the group, friends, professional counselors, or the coordinator. In the training program, feedback on power and communication is always welcome. When you fill out the questionnaire designed to provide an opportunity for this, note that it remains entirely confidential. You can choose whether to add your name or remain anonymous.

2 If You're A Witness

Try to stay calm. Do your best to ensure the safety of the person who was harmed. Asking "What do you need?" is often not very helpful, because a person in shock usually doesn't know. Instead make specific suggestions, like "Do you want fresh air/someplace quiet/water etc." Questions that can be answered with yes and no are the most accessible, including questions like "Do you want to be alone?," "Do you want to talk?," and "Do you want me to ask questions?" Validate the person's feelings and support them in their decisions. Believe any survivor of violence. Give the person the space they need to deal with what they experienced and be patient with their answers.

It's important not to act against the interests of those you want to protect or support, so always discuss your next steps. If you want to talk to others from the group or team about the situation, first check in to see if it's okay to share what happened (anonymously). Guessing

what someone might want and offering "help" can be invasive. Prioritize the needs and wishes of the survivors—because they are the experts—even if it means not addressing or feedback on something. However, it may be important for you not to remain silent just because the harmed person wants you to. If you observed violence that you believe could be a threat to other people or that is personally distressing for you, you don't have to keep secrets, stay silent or be alone. You can confide in other participants, team members or friends, but be transparent about it. Anonymize if possible. Seek professional support for yourself. Make a memory log, it may be important later on.

3 If You Were Abusive

Be honest with yourself and admit what happened. You may be overwhelmed and thinking about your own intentions, reasons, and feelings, but right now it's about the person who experienced/survived your assault. The long-term effects that your harmful behavior will have are strongly influenced by how you react now. Ask the person what they may want/need from you and respect that. Every time you're about to react to something, take a breath and double-check whom your reaction is serving. Take the feedback seriously and brainstorm ways to be more responsible in the future. Get to know your own boundaries better and pay more attention to them. This will also help you learn to better recognize the boundaries of others.

Seek support for all of this—not in the form of someone who excuses you, but from someone who's critical of you without judging you. Professional support is best. Additionally, we encourage experimenting with the concept of accountability buddies. An accountability buddy is a trusted person who is prepared to confront you honestly, while unconditionally holding on to your humanity. It is a good idea to set yourself up with one or more accountability buddies for seminars or even for everyday life in general, ideally before you receive critical feedback.

Online Seminars

In 2021, we published the second edition of our handbook for digital education formats. There, you can find extensive discussions on power dynamics and communication in the context of online seminars. Here is a simplified version of what you can look out for as a participant.

Regard online seminars as “real appointments.” They may be virtual, but there are real people on the other end of the video call. Avoid parallel activities and distractions, unless they help you concentrate (e.g., knitting). Focus on the seminar and the people who are there, out of respect for those who put work into it.

In digital spaces, much of the body language is lost. We only ever see tiny windows of one another, which can sometimes freeze or lag. It can be especially difficult to recognize how others are doing. To have an idea of how the others in the virtual room feel, it's even more important to receive verbal feedback and visible reactions. Responding to others with your face and your hands is nice, e.g., nodding, smiling, applauding by shaking both hands with the fingers pointing upward (this is a sign borrowed from German sign language). You can also use virtual feedback (emoji reactions, virtual applause). When speaking, make sure the person in front of you has already muted their microphone. In large groups, leaving one's microphone on could be seen as an online equivalent to (man)spreading. Leave your camera on if possible, especially when giving feedback to others. If you want to/have to switch it off (for a longer period of time), leave a short explanation in the chat. One reason could be to have a short dance session because you've been sitting still for too long.

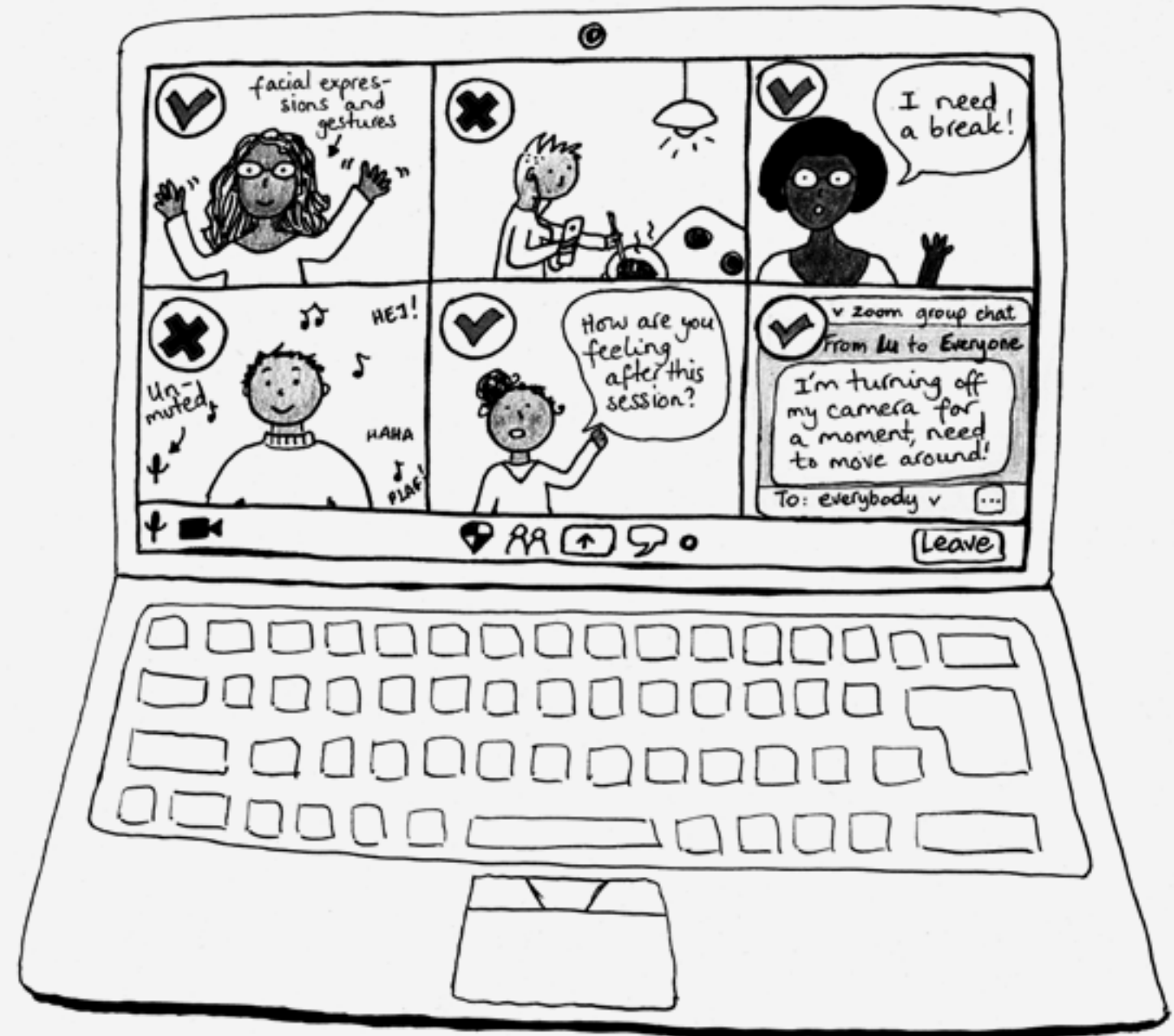
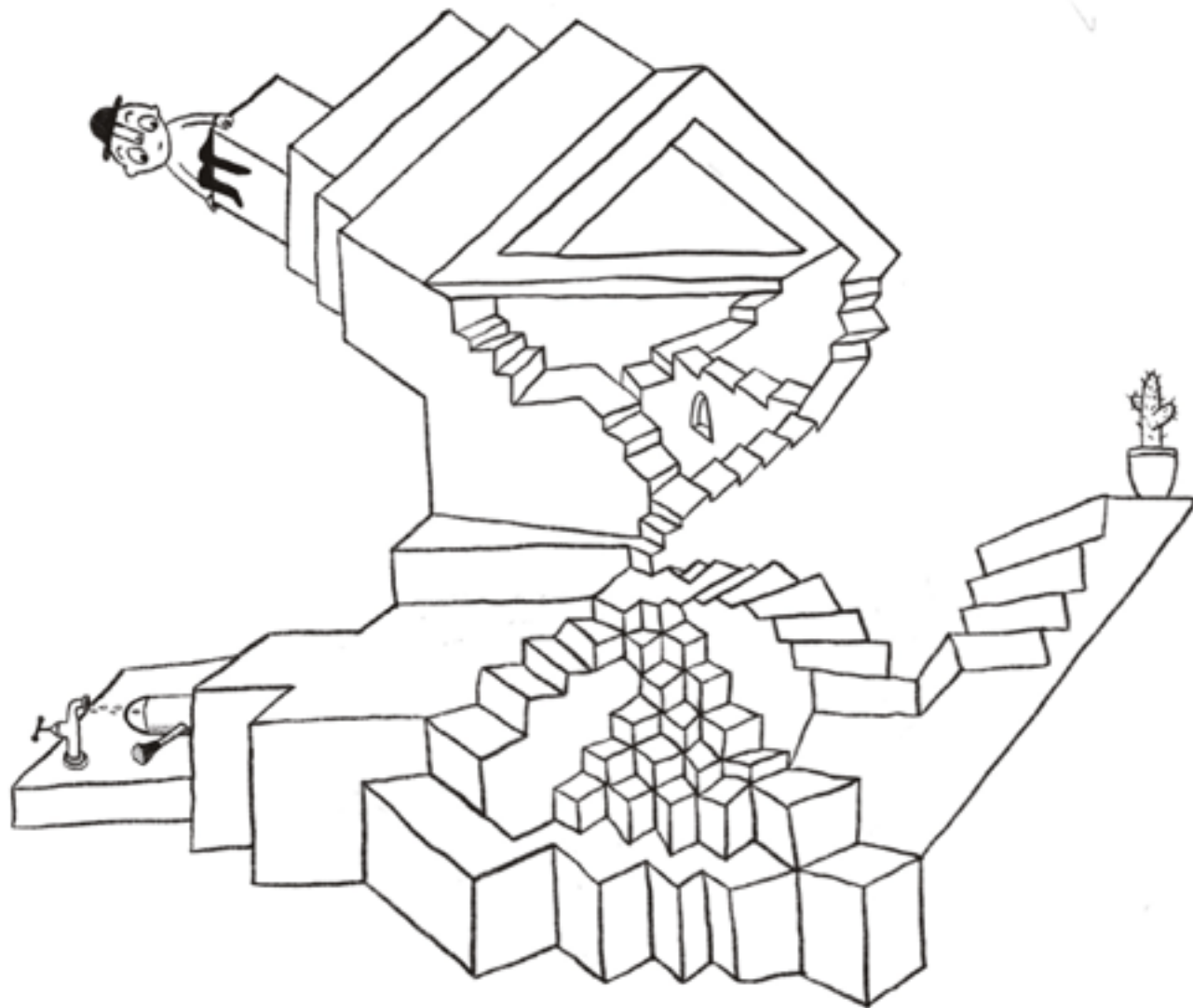


Illustration: Caroline Pochon

Trainers

- A for Awareness
- Create Inclusive and Accessible Frameworks
- Disruptions
- Facilitation Tools In-Person and Online
- Content Warnings
- Self-Reflection



Process / Dilemma / Path

Illustration: Mira Schönege

A for Awareness

In the context of groups, organizations, and events, “awareness” has become a generalized term for practices and concepts that work toward minimizing violence and harm while maximizing everyone’s safety and inclusion. Today, awareness teams, policies, and statements can be found at parties, festivals, and even on the websites of companies that “aware-wash” how they treat their employees to boost their own branding.

In its original, radical sense, awareness stems from feminist, queer, and abolitionist movements (abolitionism means criticizing the police and prisons, e.g., in the form of transformative justice approaches developed by BIPoC communities in North America). In these marginalized spaces, it was clear that state institutions very rarely protect people experiencing multiple discriminations. On the contrary, they inflict even more violence on the most vulnerable.

Awareness concepts serve two purposes. They provide support in situations where discrimination has taken place or boundaries have been crossed. At the same time, they also strive towards making people feel welcome, included, and as safe as possible in the first place, especially those who are often excluded.

An awareness concept therefore deals with two questions: How can an event/a space be critical of discrimination and increase the chances that people can participate well and treat each other with respect? Secondly, how can we deal with violations, discrimination, transgressive behavior, and violence when they do happen—in a way that intrinsically understands healing and justice as intertwined?

In our context, an awareness concept includes the preparation and promotion of a seminar, the “interior design” of rooms (e.g., labeling the toilets in ways that welcome all genders), “behavioral rules” meant to prevent harm and also an awareness team whose task is to facilitate the constructive resolution of conflicts and violent situations. For us, establishing an awareness concept is a prerequisite for a positive seminar atmosphere. In this chapter, you’ll find many suggestions and tips on how to support such a learning environment.

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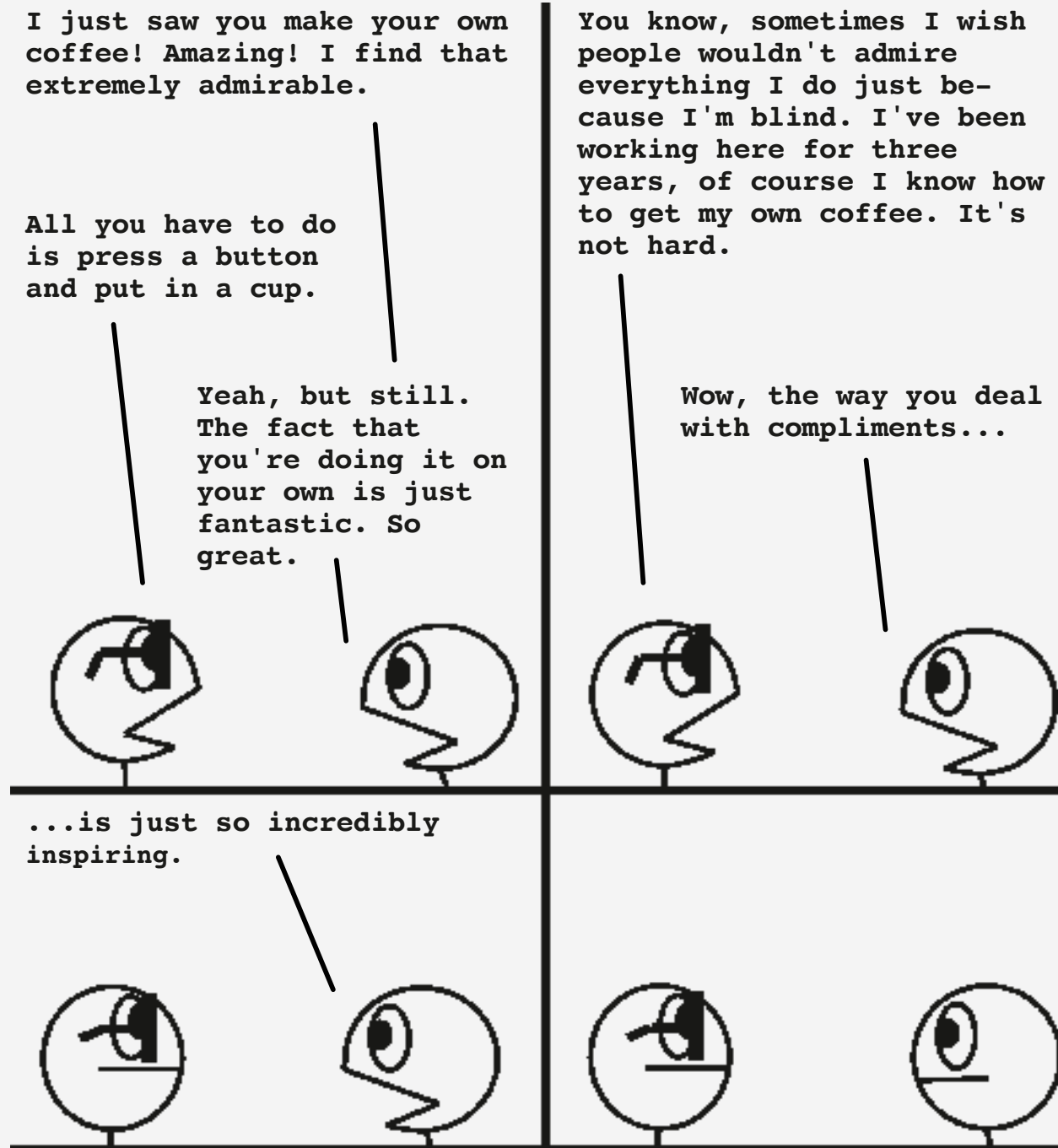


Illustration: Nadja Hermann/Erzaehlminix

Create Inclusive and Accessible Frameworks

Barriers

Ask the participants in advance what they need to be able to take part in the seminar and discuss how to handle existing barriers with the contact person at the venue (e.g., lack of elevators, etc.). It can also help to inform the participants about these barriers so that they know whether they can participate without any problems. Try to provide precise details (e.g., the width of the door-frames) rather than general statements such as “the venue is wheelchair-accessible.” You may not be able to think of everything in advance. But only when it becomes evident that you’re putting thought and effort into the participation of **disabled** folks, can they know they’re truly welcome.

Needs

Just as participants are different, so are their needs. These can be contradictory, for example some participants need to see the others’ faces in an online meeting to feel comfortable communicating while others hate having their cameras on because they feel uncomfortable being observed on a screen. It’s helpful to explicitly acknowledge the variety of needs and to emphasize that they are all valid. When you can’t place or interpret an individual’s behavior, ask about their needs instead of making assumptions about their intentions or values.

Heteronormative showers/toilets

Toilets and showers are usually gendered in a heteronormative way, meaning they are divided along the gender binary of “male” and “female.” You can supplement or replace existing signs with self-made signs, e.g., “All Gender Bathroom.” If showers are shared, it’s a good idea to craft a little sign with two sides, one read-

ing “Feel free to join” and one reading “I want to be alone, come back later.” You can attach it to the door on a string, that way it can be flipped.

Spaces for time-out

If possible, try to create quiet zones or retreat areas. This could simply be a cozy room where there aren’t many bright colors or other stimuli. For many people who are stressed, dysregulated or overwhelmed, it’s helpful to find fidget toys and other sensory tools. Having something to squish, play with, taste or smell can help people ground themselves, release tension, and calm their nervous system. Some helpful items to equip the room with include spiky balls, massage rings, scented oil, sour, and spicy candies, earplugs, painkillers, mandalas, and pencils, hot water bottles, dextrose, chewing gum etc.

Distributing dormitories

Some venues insist on receiving a list of the men and women participating, so they can pre-assign bedrooms according to gender. We recommend that you don’t do this. It’s best to let the participants decide how, where, and with whom they want to sleep, spontaneously upon arrival. That way, everyone can check-in with their personal wishes. It usually works well. To facilitate this process, participants can be invited to label their bedrooms with categories that matter to them, e.g., “women only,” “men only,” **“FLINTA”** only,” “all gender,” “no snorers,” “want to sleep with the window open,” “will go to bed early” etc. Depending on the group and the location, this may require some adjustments. Sensitivity is key.

If you need to argue with the venue, you can tell them that you won’t provide gendered participant lists in advance because the number of participants can vary until the last minute. Additionally, you’re saving the employees at the venue extra work. Finally, some people don’t want to be categorized as “male” or “female” and therefore don’t want to be placed in gendered dorms.

Tools For Increased Awareness

1 Naming Pronouns

To prevent people from being addressed with the wrong pronouns, it's advisable to normalize the naming and sharing of pronouns during rounds of introduction. People can add their pronouns to their name tags (online they can write them behind their names in the video conferencing program). Take the time to explain exactly what is meant by pronouns and give a few examples of how diverse pronouns can be. This will help lower the threshold for introducing pronouns other than "he/him" and "she/her."

2 Explicit Rules

A core element of an awareness concept is establishing certain rules within the group. Whether it makes more sense to develop these rules collectively or define them yourself and communicate them as guidelines depends on the seminar's context (e.g., timeframe, topic, target group). Often, it makes sense to find a combination of the two.

Content-wise, such guidelines can include anything you might find in the chapter for participants in this handbook. Even if you send the guidelines around in advance, not everyone will have studied and internalized them! Remember to emphasize the most important points again. These could be displayed on a poster, flip-chart or—in online formats—on a whiteboard.

What should always be communicated: Everyone is collectively responsible for ensuring that everyone feels comfortable. Everyone is encouraged to be aware of their own needs and address them. This means everyone is free to leave the room, demand breaks, fidget around, close their eyes, stretch or engage in other self-regulating activities as needed. Anyone feeling uneasy in any way can always seek support from the

awareness team. Be sure to communicate how members of the awareness team can be identified/reached (if relevant, give a phone number).

3 Awareness Team

The awareness team can be understood as a first point of contact for anyone needing a listener or support. However, you don't have to wait passively for participants to approach you. Sometimes it may be best to proactively check in with someone if you have a gut feeling that they're not feeling well. You can carefully ask if everything's okay or if they need anything.

At smaller seminars, the awareness team usually consists of the trainers. For larger events, it makes sense to assign this task to specific people. It is important that this role is not taken lightly and that the people involved have the necessary headspace and emotional capacity to be fully present.

Always being attentive is exhausting. Make sure that all members of the awareness team take breaks and that you plan for back-up support.

Sometimes people will come to you after experiencing assaults, conflicts or violent situations. In these cases, pay extra attention to ensuring that the experience of the harmed person is not doubted. Support the person in processing their emotions by acknowledging and validating them. Note: In very stressful moments, asking "What do you need?" is often unhelpful. Instead, offer specific options, e.g., "Do you want water/fresh air/time alone/human touch? Do you want me to ask questions?" etc.

Keep your focus on the person who was hurt and rather than the person who caused the harm. Through active and compassionate listening, you can explore what might be needed for healing (e.g., peace, safety, reparation) and how these needs could be met (e.g., taking time alone, addressing the conflict, receiving an apology, etc.). You can then offer to support the person in

realizing their needs. Note that in some situations, there are multiple people who were hurt. Many situations are complex, intersectional and might require further support or empowerment formats. If you want to speak to others (from the team) about the case, make this transparent, ask for consent and be careful to anonymize if possible. In the cases involving sexualized violence, it's advisable to seek advice from experts and involve them if necessary. You will also find a section in the participants' chapter on how to specifically handle manipulation, assault, and sexualized violence.

4 Inclusive Methods

Always strive for the best possible inclusion of everyone. Seemingly harmless methods can sometimes be exclusionary, such as games or warm-ups that involve a lot of movement. The same applies to methods that use very academic language. There are no strict "dos" and "don'ts" in this regard. Of course, there are "bad" methods that should simply not be used. But above all, methods need to adapt to the group's needs. Methods involving movement are not taboo per se, just like methods with challenging content or language are not inherently off-limits. The question is how can we ensure that everyone in the group can feel comfortable—this is also something you can ask them and figure out together! Sometimes offering several parallel activities with different methods can be helpful. Sometimes just a small adjustment to a method can ensure everyone's participation.

Here are some general suggestions to make your work more inclusive: It's a good idea to repeat the invitation to participants to take care of themselves and take time to recharge several times over the course of the weekend. Remind them of all the awareness resources. Issue content warnings if you consider a topic to be sensitive and encourage participants to express them too. For example, you can offer to check on people who leave the room when the topic is over. Similar to a "relaxed performance," participants can be explicitly invited to move around freely during the seminar, make themselves comfortable or make noise. Encourage partici-

pants to play with objects that help reduce stress and tension during a session. If fidget toys are good for you, you can set an example by using them.

Always make it clear and transparent what the participants can expect and what the possibilities are for integrating their needs. Try to activate different senses and allow people to engage with their preferred learning styles. Some people learn well by listening, while others need visual support. Interactive work is ideal for some, while others are happy to take a deep breath and do an exercise alone. Provide choices. When giving a presentation, try to supplement it with a poster or a PowerPoint. It can also be helpful to provide a rough script or the PDF in advance so that participants can familiarize themselves with it or read along during the presentation. Announce which materials you will provide afterwards. This way, participants can assess how much they need to pay attention and when they can easily leave without missing important content.

Provide the opportunity for people to share their feelings at the end of units, but without forcing anyone to deal with their emotions. Check-ins (in the large group or in small groups) can help give the participants and you an overview of the mood in the room.

5 Self-Care und Delegation

Trainers who are concerned about the well-being of the participants must not forget about their own well-being! Two pieces of good news: First, trainers who take care of themselves serve as role models. Then the participants might think to themselves: "Wow, if even the trainer takes an unplanned break or plays with a spiky ball to concentrate, so can I." Modeled actions are even more encouraging than words!

Second, it's not a trainer's job to do everything on their own. In the eFeF context, all participants are adults and sometimes some tasks can be delegated to them. This can be organized through schedules where the participants can volunteer for shifts—responsibilities rotate.

Depending on the event, this may include: Being responsible for the distribution of dorms, taking attendance, taking care of data protection lists, signing up for care tasks e.g., making tea for the group, checking the heating and ventilation, leading warm-ups or small games, tidying up, helping with logistics/technology, keeping an eye on the time, and being available as part of the awareness team etc.

It's crucial that expertise can also be "delegated." This is particularly important when dealing with discrimination. You don't have to be an expert on every form of harm that may arise during the seminar. If a topic or situation is overwhelming and challenging for you, you can make this transparent. You can ask whether there are people in the group who have already dealt (or had to deal) with it more. The knowledge, experience, and expertise in the group are usually broader than initially assumed.

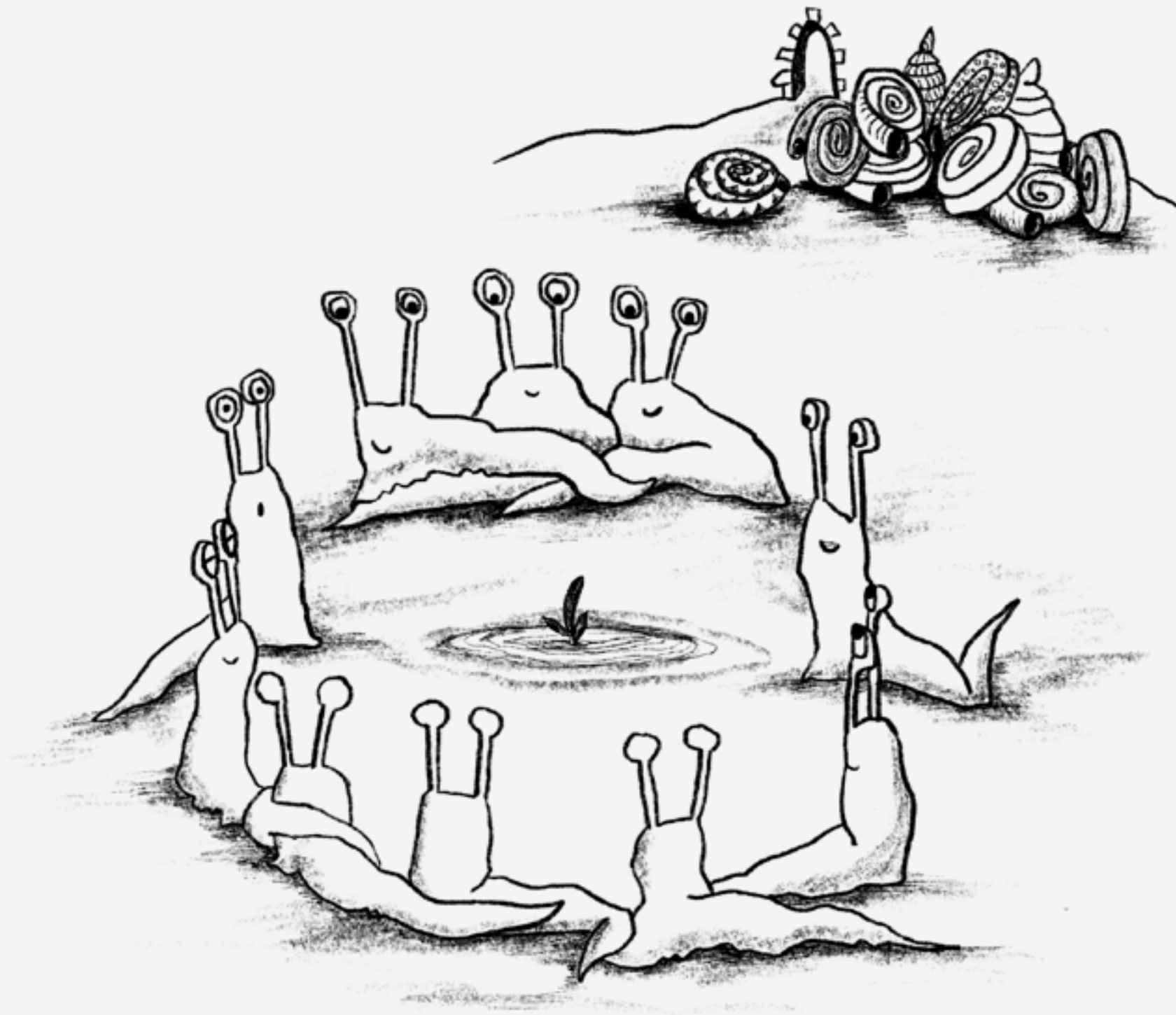


Illustration: Mira Schönege

6 Safe, Safer, Brave(r), and Accountable Spaces

Various terms and concepts have emerged when dealing with the question of which spaces are desirable for groups. The different concepts emphasize different characteristics of how we interact in these spaces. Depending on the context, they all have their justification—in the end, what matters is how the participants want to create and organize spaces for themselves.

What's important: The opportunities and limitations of each space are strongly related to whether the space is open to everyone or only to certain people. If a space is only open to people who share certain experiences (e.g., **BIPoC**, queer people, queer BIPoC, aromantic, and asexual people, etc.), it may rather feel like a safe space. Whereas if a space is open to everyone, its function rather remains that of a learning environment.

The word “rather” is intended to show that safe spaces rarely function without learning, and learning spaces usually don't operate without a minimum level of security. Even in more protected spaces, people should be open to criticism, for example. Similarly, personal information should be treated confidentially in learning spaces. Therefore, space concepts can be combined in many contexts, even if one or the other concept is more suitable for certain objectives. What's more important than the discussion about labels is the discussion about which spaces the group actually desires and what people need for this.

These are concepts for desirable spaces that exist:

6.1 Safe Space: A Space in Which No Violations (e.g., Discrimination) Take Place

- can only be declared to describe a personal experience (e.g., “For me, this is a safe space.”)
- cannot possibly be defined or guaranteed for others because we never know what safety means for all individuals.

- becomes more realistic when people have similar experiences, but remains unrealistic in general, because experiences are never identical (**intersectionality!**), and people can always hurt each other/ make mistakes.
- was further developed into the concept of a “safer space.”

6.2 Safer Space: A Space in Which Fewer Injuries Occur Than in Mainstream Society

- can be used to describe spaces in which people with similar experiences come together. Here, they can ideally empower each other and exchange ideas without having to think about external eyes or ears, with no pressure to justify or explain themselves.
- can also be used to describe a space in which everyone adheres to certain principles of behavior, creating a functional foundation for everyone's well-being.
- is called “safeR space” to acknowledge the fact that safety is only relative and never absolute: For example, there is less **sexism** in a space where only **FLINTA** are present. Nevertheless, sexism can still happen, and other forms of discrimination are even likely to happen.
- assumes that people are aware of their various **privileges** in the group.

6.3 Brave Space/Braver Space: A Space in Which People Are Encouraged to Risk Trust and Openness

- was developed as an idea for groups in which many different people come together, i.e., where a natural understanding of each other cannot be assumed, but where people are interested in each other.
- has to do with bravery because people need courage to talk about themselves, to listen to each other openly, to give each other feedback, to accept it, to break down prejudices, etc.

- can also be used to describe groups in which people have similar, very vulnerable experiences. Even if they share the experiences, it can take a lot of courage to talk about them.
- is criticized as a concept for mixed groups because marginalized people are already required to bring up lots of courage and strength to survive in everyday life. Brave(r) spaces don't relieve them of the burden of this courage, but demand even more of them by taking on additional educational work.
- was further developed into an “accountable space” in the context of mixed groups.

6.4 Accountable Space: A Space in Which Everyone Consciously Takes Responsibility for Their Thoughts and Actions

- is suitable for describing groups in which everyone agrees that good intentions aren't enough when dealing with each other. They must be translated into practice.
- includes a consensus on concrete communication guidelines that everyone adheres to. Different guidelines can also apply to people with different positions in order to minimize the burden on people who experience discrimination (so that, for example, the work of correcting and educating others is redistributed to privileged people).
- aims not only at avoiding violations, but also at “mess management.” This means that an unpleasant situation (a mess) or mistakes can (and will) always happen. Instead of just thinking about how to avoid them, we prefer to think about how to handle them responsibly when they happen.

Holding Space for Disruptions

It's the responsibility of the trainers, but also of the participants, to ensure that disruptions can be addressed and dealt with. When insecurities, intense emotions, and distractions arise, they can quickly stand in the way of concentrating on the seminar. They end up as disruptions, in the sense that they interrupt what's "supposed" to be happening or what was planned. When disruptions take place—visibly or invisibly—they should be allowed the space they inherently occupy. To this end, you can clarify at the beginning of the seminar that disruptions are allowed, accepted, and can be handled together.

It could be anything: A bee in the room, having a crush, a flickering lamp, a headache, boredom. Disruptions can be tiny and subtle things that make it difficult for participants to participate and/or feel comfortable in the group. Sometimes they are extra valuable, for example when they reveal/indicate that something seminar-related is going wrong.

Maybe the moderation lacks clarity, maybe you forgot to issue a content note, maybe there was a small change in the tone of someone's voice, and now it's suddenly unclear which feelings are in the air. Maybe a technical term was used that not everyone is familiar with, maybe you raised awareness of power dynamics, and now people are unsure about how to behave. Maybe someone used a racist word or reproduced a stereotype, and now others are unsure whether it's permitted to intervene. Oftentimes, participants will wait until the end of the seminar to ask "How could I have addressed the

problem?" This question arises all the more when the disruption was related to a matter that wasn't the seminar's core topic.

Emphasize that participants and trainers alike should anticipate making mistakes and learn from them. Mistakes are essential to the shared learning process. You can also stress that you aren't flawless and that you're appreciative of critical feedback. Breaks can be framed as an open invitation for this purpose.

Some disruptions can also be avoided by actually writing down the agreed communication rules together at the beginning of the seminar. This way, participants don't have to guess them, especially since "unwritten" social rules aren't necessarily clear to everyone. Ideally, the person perceiving a disruption should be allowed to express it immediately, even if it interrupts the process or the discussion. As a trainer, you can decide if you want to give the issue space right there and then or if you want to create time for it later.

An appreciative approach to mistakes is essential for any learning space, including seminars on certain forms of discrimination. This is particularly important because people who are just beginning to engage with a form of discrimination often reproduce harmful language at first. In some cases, it can be useful to explain the background of a term or to give examples of which words to use instead. However, for people who experience discrimination, the in-depth discussion of why certain words are problematic can also heighten tensions or cause hurt. You can always ask yourself "Is this relevant for the whole group or should I address this conversation in a smaller setting?"

Setting Boundaries

Some people display violent or abusive behavior. It takes a huge effort to set boundaries in such situations. Once a boundary is made clear, often none of the people involved feels comfortable. This is a classic example of where our demand for everyone's well-being reaches its limits: If a group's discomfort is triggered by a person's boundary-breaching behavior, it's important that this person no longer feels comfortable with their action and is given less, or no, space. Protecting the people who have been discriminated against/hurt should be the top priority.

When someone has been harmed, it can make sense to take a break. This makes it easier for the person who was hurt to claim their rights. It creates opportunities to talk to them one-on-one, support them and, if necessary, address what happened in the larger group afterwards. Trainers should also be available to participants after units so that they can talk about the unit, dynamics in the group, and other issues. If you and the harmed person decide that you want to address something that happened at the beginning of a following unit, make sure to plan enough time for this. When disruptions happen, you should be ready to cut down on content you had planned.

If you notice that someone is receiving feedback on discriminatory behavior, you could ask if and how the process could be supported. This can have a positive impact on the seminar as a whole.

Setting boundaries can be difficult, but so is acknowledging and naming the fact that one's boundaries were crossed. Explicitly naming discrimination and assault is often taboo, which takes extra effort to do so. In our experience, naming of things can sometimes be facilitated through writing. You can include methods for anonymous written feedback in your plan, or invite the participants to fill out a questionnaire afterward.

Reflection on Disruptions

Social norms and rules serve different purposes. Many rules we grow up with are meant to ensure that everything runs “like clockwork”—e.g., being punctual, friendly, respectful, cooperative, and obedient etc. Most of these social rules are unwritten.

In a way, this handbook also establishes certain norms and rules for the eFeF context. Of course, we too have asked ourselves what purpose this framework serves. The answer is that we hope it may turn eFeF seminars into power-critical spaces. But here, too, we must ask ourselves: For who is it easy to follow these rules and who is even aware of them?

Communication can take place in different levels and at different wavelengths—we might also say that people speak different languages while communicating in the same language. Statements can be expressed and heard on a factual level, but also on a relationship level. Sometimes it’s worth double-checking which level was intended to prevent avoidable misunderstandings.

Neurotypical people often communicate in ways in which many things aren’t said directly or clearly. Instead, the assumption is that the other person will naturally understand what they are talking about. Clear and direct communication can be a great relief for some people, but it can also cause stress for others. When disruptions, insecurities, and difficulties arise—especially in a situation where someone has been hurt—it’s important to clearly state the conflict/issue.

In our society, **disabled** people and their needs are often perceived and treated as disruptions. Sometimes people don’t behave the way we expect, and then it’s easy to jump to conclusions and assume they’re being “weird” or “rude.” If team members aren’t aware of or sensitive to disabilities and neurodivergence in particular, they can quickly feel annoyed at certain people and their behavior perceiving them as disruptive. However, more often it’s the case that the format isn’t well-suited to the needs of certain people, or that there are communicative troubles and ambiguities around unwritten rules.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all solution for such situations. This is because human needs are incredibly diverse and can often contradict each other. Additionally, ableist norms and social barriers impact how we recognize our needs in the first place. For example, many **neurodivergent** folks undergo a long and tough journey to find out that they are neurodivergent and to understand what needs may come along with unmasking. This means that people may not be fully well aware of their own needs or may struggle to articulate them. How do I deal with this as a team member? One important step is to examine the various barriers that **disabled**, chronically ill, and neurodivergent people experience. Reflect on the “social” rules you’ve internalized. Which behaviors do you interpret and how do you interpret them? Here are examples:

- Facial expressions: How important is it to me that others return my smile? Do I really need eye contact? How can I recognize an (un)interested facial expression?
- Movements: Does it irritate me when people fidget on their chairs, walk around, play with their hands etc.?
- Vocal tone: How much importance do I attach to the emphasis, pitch, and depth of a person’s voice? What do I associate with a monotone voice?
- Phrases: To what extent do I see polite little phrases such as “please,” “thank you,” “good morning” etc., as a sign of appreciation of me as a person? Do I expect this from others?

Shall we begin?

Yes, but first we must agree how we want to discuss what our conversation rules for the weekend should be...



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Trying out Facilitation Tools

Facilitation is a key element of being a trainer. Over time, we all develop our own way of doing it. Good facilitation goes far beyond simply moderating discussions, for it has to do with the overall guidance of groups. Like many things, it is something we practice and refine over a lifetime. There are certain questions we constantly ask ourselves: How do I organize the room? What details might ensure that everyone feels comfortable? How do I behave?

Here is some additional food for thought for facilitation processes:

You can share with the group what “facilitation” means to you, i.e., what you will do and not do. Sometimes it can help to jot down a few points regarding communication rules/encouragements on a flipchart—which can also serve as a helpful reminder for you. Asking participants who are silent to participate “more” usually increases the pressure and makes participating more difficult. Therefore, it’s worth trying out different facilitation tools to make it easier for everyone to participate:

- Vary constellations, e.g., the large group, small groups, groups of two, individual work. This can liven up discussions and help people open up.
- Limit speaking times with a sand timer or a stopwatch if you want to ensure that no lengthy monologues are held. Those who have not yet spoken should be prioritized in the discussion if they wish to contribute.
- You can also work toward balancing speaking time by directly addressing any imbalances you observe.

A constructive way of doing this can be to explain why you're deciding to let someone speak first even though another person has been raising their hand longer e.g., by telling that person "You've already said a lot, so we'll hear [...] first." You can also go up to people during breaks and point out that they could try to read the room and wait longer before saying something, in order to give space to others.

- Interrupt the discussion process to ask how the discussion is going for everyone.
- Have rounds in which every person has a fixed opportunity to say something. This can be according to the order of how people are seated, or by each person naming the next speaker. If someone doesn't wish to share, they can simply pass. This can increase group cohesion and concentration.
- If, for whatever reason, you don't want to keep track of who has been raising their hand for how long, you can also let the participants follow up on that order themselves. This can be done by raising one finger if you want to say something, then by raising two fingers if someone else is already raising one, by raising three fingers if someone else is raising two and so on. As soon as the next person starts speaking, all those raising fingers can take a finger down to move up a place in the queue. When the person raising one finger is next, they can simply speak. This way, everyone is equally responsible for keeping an eye on the group. It's important to bear in mind that this model requires a certain level of concentration.
- You can introduce non-verbal signs (e.g., borrowed from sign language) that people can use to communicate without having to interrupt others. These could be signs to signal agreement and disagreement, signs to request someone to speak slower, or to repeat a sentence etc.
- When someone—including you—mentions or introduces a difficult term, you can note it on a flipchart. This way, new concepts and terminologies remain visible, and people don't feel pressured to remember everything immediately. Agree on a sign—this can be verbal or non-verbal—that people can use to indi-

cate that they don't understand a word. This could simply be calling out "huh?" Once the word is explained, you can add it to the list.

- If you notice that many people aren't participating, it may be worth addressing this and checking in on the mood and energy level in the room. To do so, you can ask people to raise their thumb somewhere on the range between thumbs-up and thumbs-down to indicate their remaining "battery" levels. Depending on the result, ask the participants if they would like a break, an energizing warm-up or a change in the group constellation to smaller groups.
- If individual participants seem shut down or lost to you, you can also approach them during a break and talk to them about it. Be careful not to expose them or put pressure on them though! Just share your impression and ask if they need anything.
- Avoid statements such as "I'm sure you're all familiar with...", "As you all know..." or "This surely isn't new to anyone." These kinds of statements make it very difficult for people to admit that, in fact, they don't know something.
- In general, don't assume.

This list could be continued endlessly. Feel free to add to it and to check it regularly. Remind yourself of things you may have forgotten and try new things too.

Facilitating Online Seminars

Keeping the Group Together

Online, there is a greater potential for misunderstandings, which makes interactions less intuitive. To start with, body language is barely visible. In addition, many power imbalances may not be recognizable at first. Plenary sessions often have to be moderated more strictly and they are oftentimes more tiring. Therefore, it's generally advisable to move many conversations and discussions to smaller groups. Also be prepared for the fact that you will receive less feedback from the group than in face-to-face seminars: You have to actively ask for it online. Questions about awareness, safer spaces, inclusive methods, and facilitation need to be asked again.

Power Imbalances in Online Seminars

Even in online seminars, we encounter power imbalances between individuals. These can take different forms in some cases, but overall they are quite similar to those in face-to-face seminars. This has an impact on facilitation and communication in the digital space.

1 Increased Challenges in Digital Space

- Visual impairments may have a greater impact since online communication is more visual. There are ways to deal with this, such as ensuring the compatibility of screen readers or by verbalizing content more frequently.
- It's more difficult as a trainer to respond informally to people who have learning difficulties, are **neurodivergent** or need other help.
- If the spoken language is not someone's first language, it can be more difficult to understand others without seeing them in person. This may be because the video windows are too small to see the lip movements, for example, or because the sound, facial expressions, and gestures are not properly synchronized. Some programs have a good subtitle function that can be used in parallel. Some video conferencing solutions also offer the option of running a translated audio track simultaneously.
- Those who struggle to write quickly may be at a disadvantage when making quick decisions via the pad. Moderators should therefore check that everyone is always able to follow along.
- Those who don't have a quiet, work-friendly, and supportive environment (at home) are at a disadvantage. This includes those who are in distracting surround-

ings, those who don't have a well-lit workplace, those who can't step outside for fresh air, those who aren't cooked for, or those who don't have enough space to move around briefly between sessions. This may also have an additional influence on how participants perceive each other: Depending on what can be seen in the video or what is happening around the person, power imbalances can arise and become more pronounced.

- Those who have limited technological skills at their disposal are also at a disadvantage. Here, key factors include whether one has a functioning device, headphones, a functioning camera, and the ability to master digital tools quickly. Solutions are often only found effectively in the long term and sometimes they remain utopian, because it's a matter of distributing resources. Short-term solutions like the option of borrowing hardware are quite rare.
- Digital spaces are also difficult for those who have a poor/unstable internet connection or who depend on others for access to the internet. In rural areas, for example, the internet is often less reliable than in urban areas. Consider whether there are alternative forms of participation for people with slow internet connections. Unfortunately, the answers here are also either unsatisfactory or they take time to implement.
- It could be that power imbalances between dominant and less dominant people become more pronounced online. For example, someone might be even quieter if they're already used to holding back and are especially attentive to whether others want to say something. When one's microphone is muted, speaking takes more deliberate effort. Meanwhile, people who are already more dominant might take a digital audience as an invitation to talk non-stop. It's also easier to interrupt others online.
- Trainers have more power online than in person: They can open breakout rooms, decide when they start and end, share their screen, control whether others can do the same, admit participants into the seminar in the first place and also remove them if

necessary. It's important to be aware of this and try to give participants as much space as possible, see tips below.

2 Increased Opportunities in Digital Space

- Mobility and hearing impairments can, in some cases, be better accommodated in digital spaces. This is because participants' own homes are accessible and interpretation services are easier to provide.
- It's easier and less visible for another person to accompany people with learning difficulties. It's easier to plan an individual program.
- Bodies play a smaller role: Only participant's heads are visible, and everyone's the same size.
- It's easier to decide not to participate in a warm-up game, as people are less noticeable overall. This also makes it easier to step away briefly if necessary.
- Playing with fidget toys, doodling, drawing or doing other things on the side goes largely unnoticed.
- It's also easier to put your feet up, drink coffee, make yourself a hot water bottle, take medication, eat sweets, etc.
- It's easier to avoid certain content online if it's potentially triggering. For example, the sound can be muted by participants, and the chat can be used to track when the topic is over.
- Some participants feel less inhibited about speaking up online, which can be a huge benefit for everyone! This is particularly true for people who struggle with speaking in front of (large) groups.

The fact that children/partners/animals/personal decorations sometimes appear in the background during a conference allows facilitators to appear more "personal." However, this also means that a trainer's work extends deeply into their privacy. Therefore, think carefully about how much individual/private information you want to reveal through your video backgrounds!

Considering Different Forms of Online Participation and Facilitation

Especially at the beginning, but also over the course of the seminar, it can be difficult to engage all participants. To help you achieve this, here are a few tips on how you can make your program as participatory as possible:

- Address communication rules and everyone's roles right at the start of the seminar. In person you can wait an hour before you do this, but online it's best to provide at least some basic information right at the start of the seminar. Otherwise, everyone may remain silent and not know whether and how they can speak up.
- Do rounds where everyone gets the chance to say something. This can be done by letting people pass the turn to each other (this creates a stronger connection within the group). One opportunity for this is of course the round of introductions, but also "How am I doing?" rounds, "What will stay on my mind?" rounds are an option.
- Encourage participants to write their pronoun(s) next to their name(s) as soon as they arrive.
- Combine methods of getting to know each other with an introduction to the topic.
- Introduce the awareness team: Their visibility can be achieved online through a list of telephone numbers in the pad or on a whiteboard—preferably in a place that's easily accessible for everyone.
- Use different facilitation tools to make it easier for everyone to participate: Vary the forms of exchange, e.g., between small groups, individual work, plenary sessions or groups of two. This is even more important online than in person. In general, breakout sessions should be used, e.g., by starting each evaluation with a breakout session in which people can briefly exchange ideas in pairs or in a small group.
- When using breakout rooms, agree on a time when the participants should return to the main room. This way, they can come back independently—and aren't called back by the trainer and potentially interrupted by a "digital cut" mid-sentence.
- Think of ways to boost the participants' concentration: Warm-ups and energizers are even more important online than in person, as concentration drops more quickly, and there is less of an intuitive "group feeling."
- Every morning, have a "What's up?" round in which everyone can say something about how they're doing and what stood out to them from the day before. At the end of the day, let participants leave notes anonymously on a pad regarding what was good that day and what they hope for the next day. You can then pick up on the respective points the next day if possible. Online settings offer certain advantages here, as anonymous enquiries are always a little more complicated in person.
- Leave the virtual room open beyond the official seminar times to create some informal space.



Illustration: Tristan Marie Trotz

Some Tips for Trainers on Online Communication

It's often more difficult to communicate successfully in online seminars—especially when ensuring that everything comes across as intended, and everyone feels comfortable. The following tips can help you to create a pleasant atmosphere as well as to better understand the participants and guide them through the seminar:

- **Smile!** So that the seminar doesn't seem technical and dry.
- **Transparency:** Participants need to be taken by the hand more than in normal seminars in order to stay focused. It helps to explain everything you do step by step, e.g. "I'm about to share the screen. Now I'm copying the link to the pad. Now I'm opening up the breakout groups, this may take a moment. You'll receive an invitation, the group work will take five minutes, then you'll be brought back automatically. There is a timer telling you how much time you have left." Just imagine that you're explaining how to get from A to B.
- **Silence ≠ agreement:** Whenever the participants need time to reflect or think about something, this may mean silence. However, interpreting silence digitally is more difficult for both the other participants and the facilitator than in an in person seminar. It's advisable to address this so that all participants are sensitized to it.
- **Address people directly:** Addressing people directly helps those who are less confident to speak up online, and it often feels more personal to ask for someone's opinion directly. However, pay attention to the needs of the participants and respect the silence from time to time.

- **Don't assume prior knowledge:** Even more so than in person, participants are left alone with their questions and uncertainties because there are fewer informal opportunities to ask questions. Words that are difficult can be written down quickly and explained in the chat.
- **Take everyone along:** If you notice that many people aren't participating, it may be worth addressing the problem. You can then explain how important it is for you that everyone is really involved and actively engages and that you need an idea of how everyone is feeling. This can be followed by a check-in round or a mood chart.
- **Use breaks:** You can also approach people during the break and ask them if they're keeping up or how they're feeling in the group.
- **Self-reflect:** How do I deal with sensitive issues? What can I pick up online, what would I rather not?

Netiquette: Conversation Rules

The netiquette—or rules of discussion—should be agreed on right at the beginning and made clear to everyone. It's advisable to adhere to and enforce these even more strictly than in an in-person seminar. The following discussion and communication rules have proven to work well in practice:

1 Monitor Hand-Raising

Some video conferencing programs have a built-in option for hand-raising. Other good options include participants writing an asterisk (*) or another symbol in the chat, giving a physical hand signal or switching on their microphone when they want to say something: "I will turn my mic on when I want to say something and turn it off when I'm done." It takes discipline, but it works.

2 Avoid Background Noises

Alle achten darauf, dass ihre Mikrofone aus sind, wenn sie nicht sprechen. Wenn (gezielte) Erinnerungen daran nicht wirksam sind, können einzelne Mikrofone von Teamer*innen ausgeschaltet werden.

3 One Raised Hand, One Question

Everyone should make sure that their microphones are off when they aren't speaking. If (specific) reminders aren't effective, individual microphones can be muted by team members.

4 Speakers' List in the Chat

During a lively discussion, one way to keep track of hand-raisers is for people to write an asterisk (*) in the chat if they want to speak. This automatically creates a list of speakers. If someone wants to give a direct answer to what was just said, they can write two asterisks (**) in the chat and thus gain "priority." Finally, a third

character (***) can be used to indicate that a person hasn't spoken yet. This enables the prioritization of someone raising their hand for the first time.

5 Chatiquette

The rules of chat conversation are called "chatiquette." They include refraining from spam as well as from the excessive use of capital letters and emojis. This is usually clear to seminar groups, but all the more important for public online events. The chat can quickly become very confusing or overwhelming, especially if you alternate between writing to the whole group and with individuals. Therefore, it's better to use the chat sparingly and selectively rather than for documenting content or discussions.

6 Reactions

Online, it's often difficult to recognize or see the reactions of others in the group. It improves the working atmosphere greatly, if participants are encouraged from the outset to make their emotions visible through "reactions." Options include built-in software functions such as "applause," "heart" or "thumbs up." Short appreciative comments in the chat can also help. Finally, it's also possible to show appreciation for a contribution in an "analogue" way with a physical thumbs-up, "silent applause" or other signs borrowed from sign language.

Possible Online Disruptions

The disruptions and distractions that participants experience in a virtual environment are less noticeable than when everyone is in the same room. This has advantages, of course, as disruptions don't necessarily have to affect the entire group. Nevertheless, they can take up space invisibly and cause a general sense of unease, the source of which may not be immediately clear.

Online disruptions may manifest in a different way than in person and sometimes occur in different unexpected situations—but that doesn't necessarily make them any less disruptive. We have tried to compile a list of the specific disturbances that can occur in online situations. It isn't exhaustive but might serve as a framework for orientation.

Potentially:

- Lack of clarity in the facilitation.
- Lack of clarity about etiquette, like whether I can make myself a quick coffee, whether it's noticeable if I am away for a short time, or whether I need to inform the group when I go to pee.
- Questions like "Why did this person suddenly turn off their camera? Do we need to worry or did they just take a short break?"
- Discriminatory words or behavior: These are particularly difficult to pick up in online contexts, as there is no informal exchange in breaks. People are left more alone with their doubts, shame, anger, and questions.

- Technology: One person's poor internet connection might ruin their entire seminar experience, which can then spill over to the whole group. Some technical disruptions immediately take up a lot of space, especially if they are caused by the video conferencing system. It's not possible to ignore them.

How to Deal with Them

It's more difficult for you as a facilitator to notice when participants mentally "drop out" because they aren't acknowledging a disruption. Ideally, the person noticing a disruption should be allowed to express it immediately, even if it interrupts the process or the discussion. You can then decide as a group how and when you want to address the disruption.

Online, it can be easier to draw attention to an issue without interrupting another person. You can simply use the chat to write something like "I would feel more comfortable if we all spoke more slowly," "I wish we would avoid the word X" or "I feel uncomfortable with the discussion right now." The chat should not be used to have a parallel discussion! Sometimes, such a comment is enough to briefly remind everyone of a rule without completely interrupting the process. But if there is a need to discuss it, create a dedicated space to do so. Sometimes, a note in the chat can also be perceived as unsettling, especially when it's unclear what emotions are present—so be sensitive to whether something might need further discussion.

If discrimination and harm occur during a seminar session, it's more difficult to ensure the protection of the harmed person online. You can carefully ask them via chat if they want to talk. If a person needs to talk to someone from the team immediately, we have had

good experiences with opening a separate room (and not a breakout session) via any (other) video conferencing provider. This gives the person absolute certainty that no one will join them. Therefore, the facilitators' phone numbers should be easily accessible at all times (e.g., on the pad, whiteboard etc.) so that they can be reached quickly in such cases. Private chats with facilitators in video conferencing systems are an alternative, but these can get lost among other things happening in the chat activity.

Online, there is usually a greater reluctance to talk to team members about the workshop, the dynamics in the group, and other issues (compared to in-person seminars). It takes more energy to call a person than to check-in during a break. Especially because online, the need to recharge during breaks is much greater anyway. It's therefore all the more important to emphasize who can be contacted at what times—even when the official seminar time is over.

Content Warnings

Feel free to issue content warnings for sensitive topics and encourage participants to use them.

If a content warning is issued, each person has the opportunity to step away if they don't want to hear or see something (e.g., by muting the sound/turning down the brightness on their screen). This is usually easier and less noticeable online than offline.

When it's over, the facilitator can give a verbal or visual (preferably pre-arranged) signal. If both hearing and sight are involved, it makes sense to specify a time frame, otherwise, it will be difficult to check-in when the topic/video is over.



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Self-Reflection

We think it important to continually question ourselves and our own position: What qualifies me to speak about a certain topic? Who is speaking, who isn't? Where does my knowledge come from? From what perspective am I viewing the topic? How can I incorporate the perspectives or positions of others? Am I taking up space that would be better filled by another person? Should I pass the microphone?

No tolerance for racism!

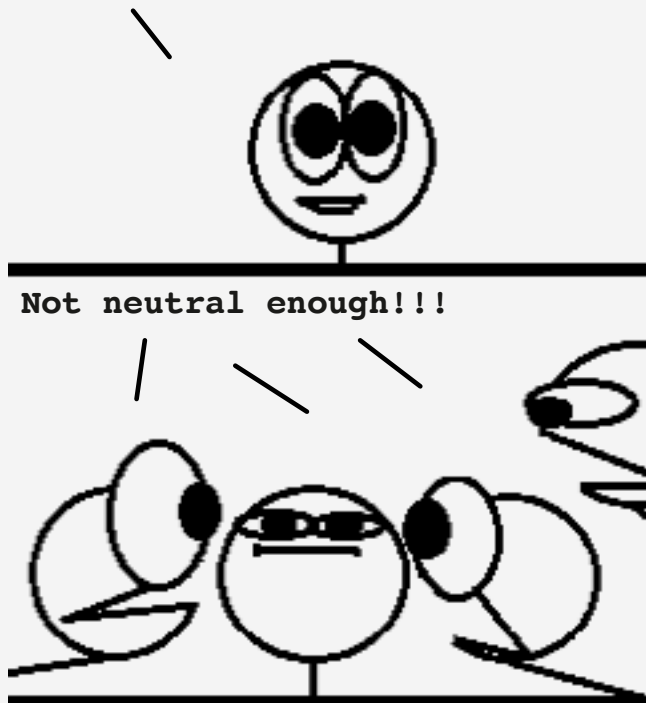


Illustration: Nadja Hermann / Erzählmirmix

What (Not) To Transmit to Participants

1 Content-Wise

The role as a facilitator gives you a certain “power” which should always be handled critically, carefully, and responsibly. The German law includes the so-called “Beutelsbacher Konsens,” a legal framework for those conducting political education. Its guiding principles are: 1. Participants should not be “overpowered” into adopting a certain opinion that inhibits them from forming their own opinion. 2. If a controversial topic in science or politics is brought up, then all the different perspectives and opinions on the topic should be presented, even if they contradict each other. 3. Participants should be supported in forming their own opinions.

Of course, the “Beutelsbacher Konsens” has its limits. In reality, not all requirements are always achievable and depending on the context, some can even be problematic. One example: There is an ongoing controversial political debate about whether **racism** exists in Germany. Nevertheless, in a workshop on racism, we wouldn't say “Maybe racism exists, maybe it doesn't, we let's agree to disagree.” Similarly, we wouldn't say “Sure, maybe racism against **white** people exists, if that's your experience.” Also, the first principle—refraining from “overwhelming” participants—should not mean we have to be politically “neutral.” In 2019, the Weimar Declaration for Democratic Education was signed by various cultural and educational actors who critically deconstructed this supposed neutrality requirement in an exemplary manner.

Nevertheless, these guiding principles raise important questions: When does education end, and where does manipulation begin? When am I overstepping participants' boundaries? Could a method or technique have unintended negative effects?

2 Interpersonally

The interpersonal level between facilitators and participants must be carefully considered. Ideally, we want seminars to be spaces where we can meet at eye-level and learn together without hierarchies. In practice, this often fosters trusting relationships between facilitators and participants, some of which last for years and even decades. This approach has resulted in collaborative projects, (activist) networking, support from facilitators for participants outside of the seminar setting and friendships.

However, seminars are always shaped by power imbalances and hierarchies, no matter what. The most obvious one is between facilitators and participants. As the leading figures of a seminar, the former are in a position that entails not only responsibility for the content, but also for interpersonal dynamics. The responsibility to strike the right balance between proximity and professional distance primarily lies with those higher up in the hierarchy.

There's another factor: Many facilitators have charismatic and motivational qualities, allowing them to radiate trustworthiness presence and empathy. These skills help them to facilitate seminars effectively, create open learning spaces for participants and get them excited about certain topics. However, this behavior can also be used to manipulate people in a variety of ways. For example, facilitators could win over a group in ways that might be considered flirtatious in other contexts. This can create a weird seminar atmosphere. Therefore, make sure to review such skills through an ethical framework. This should include reflecting on power and on the goals of one's actions.

Bear in mind that manipulation is not always deliberate and often occurs unconsciously. This means there needs to be room for feedback from colleagues and group reflections. You could start by asking yourself the following questions: How do I excite a group about a topic? Are there moments that seem strange to me?

When might I manipulate participants through my behavior? How does this make me feel? How do I handle the admiration that participants have for me? What might bother me about other facilitators in this context and why? Can I also observe this behavior in myself?

Analyze Roles in the Team

As a team, you serve as a role model. Therefore, it's important to ensure a balanced distribution of roles and—if possible, power—among the team members. The following might help:

- Discuss possible clichés and risks of how roles might be automatically filled. Ask yourself: Who holds which knowledge, who writes the rules, who writes the protocol, who leads which unit on which topic, who makes coffee, who takes care of logistical matters, who counts as the “expert,” who gives the scientific input, who takes care of people’s individual well-being?
- Check this in your preparation, during the seminar and in your evaluation.
- If, despite your best efforts, you find yourself in an imbalance or reinforcing stereotypes for any reason, address it with participants. This ensures they know you’re aware of it.
- Generally, you can make the distribution of roles transparent to participants: Does a trainee deliberately stay in the background because they choose to? Does a facilitator let others from the team do the talking because they already took up more space during the conception phase? If so, communicate that this decision was mutually agreed upon.

Keep Reflecting on Methods and Educational Materials

The methods of Global Learning are often criticized—for quite a few justified reasons:

- Lack of critique of historically ingrained (colonial) power relations.
- Othering: Marginalized people are constructed as “others” who must be helped.
- Inequalities aren’t radically questioned, but rather reinforced.
- “Symptoms” are considered more than causes.
- The term “culture” is often essentialized and sometimes even used as a substitute for the term “race.”
- Racism, sexism, and class are often given too little attention and other issues such as antisemitism or disability are almost never addressed.
- European standards are often treated as an unquestioned norm.

A lot of progress has happened in recent years, but there is still a long way to go to achieve educational work that is truly sensitive to discrimination. The following questions could guide us on this path: What’s the connection between us and our topics? From which perspectives do we view them? What are the causes of the injustices we’re describing? Are power relations highlighted or trivialized? What is portrayed as the norm? Who is portrayed and how? Who isn’t? Whom might I exclude with a certain method?

The goal of our work should never only be for participants to gain knowledge and understanding of a certain issue. What should matter most is how they engage.

Have you held a workshop many times? Have you been working on a topic for many years? That’s all the more reason to question the content again. Perhaps there are new perspectives now that you might not yet be aware of. Fact-checking your input and staying up to date with figures and statistics is good, but also make sure to analyze how different forms of power relations impact an issue. For example, you might need to address colonialism and sexism in your workshop on the climate crisis, if you haven’t done so before.

The **intersectionality** of topics makes it necessary to always consider the intertwining and co-stabilization of power systems in Global Learning. Another example: There’s no way to meaningfully analyze the global consequences of a global pandemic without taking into account race, gender, class, disability etc.

Many good guides and checklists have been produced on this topic. Therefore, we’ve only highlighted a few points in this section.

Background

- Racism
- Sexism
- Classism
- Ableism
- Testimonials on the Topic of
“Power Dynamics in Discussions”
- Final Notes

Racism is an invented social construct that has an impact on all of us and the world around us to this day. Racism kills.

Leaving The Happyland — An Introduction for **White** People

In her book “Exit Racism,” Tupoka Ogette describes a place called “Happyland.” In Happyland, everyone’s doing great and discrimination doesn’t exist. Accusing someone of being racist or discriminatory is the worst insult in the world. The people living in Happyland don’t see the need to deal with discrimination such as racism because they’re in a **privileged** position. For them, it’s easy to say, “Why are you calling me white? I’m an individual, and it’s offensive when you reduce me to my skin color.” Or “Why should it matter that I’m a cisgender man? It hurts me that I’m not perceived as an individual.” And, of course, it would be a dream if we didn’t have to talk about privilege, discrimination, and all that. We’d all just see each other as humans. And it wouldn’t matter how we are situated.



But it does matter how we are situated as long as we don’t all truly have the same access to power. Only those who consciously or unconsciously benefit from discrimination can be indifferent to racism. **Racialized** people, on the other hand, are constantly not perceived as individuals. They are grouped into seemingly homogenous clusters based on various historically established power relations—or sometimes even into one single group. The fact that each individual has a unique life experience and story is undermined by this. Due to racialization, **BIPoC** are often forced to deal with social power relations from an early age.



Tupoka Ogette goes a step further and describes how “Happyland” actively harms those who lack certain privileges. These people are expected to simply accept racism and not fight back or even address the fact that these social injustices exist. When white people leave “Happyland,” they learn that openly addressing social injustices and pointing out discriminatory behavior is an important step in combating these systems of power.

Illustration: Ellen Gabriel

Origins of Racism

Racism emerged historically: Its roots go back to the 15th and 16th centuries, serving as a justification for European colonialism. It was a fact that Europeans robbed, enslaved, and murdered people. To ease their conscience, they required a justification.

The process was intensified during the Enlightenment. After the French Revolution, all people were supposed to be equal. To ensure that this principle only applied to white cis men, sexism and racism became established in modern science. Philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel also wove their theories together with these ideologies.

The construction of racism can be described as follows:

- 1 People are divided into different groups. This is done on the basis of supposedly unchangeable and hereditary characteristics. Often, it's wrongly assumed that the constructed physical markers are identical to "skin color," when in fact we're referring to the sum of various attributed characteristics. To name examples, these include hair structure, language or accent, certain facial features etc.
- 2 These groups are thought to be uniform in themselves and therefore clearly distinct from one another.
- 3 The groups are placed in a hierarchy: Historically, the group of white people was placed at the top and the group of Black people at the bottom.

Debates Around Racism

There are (and have been) long and controversial discussions about the definition of racism. Here, we have opted for definitions that comprise the role of history. To talk about racism without addressing colonialism, and colonial continuities could quickly lead to people thinking: "Anyone can be racially discriminated against." However, this would completely ignore the systemic and institutional dimensions of societal power relations that have developed over centuries.

One ongoing discussion centers on the distinction between different forms of racism. This is relevant for precisely addressing specific discourses that are currently rampant in the media (e.g., anti-Muslim racism) and also to make certain forms of racism visible, especially those that are often overlooked because they affect certain racialized group (e.g., anti-Asian racism). Apart from this, there are debates taking place about how to label certain forms of racism (e.g., as what kind of racism Antiziganism could be called).

There are also discussions about which terms can or should be used for those who experience racism. In this guide, we mainly use the very broad term BIPOC. Sometimes we also speak of "racialized people" to emphasize racism's constructed character. And sometimes we simply speak of "people experiencing racism" to highlight the perspective that racism is an undeserved experience that white people don't have. These are all collective/umbrella terms. To describe specific situations, we choose to use more specific terms, such as when describing the racist hierarchy.

Antisemitism is often associated with racism. There is debate as to whether it's a subcategory of racism or a category in its own right. Sometimes antisemitism is presented as a part of racism, and there are definitely similarities to racism. This perspective is usually explained by the fact that Jews were constructed as a "race" by the Nazis. However, there are differences in the historical development of these power systems as well as in their present-day effects and in the construction of the discriminated groups. In antisemitism, for example, the "other" is portrayed as superior, whereas in racism it is portrayed as inferior. These differences also have different consequences in terms of the impact that they have on these power structures.

The Impact of Racism

Racism still has an impact on many levels today: It is situational, internalized, individual, ideological, and institutional. As a result, racism manifests itself in many ways.

Racism is an instrument for the unequal distribution of social and material power. On a large scale, this is apparent when it comes to colonialism and enslavement and on a small scale, it is evident when it comes to the question of who gets an apartment or the better grade at school even in the case of identical performance.

Racism extends into the first years of our lives, e.g., through what we see in children's books. Mostly, there is no representation of BIPOC at all. Sometimes, there are BIPOC characters, but they appear only as "helpful" side characters or are portrayed as pitiable. Certain books have good intentions, for example, by telling stories where the outsiders end up belonging to a group because they saved the main character (who belongs to the majority). This is highly problematic, as it implies that those who experience racism must earn their right to belong or be accepted or even just tolerated by white people.

Racism is so powerful that it even affects the representation of resistance against it. In these narratives, the role of **BIPOC** individuals is often made invisible. For example, the fight against enslavement is often portrayed as a generous gesture by white people, while the crucial role of enslaved and resistant folks isn't shown.

Racism is an integral part of the society we live in and therefore also part of our socialization. This means that we cannot grow up without racist patterns of thought, as they are deeply rooted within us. This means that racism isn't necessarily intentional. What matters is confronting racist thought patterns critically and responsibly. Unlearning these is a lifelong process.

This can have a particularly twisted effect on BIPOC individuals: Experiences of racism can go hand in hand with internalized oppression and self-doubt. In extreme cases, this leads to self-hatred and to BIPOC individuals internalizing racist ideologies, leading them to sometimes reproduce racist ideas in pursuit of being "unlike" and "better than" others in a certain ascribed group and in the search for recognition from **white** people.

Fighting Racism

Since its beginnings, the fight against racism has primarily been carried out by people who experience racism. In the (later) portrayal of this resistance, however, white fellow campaigners are often given a more prominent role. Also, certain forms of resistance are highlighted and played off against others.

A famous example is the perception of the two **Black** activists Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The way the two of them are depicted reinforces the idea that there are "good" Black anti-racism fighters and

"bad" ones. Martin Luther King Jr. received a great deal of recognition from the state, even from Donald Trump, who signed the "Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park Act" on January 8, 2018. This act upgraded the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site to a National Historical Park. Malcolm X, on the other hand, never received any form of state honor. Martin Luther King Jr., is always portrayed as the Nonviolent, peaceful Black activist and Malcolm X as the "radical" and "violent" one, even though they became very close at the end of their lives.

As long as racism has existed, there has been resistance against it. This takes place at all levels, making the struggle correspondingly diverse. It ranges from anti-colonial resistance (such as the resistance struggles led by Queen Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba against the Portuguese) and anti-slavery/anti-colonial liberation movements (for example in 1804, the anti-colonial revolution in Haiti which ended with the declaration of independence from the French) to social movements (e.g. Black Lives Matter), self-organized actions (e.g. holding night shifts in front of refugee shelters to shield against Nazi attacks and deportations), and BIPOC empowerment workshops.

It was Black people who primarily supported the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. It was through this social movement that the concept of empowerment was named and actively developed. Theoretically, as well as practically, empowerment aims to build resilience and community power against the destructive experiences of racism. Lawrence Oduro-Sarpong calls it "the healing power from within."

Empowerment refers to the process by which BIPOC mobilize their own resources in order to overcome the powerlessness and oppression caused by racism. This can include remembering and learning from historical and current resistances, sharing pains and strategies, and reminding each other that racism is a collective experience.



“For the White Person Who Wants to Know How to Be My Friend „The first thing you do is to forget that I’m Black. Second, you must never forget that I’m Black. [...]”

— Pat Parker

Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Responsibilities Of White People

Debates about **racism** usually only revolve around the (supposed) experiences and (supposed) needs of **BIPoC**. The beneficiaries of this system often remain invisible, because they aren’t named. This way, white positions are further normalized and standardized. One step towards breaking this racist pattern is to explicitly name a white perspective as such.

Another step is for white people to actively confront their whiteness—and the facts, **privileges**, and behavioral patterns that go hand in hand with it. One possible setting for this is awareness workshops specifically for white people. In her book “Plantation Memories,” Grada Kilomba speaks about white “ego-defense mechanisms” that occur naturally and systematically in dealing with one’s own whiteness. She breaks them down into five phases: 1. Denial. 2. Guilt/bargaining. 3. Shame. 4. Acknowledgement/acceptance. 5. Reparation. The idea is not to get stuck in a certain phase but to continuously move on towards responsibility and accountability.

These workshops are often grouped under the label of “critical whiteness.” Dr. Natasha Kelly explains that critical whiteness is often misunderstood because it neither describes the social position of “critical white people” nor does it mean that white people themselves have produced critical knowledge. It is a **Black** theoretical approach to racism that is as old as slavery and colonization: being critical of whiteness is a survival strategy in dominantly white societies, based on accumulated Black knowledge.

There is a lot of criticism about the way white people engage with “critical whiteness,” as there is a tendency for them to end up dealing only with themselves: Whiteness then takes center stage again. Furthermore, there is often a lack of practical solidarity with BIPoC, because self-reflection on one’s own position is not necessarily coupled with the fight against racist structures. It’s also criticized that white people use “critical whiteness” to present themselves as particularly self-critical and reflective. This can then create new power structures where less educated white people are cancelled and excluded. Only because they don’t know the right words, for example.

More on this in “Allyship: How Can We Show Solidarity and Form a Coalition Against Discrimination?”

“White is not a color. White is a political definition which represents the historical, political and social privileges of a certain group that has access to the dominant structures and institutions of society.

Whiteness represents the history and reality of a certain group. When we talk about what it means to be white, we’re talking about politics and certainly not about biology. Just like the term Black is a political identity that refers not to biology, but to historical, political and social realities.”

— Grada Kilomba

Illustration: Johanna Eisl



I never said that women are stupid. All I said was that I find it striking how all the important decisions in the history of humankind were made by men.

You're just saying that because you're angry that you can't keep up with us at poker.

What? You never let me play.

I never said you're bad at poker. All I said is that you never won against one of us.

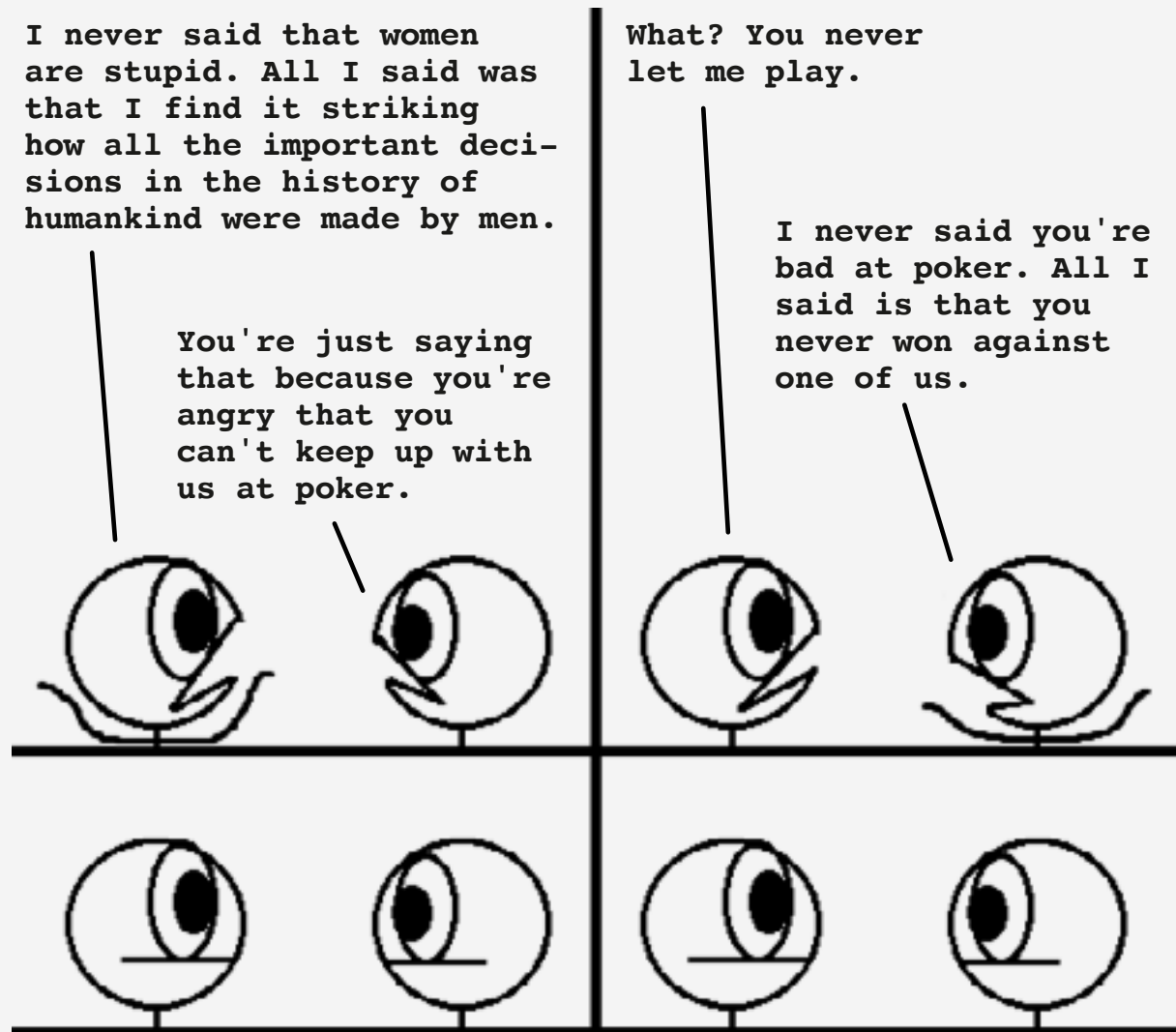


Illustration: Nadja Hermann/Erzaehlmirnix

Sexism: The Construction of Gender—Gender Diversity Prior To Colonization

A bit of theory helps us understand why certain terms are used or questioned.

Many people believe that gender is a biological fact. To show that this isn't the case and to recognize the extent to which our ideas of gender are shaped by the society we live in. It's worth looking at how gender is and has been viewed in different societies.

Before European colonization, for example, there was vast gender diversity in the world. In at least 30 African societies, there was the so-called female husband. This meant that a woman could take on the role of a man and marry another woman. She could then take on tasks within society that would otherwise be reserved for men.

In most indigenous societies in North America, there were (and still are) so-called TwoSpirits, an umbrella term for different non-cisgender genders. In India, there are still hijras, a separate culturally and religiously defined gender. In some colonized societies, but also in Europe, scientists once assumed there was only one gender.

Origins of the Gender Binary

The emergence of two binary—supposedly biologically distinct—genders started early on.

The transition to agriculture weakened the position of women because they had to marry into other people's families and bear many more children, while men inherited property and defended it by force if necessary. Even in the earliest agricultural states, such as Mesopotamia, patriarchy prevailed. Gender determined the division of space: Women took on the activities in the home. This included both production work, as almost everything was produced in the home at this time and **care work**. Meanwhile, men took on the activities that were performed in public.

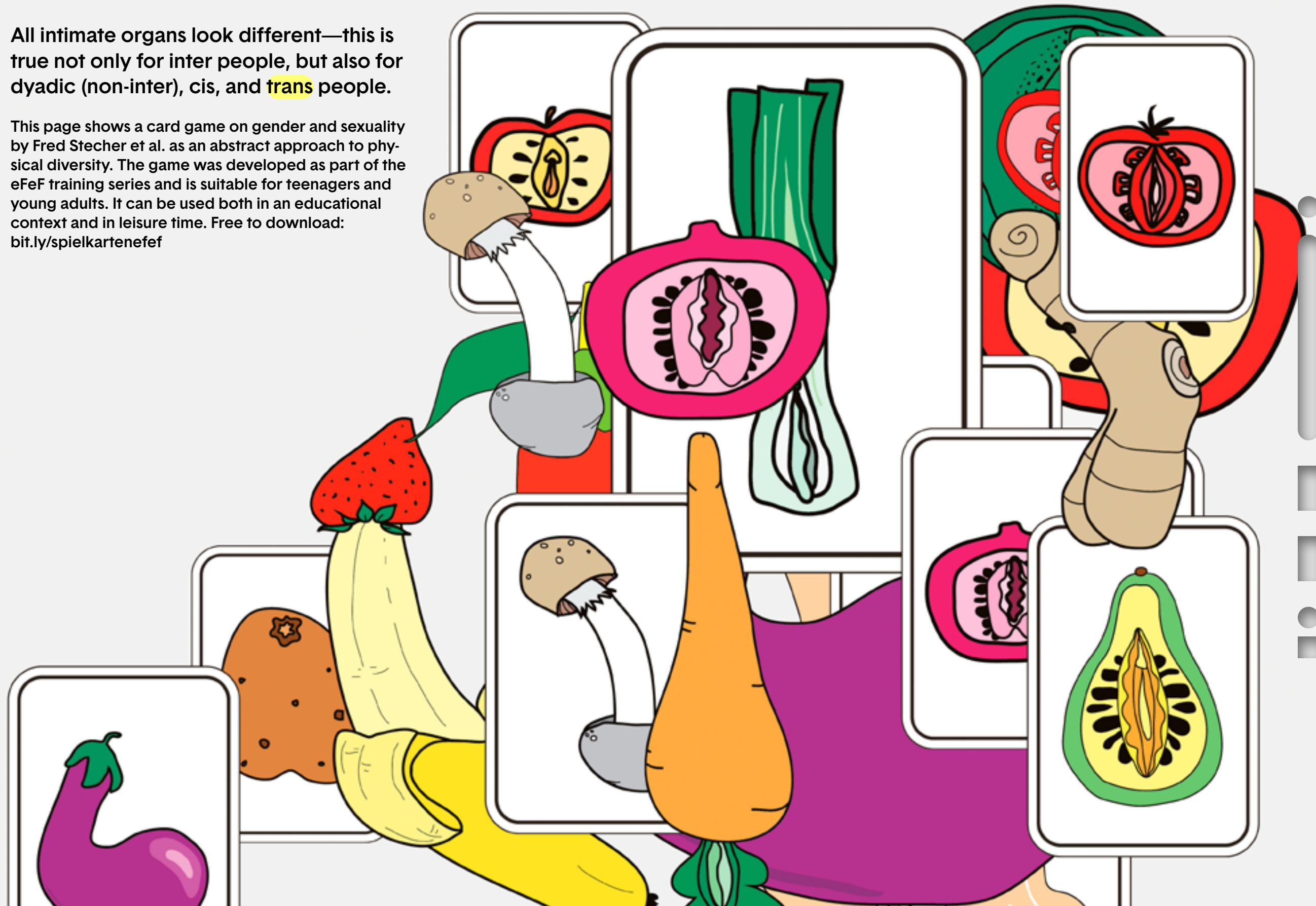
With the introduction of factories, the start of industrialization, and ultimately the beginning of the capitalist system, production work was shifted outside the home, and women's work was restricted to care work. In feminist contexts, this is often referred to as "reproductive work." The division between paid wage labor and unpaid care work reinforced the hierarchy and dependency that had already existed to some extent.

This division of labor was in turn justified biologically e.g., by linking femininity with weakness, a lack of intelligence, a natural talent for household chores, and raising children. This new role was made palatable to women, among other things, by constructing the role of the "housewife" as part of a modern and civilized society, in contrast to the societies that Europe was colonizing.

This form of dividing labor was supported by the "modernization" of Western science in the 18th century. Suddenly, scientists assumed that everything had to be divided into two. This affected not only gender, but also the division into "**rac**es" and the division of bodies into healthy and sick. It's important to note that in this construction, one part was always defined as the center or the norm (e.g., **white**, male, healthy, heterosexual) and the other part as a deviation (e.g. **Black**, female, sick, homosexual), thus cementing power relations. This construction has been and still is an ongoing process.

All intimate organs look different—this is true not only for inter people, but also for dyadic (non-inter), cis, and **trans** people.

This page shows a card game on gender and sexuality by Fred Stecher et al. as an abstract approach to physical diversity. The game was developed as part of the eFeF training series and is suitable for teenagers and young adults. It can be used both in an educational context and in leisure time. Free to download: bit.ly/spielkartenefef



Assigned Genders

So, if gender is not a biological category but a social one shaped by power relations, then who determines a person's gender?

Surely, you're familiar with the question that most people ask first when someone is pregnant: "Is it a girl or a boy?" Oftentimes, this is already determined in the womb, but at the latest it is decided at birth. In that decisive moment when the doctor examines the baby's external genitalia and makes a decision that will have a major impact on the rest of the baby's life: They look between the baby's legs and decide whether what they see looks more like a vulva or a penis.

This decision is actually not as clear-cut as many people think. The external genital organs of all humans develop from the same original organ in the fetus. How these organs are classified is a matter of interpretation. When uncertain, doctors often determine whether it's a clitoris or the glans of a penis by measurement (and this is simply a definition that some doctors established at some point).

Around 1% of babies have genitalia that doctors find particularly difficult to classify. These people may describe themselves as **intersex** or inter. In most cases, they are subjected to medical treatments, such as surgeries, that aim to force them into a "sexual" norm when they are still babies. It's important to mention that not every intersex biography looks like this. "Inter" is an umbrella term that can refer to a variety of physical characteristics. Genitalia are only one of these characteristics—there are also chromosomes, hormones, gonads, and/or secondary characteristics that deviate from what is deemed normal.

Hey Lisa, thanks for your help. I've gotta say, your programming skills are really good for a woman!

Thanks for the compliment. I've gotta say that was very social for a man.

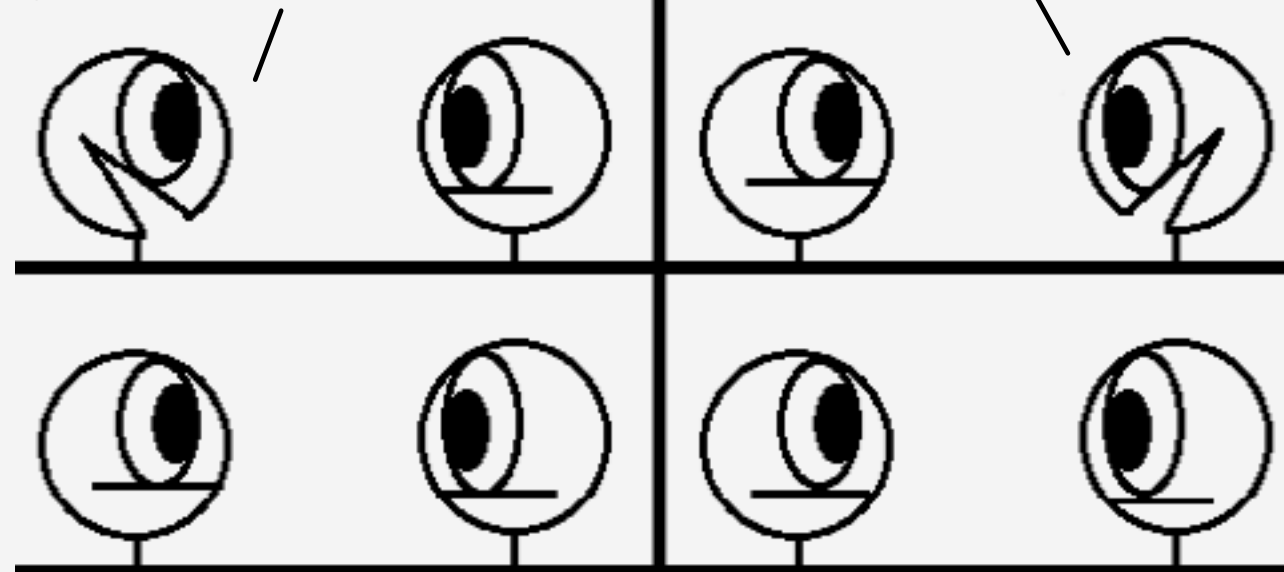


Illustration: Nadja Hermann/Erzaehlminix

Gendered Socialization

Depending on whether the baby is assigned a female or male gender, different life courses begin pretty much right after birth. Gender determines a lot: the child's name, the color of their clothes, the type of toys, etc. This process is often partly conscious and partly unconscious.

Did you know that a baby's cry is interpreted differently when people are told that it's a boy or a girl? That parents talk to their girls more than to their boys? That mothers tend to overestimate boys and underestimate girls when it comes to motor skills? This pattern continues throughout childhood and adolescence.

These attributions and the resulting experiences have a major impact on reality, because they feed stereotypes, which are in turn used to feed power imbalances. For example, the gender pay gap can easily be explained by referencing "a woman's natural talent for **care work** and housework" and the orgasm gap by referencing the idea that "a woman is automatically happy when her partner is."

As is often the case, stereotypes and clichés are constructed to justify and reinforce discrimination and oppression. Generally, children are put under pressure to fulfill certain societal expectations and roles. For girls, this can mean they have to be well-behaved, deprioritize their needs, hold back, care for others, and not take up too much space, to name a few examples. This may prevent them from developing self-esteem and make it harder for them to stand up for themselves and clearly defend their personal boundaries. Also, it's taken for granted that they do the care work. For boys, socialization can mean they aren't allowed to cry and must always be able to act strong. This often prevents

them from dealing constructively with their feelings and their own bodies. At the same time, they're given far fewer boundaries and their overconfidence is reinforced. When they happen to share some care work, they receive extra praise and admiration.

However, it's worth emphasizing that socialization isn't a one-size-fits-all process. It's largely imposed on us from the outside and depends on many different factors. Gender is just one of them. Others include health, **race**, religion, or class, for example. Additionally, **trans** people often experience their socialization differently from **cis** people. The argument that trans women are supposedly socialized as male is a typical argument used by TERFS (trans exclusive radical feminists) to exclude trans women from women's and **FLINTA** spaces. They forget that many trans people already consciously or unconsciously feel that the assigned gender role doesn't suit them in their childhood. And socialization doesn't completely determine who we are.

Language also impacts reality. The construction of the gender binary is constantly reinforced through the way people are addressed, described, and called. This has social consequences because it narrows down the vocabulary and space to think and dream about who we could be. If we don't change the way we interact with each other and the way we model gender, how will children be given the opportunity to develop beyond these categories, labels, and expectations?

!!! Content note following page:
Misgendering! !!!

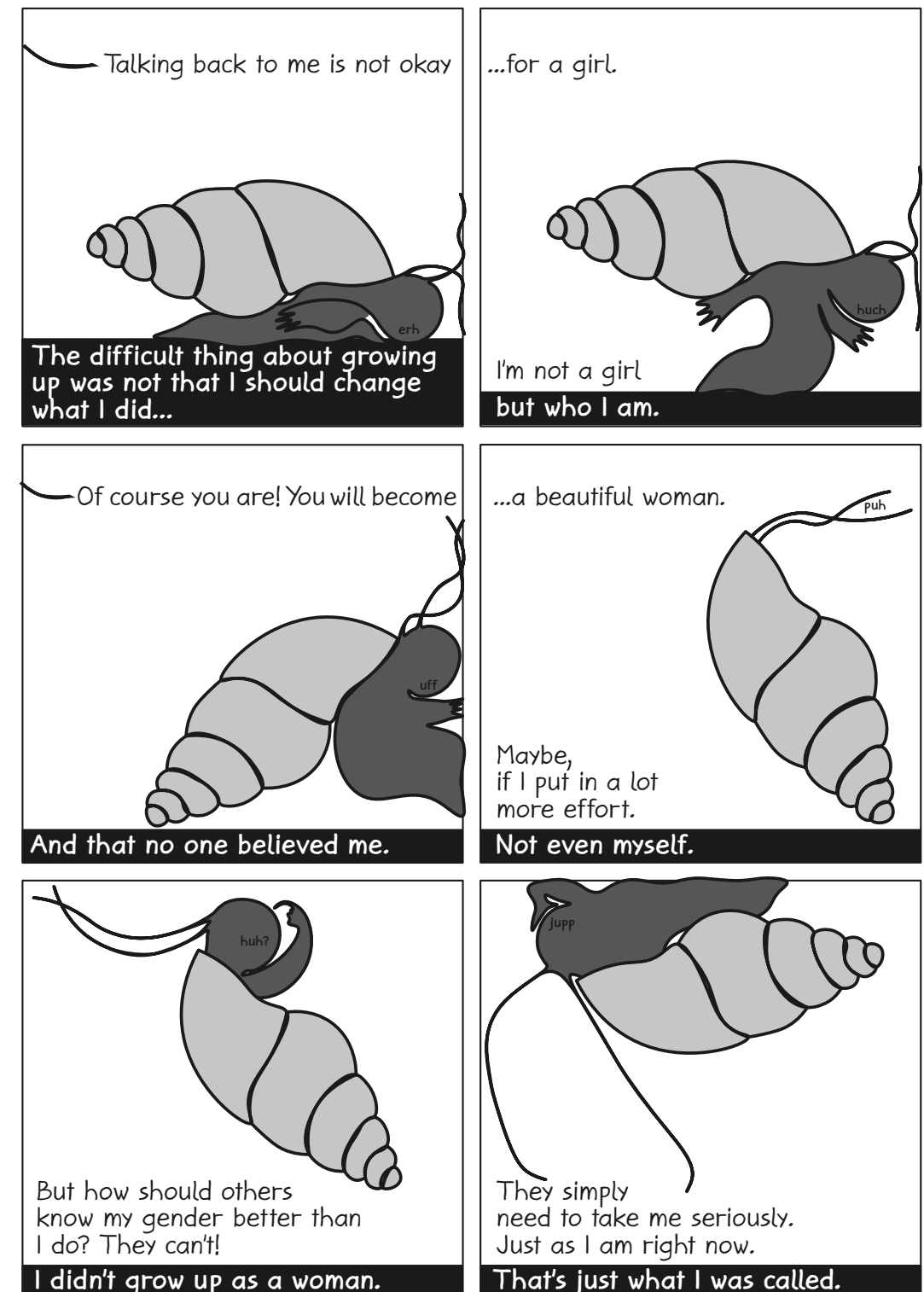
Deviating From One's Assigned Gender

You may have already asked yourself this in the previous paragraph: What happens when people can't come to terms with the gender (characteristics) attributed to them? Many people don't identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. They often call themselves **trans** or transgender, sometimes also **non-binary**, genderfluid, gender nonconforming, etc.

Unfortunately, gender ascriptions take place every day and in all social contexts, e.g., "Dear Mr. ..." or "Look at that woman over there." We're constantly assigned genders based on our first names, appearances, or other factors. When a wrong gender is assigned to someone all the time, every single day, this can be immensely painful. Additionally, many **cis** people react in irritated, offensive or even aggressive ways when they see others defying their expectations of gender assignment.

Attention! We can never see a person's gender. It is very difficult to stop automatically assigning a gender to someone the moment we perceive them. From an early age, gender is one of the main categories our brain uses to categorize people. Practice really helps with unlearning this! One way to do this is to get into the habit of simply asking people how they would like to be addressed and which **pronouns** they prefer (he/she/they, etc.). To normalize the transparency of pronouns, cis allies can also get into the habit of always introducing themselves with their pronouns.

Illustration: Tristan Marie Trotz



Fighting Patriarchy

The fight against hierarchical gender relations—patriarchy—has always been multifaceted. It has primarily been supported by **FLINTA**, and in Western Europe, it can roughly be divided into three so-called “waves of feminism.”

The first wave was primarily concerned with increasing equality between men and women. The second wave—also called the New Women’s Movement—saw itself as a women’s liberation movement and fought for the absolute self-determination of women. The third wave of feminism focused—or is focusing—on the deconstruction of gender as a category of oppression. All of these movements build on each other and continue to have an impact in the fight against patriarchy today. Each of these movements was/is diverse, and many different feminist currents have emerged over time, such as **Black feminism**, **Muslim feminism**, **queer feminism**, and **materialist feminism**.

There are other struggles against gendered power relations, such as various gay and lesbian movements, the struggles of **intersex** and **trans** people and those of asexual or aromantic people.

All these movements can overlap, cooperate, and stand in solidarity with one another. At the same time, however, some groups or movements that call themselves feminist also stand in opposition to each other, causing discrimination, exclusion, and an explicit distancing from one another. This keeps the debate alive and with it the further development of feminisms.

Empowerment

Discrimination and violence against FLINTA can take different forms. This includes the internalization of **sexism**, heteronormativity, and cisnormativity by FLINTA themselves. Internalized discrimination influences how people see themselves and how they see others (marginalized as well as **privileged** others). Working on these internalizations is an important part of empowerment.

Often, unlearning what we were taught is fundamental for “waking up to one’s rights” and building motivation to fight injustice together. Safer spaces can help facilitate empowerment processes by enabling exchange and networking.

Empowerment is linked to two realizations: “I am not alone” and “It’s not my fault.”

FLINTA empowerment topics include:

- Acknowledging **care work**.
- Recognizing the phenomenon of perpetrator-victim reversal
- Reappropriating one’s own body.
- Speaking about shame.
- Deconstructing competitive thinking.
- Practicing a self-confident appearance.
- Valuing vulnerability and softness (Radical Softness).
- Standing in intersectional solidarity with all other FLINTA.

Responsibility for **Endosex** Cisgender Persons

An endo cisgender identity is privileged. It often remains linguistically and socially invisible as a self-evident norm, while people who identify as **intersex**, trans, non-binary, etc., are perceived as exceptions, deviants, and “others.” To break with this, a first important step can be to use the words “endosex” and “cis” consistently.

Another step for endosex **cis** women and endosex cis men is to actively engage with the structural, social, and individual mechanisms that privilege them. For them, these mechanisms are often invisible. Thus, responsibility also means thinking about how these mechanisms can be circumvented.

One way to do this can be to not guess gender identities, to take people seriously, acknowledge self-descriptions, and to use correct **pronouns**.

!!! Content note following page:
trans exclusive feminism, sexwork exclusive feminism, **white** supremacy! !!!

Anti-trans ideologies have recently become more and more prevalent. Be it in mainstream discourses and media, in legislative decisions, in the political statements of prominent people like J.K. Rowling, as well as in many left-wing and feminist spaces. So-called TERFs (trans exclusive radical feminists) often dominate feminist discourses. And oftentimes, trans and queer people are the only ones left to deal with these exclusions and to address them again and again. A first step you can take as an endosex cis person is to familiarize yourself with the typical recurring buzzwords and arguments used by TERFs in order to quickly recognize such positions. It shouldn't be the job of trans people to draw attention to these exclusions and ensure that (feminist) spaces are safe for all FLINTA.

When endo **cis** people plan a **FLINTA** space, it's their responsibility to ensure that all FLINTA people can feel welcome, including **intersex** cis men, or **trans** people who might not have an appearance typically expected of FLINTA. If this safety cannot be guaranteed, then perhaps the space needs to be renamed or reframed. More on this in "Allyship: How Can We Show Solidarity and Form a Coalition Against Discrimination?"

Responsibility for Men

Men are **privileged** by gender. These privileges are distributed unequally among men along the lines of an internal hierarchy. On one hand, men who conform to current social norms of masculinity (or work toward it) are favored, while men who are perceived as too feminine are devalued.

On the other hand, men who experience a form of discrimination such as **racism**, **classism**, **ableism**, etc. are generally not given an opportunity to be at the top.

Oftentimes, it's an automated and unconscious act to play along with the logic and rules of these hierarchies.

In order to take responsibility, one should review how these hierarchies affect their actions and whether they align with their actual needs. Sometimes, ideals of masculinity must be unlearned for one's self-expression to become more authentic.

Currently, social norms surrounding masculinity consist of ideas about what it means to be a "real" man. These ideas have become increasingly diverse in recent decades and are often unattainable and contradict each other. For example, men are expected to be strong, show no emotions except for anger, and be loving fathers all at once. Chasing these impossibilities is unsatisfying and harmful to one's health. Defining your own version of masculinity and setting achievable goals is a healthier way to navigate this pressure.

Allowing oneself to make mistakes, being aware of one's feelings and boundaries, listening to them, doing **emotional labor** and **care work** are important strengths that receive far too little space or appreciation in our societal ideas of masculinity. Giving these virtues more space and practicing them as part of one's individual masculinity is a big step towards handling manhood responsibly.

All men have male privileges, regardless of whether they are trans, inter or cis. This is simply because masculinity ranks higher than femininity in the patriarchy. Trans and intersex men may rank lower in the internal male hierarchy than many cis men and therefore experience discrimination, but they rarely experience transmisogyny. Transmisogyny is something experienced by trans and inter women, and some **non-binary** people, making trans femmes particularly vulnerable, even more so when they are **BIPoC** and/or survivors of multiple oppressions.

Read more in "Allyship: How Can We Show Solidarity and Form a Coalition Against Discrimination?"

(Anti-)Feminism

We already mentioned a few of the many different feminist movements that exist, but there are also anti-feminist movements that actively try to uphold, recreate, and strengthen patriarchal structures.

In many cases, antifeminism is easy to recognize, for example, they can appear in the form of right-wing parties or self-proclaimed "men's rights activists." However, it can sometimes appear in the guise of left-wing feminism and in such cases, it may take some practice to recognize.

Some typical warning signs include the discrediting of trans people, especially trans women, the demand to criminalize sex work, and the domination of FLINTA of Color (e.g., in debates around the veil).

There are many names for these ideologies and the people who represent them: TERFs (trans exclusive radical feminists), SWERFs (sex worker exclusive radical feminists), WC feminism (**white**-Christian feminism), anti-feminism, etc.

What's (structurally) striking is that self-proclaimed "left-wing feminists" sometimes collaborate with right-wing organizations, parties, and people when it comes to excluding trans people from spaces and dismissing their genders, to criminalizing sex work, and to denying FLINTA of Color their right to self-determine their clothing. There's a lot of white supremacist thinking and white saviorism behind this. To take sex work as an example: When criminalized, the first to suffer disadvantages are in fact, FLINTA of Color, even though they are the ones supposedly "in need of saving."

The problem with these types of “feminism” is that they usually reproduce biologicistic and sexist narratives. Womanhood is reduced to physical characteristics like the possession of a uterus or the ability to bear children. There is a narrow script of what it takes (and means) to be a woman, essentializing and homogenizing the experiences of all women worldwide as “universal sisters with universal problems.”

Needless to say, this is a very **white** way of thinking. While white feminists sometimes claim to represent all women, there seems to be a clear-cut distinction between the women who appear as defenseless **victims** (the “other” ones) and those who are able to speak and decide for themselves (the empowered white feminists). Usually, it’s white and mostly middle-class **endo cis** women who want to retain sovereignty over who is allowed to be in feminist spaces and how. Usually, there’s little understanding of **intersectionality**, and the long-term goal is not to liberate everyone, but to maintain one’s own **privilege** within white supremacy.

The acceptance of these positions in white, left-wing spaces shows how strongly white supremacist thinking runs through our entire white-Christian society. The strategies of antifeminists include the reversal of victims and perpetrators (e.g., by saying “the queer feminists are excluding us everywhere, they are so intolerant”), the insistence on one’s “freedom of opinion,” and the total ignorance toward discrimination and social power relations. Evidently, not everything is an opinion, especially when so-called opinions deny other people their existence, deny them access to spaces, discriminate against them and—on a larger scale—contribute to a culture in which people are locked up, deported, and murdered.

What Is **Classism**?

Society is divided into different classes based on social, economic, and cultural capital. This means that class is based on the income or wealth people have, as well as their (formal) level of education, neighborhood, name, language(s), taste preferences, and social networks.

Classes can be named and divided in different ways. What’s clear is that they are opposed to each other. One way of contrasting them is by labeling privileged classes as “bourgeois,” “property-owning” or “ruling” classes and oppressed classes as “poor” or “working” classes.

Classism is the discrimination based on a person’s association to one of the two lower classes, or the attribution of such belonging. This affects low-income, unemployed or homeless people as well as their children or people to whom one of these characteristics is ascribed.

The terms classism and anti-classism emerged during the second wave of feminism and were first used in an anthology by the white, feminist, and lesbian group “The Furies.” It was created to give a name to the power of the category of class within the women’s movement. Class relations can be described in different ways. Currently, it’s argued that a sharp analysis and precise description of the corresponding power systems is more important than agreeing on uniform labels and formulations.

Effect

Classism was deadly even before there was a name for it: Under National Socialism in Germany, people experiencing classism were persecuted, discriminated against, imprisoned, murdered after being branded as “asozial” (“anti-social” in English).

One example of this is the wave of arrests in 1938, where over 10,000 people were deported and interned in concentration camps. It wasn’t until February 2020 that the victims stigmatized as “asozial” under Hitler were officially recognized as victims by the German parliament. Here, the continuity of classism becomes frighteningly clear.

Because every power relation has something to do with unequal access to resources, classism is closely intertwined with all other forms of discrimination. This is why **trans** people, people experiencing **racism**, single mothers, and **disabled** folks often experience classism. Those who experience multiple forms of oppression are especially at a higher risk of also experiencing classism. At the same time, not having access to resources (due to classism) can also result in other marginalizations. For example, around half of all disabilities are caused by poverty and could be prevented.

Classism not only exists at a national level but also at a global level and is therefore also intrinsically linked to colonialism and racism.

The COVID-19 pandemic is one example of how **classism** impacts people worldwide. In all countries, people from poor or working classes have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. This is not only true for COVID, but for diseases in general.

Classism serves the exclusion of people from society, the unequal distribution of resources such as money, education, housing, health care, etc., as well as active exploitation. All of this is legitimized and covered up through all sorts of capitalist narratives, e.g., the idea that “success” is a direct mirror of performance. It suggests that all **privileged** people have worked hard for their privileges and therefore earned them. The circumstances into which a person is born are often overlooked, among other factors of coincidence.

The need to cover up injustice has been around for a long time: Until the late 20th century, scientific research findings were manipulated and falsified to support the claim that class differences have a biological basis and serve as the foundation of a natural social order.

Like all other forms of oppression, classism also manifests itself on an internalized level. It’s widely associated with shame, making it difficult for people to realize or acknowledge the fact that they might be experiencing classism. This is often accompanied by a sense of being “out of place” in spaces of class privilege, e.g., in academia. This can lead to self-imposed avoidance of spaces that are perceived to belong to those who benefit from classism.

On a social level, classism manifests in ways that include humiliation and hate speech. Striking examples are to be found in the media, e.g., in “reality TV” programs (usually found on private channels) and also in certain forms of print media (e.g., popular newspapers). It is common in the entertainment industry to perpetuate and support classist prejudices and stereotypes.

There are many different ways in which classism is reinforced. Competitive thinking, for example, is normalized, accepted, and sometimes even encouraged. It aligns with the notion that sharing and caring about others are forms of weakness. This makes it especially challenging to counteract classism.

However, classism is not only an ideological issue. It has life-threatening material consequences, backed by the state and other institutional structures. It permeates laws, contracts, and regulations as well as politics, government offices, and urban planning. Forms of classism can be found everywhere, including social movements.

Resistance

People have probably been fighting against classism ever since its existence: In recent years, self-organized protests have often opposed classism in a public way.

Examples of this in Germany include resistance against the Hartz IV reforms (reforms to cut social aid) and the bicycle courier strikes. During the second wave of feminism, lesbians and workers’ daughters organized to oppose classist conditions both within the movement and in mainstream society. The workers’ movements of the 19th and 20th centuries date back further, as do the so-called peasants’ wars of the 16th century.

The fight against classism takes many different forms. Naming classism as a problem is often a first step. This makes it easier to recognize and address and, therefore easier to tackle. It also involves practicing more mutual aid, solidarity, and community care to oppose and withstand the ideology of performance.

In addition to naming it, Lena Hennes describes a few points for specific interventions against classism:

- 1 Create opportunities for intersectional anti-classism.
- 2 Support projects and spaces that already deal with this.
- 3 Politicize feelings within these spaces. They give us clues about discrimination.
- 4 Critically question norms, evaluations, and hierarchies of knowledge.

- 5 Recognize experiences as equal and perceive intersectional forms of discrimination.
- 6 Recognize and name obstacles that stand in the way of dealing with classism and work on them in solidarity.

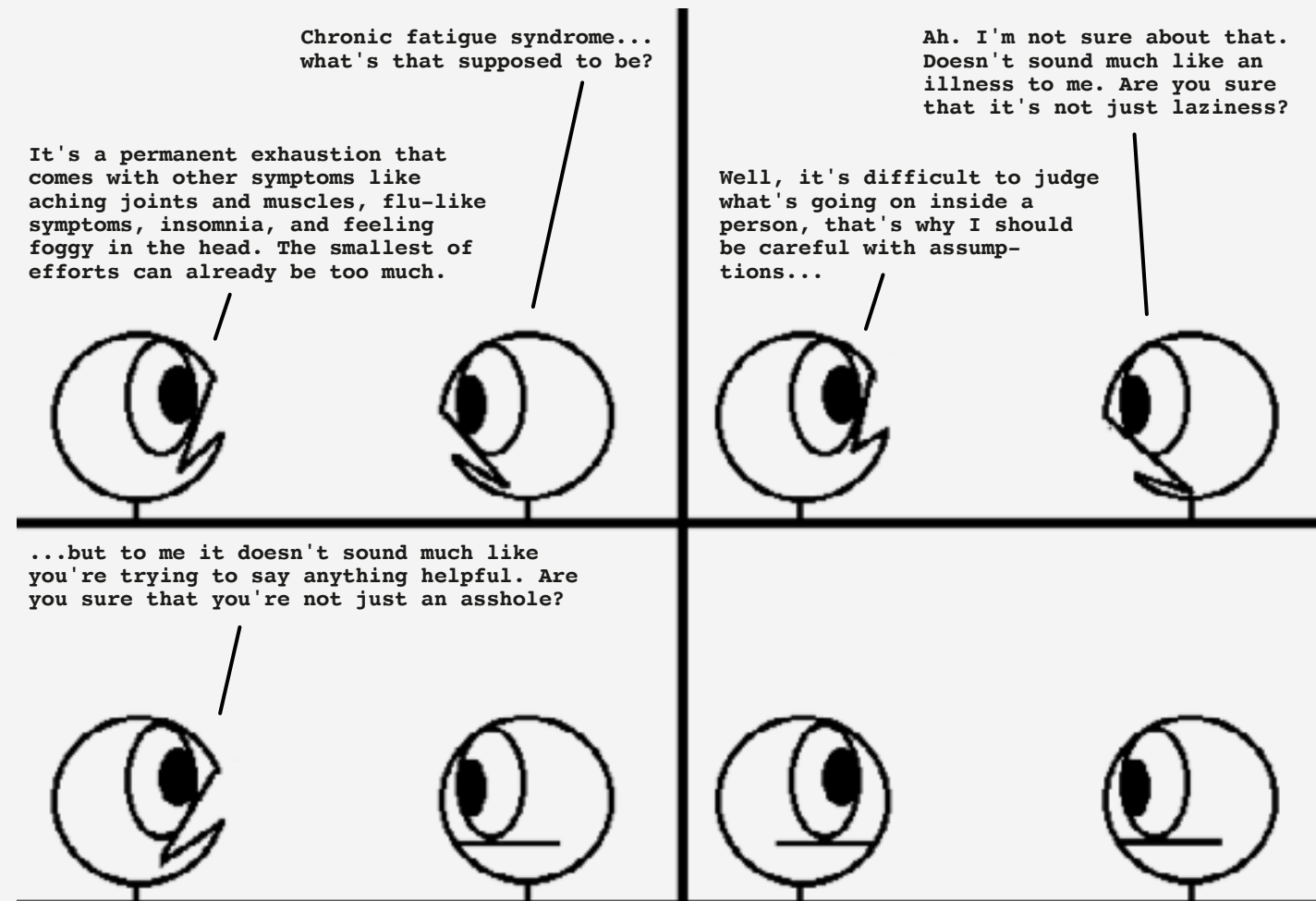
Resistance to classism also involves actively redistributing money. This can be in our own social environment, but it can also mean supporting anti-classist projects and spaces. Ultimately, consistent anti-classist work requires dismantling unequal economic, social, and cultural conditions.

Apart from concrete redistribution, a responsible approach to classism for those with privilege consists of listening to experiences, acknowledging them and, committing to self-education.

A History of Ableism

In the European Middle Ages, a disability was usually seen as a “punishment from God.”

This perspective changed with the Enlightenment. Scientists sought to analyze and categorize everything in nature through logic and reason. It’s no coincidence that racial theories and scientific justifications for gender relations also emerged around this time. Every aspect of human identity was categorized into binaries such strong vs. weak, sane vs. insane, intelligent vs. stupid. These juxtapositions were applied to **race**, gender, class, and disability alike. The constructions of race, gender, and class are therefore intrinsically linked to the construction of disability, interlocking, and stabilizing different forms of discrimination.



Towards the end of the 19th century, social Darwinism emerged. Darwinism an ideology that applies principles of evolutionary theory, like “natural selection” to human societies. This gave rise to the pseudo-science of eugenics, and, in the German context, to what was called “racial hygiene.” Medical practitioners aimed to achieve a disease-free society by preventing “sick” people from reproducing so that they wouldn’t pass on “diseases.” The definition of “sick” was strongly tied to a person perceived contribution to contribution to society. This included physically **disabled** people, people with learning difficulties or mental illnesses, queer people, sex workers, poor, and homeless people, Jews, Roma and Sinti, criminals, and many more. This once again illustrates how strongly the constructions of categories such as disability, gender, class, and race are interconnected.

During National Socialism, around 400,000 of the people just mentioned above were forcibly sterilized. This resulted in numerous deaths. In addition, around 70,000 people were systematically murdered and approximately 200,000 were murdered without systematic planning.

After 1945, there was no significant break in Germany. The role that doctors and psychiatrists played in the murder was largely ignored. For a long time, the German government didn’t acknowledge that the sterilization and murder of disabled people constituted crimes. To this day, sterilization isn’t officially recognized as a form of National Socialist persecution.

It wasn’t until 1994 that discrimination based on disability was criminalized by the German Basic Law “Grundgesetz”. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) was adopted in 2008.

What is Ableism?

There are various approaches to understanding or defining disability, for example, the medical model and the social model of disability.

In the medical model, disability is perceived as an individual limitation, whereas in the social model it’s understood as a consequence of social exclusions and barriers. The truth may lie somewhere in between, but here we’ll focus more on the social component, as this is more important in the context of power and discrimination.

Disability is a construct, simply—and above all—due to the fact that all diagnoses classifying people as formally “ill” or “disabled” are made by humans. People can be disabled due to one or more of the following aspects:

- physical aspect (e.g., wheelchair users).
- intelligence/learning ability (e.g., people with learning difficulties).
- sensory impairments(e.g., people who are blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing).
- mental health (e.g. people with mental illnesses, like depression, anxiety, trauma, “personality disorders,” “eating disorders,” etc.)
- **neurodiversity** (e.g., people with autism and/or ADHD).
- chronic illnesses or pain.

The list makes it somewhat clear how strongly disability is linked to medical diagnoses. This is a problem because medical diagnoses are always imposed on us externally. They are decisions made by others. Also, the medical system never manages to depict health as a multidimensional spectrum—instead, there is always a

line that separates “healthy” from “sick,” “normal” from “abnormal.” There are many names and terms that disabled folks may choose to use for themselves, but in the end, on a material level, people often depend on diagnoses because they are the prerequisite for gaining access to needed resources.

Because disability is very fluid, it differs from other categories on the basis of which a person can be discriminated against. Since disabilities can come and go, many people are only disabled for certain periods of their lives. At the same time, almost all people experience disability at some point in their lives.

Effect

Ableism operates on many levels and far exceeds outward hostility toward people with disabilities. It is about the distribution of access and resources, internalized beliefs, the right to self-determination, exploitation, exclusion, and much more.

Part of ableism is the segregated employment of disabled people, e.g., in so-called “sheltered workshops,” where people work for an hourly wage of around 1 euro. Some see this as a form of modern slavery. Disabled people are constantly denied their right to self-determination. This happens both on an individual level, e.g., when **non-disabled** people push wheelchair users around in public spaces without asking, as well as on an institutional level, for instance, in care homes or psychiatric wards.

In the media, disability is usually presented as something to “overcome.” In movies and TV series, for example, disabled people often end up overcoming their disability by becoming “healthy” or leading a happy life “despite” their disability. The aim of these stories is to inspire non-disabled people. This is why they are often

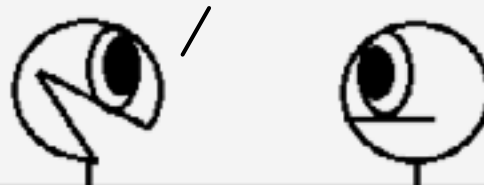
WHAT I SAY:

I have an illness that's not visible
at first sight.



WHAT PEOPLE UNDERSTAND:

If you tell me that you would
never have noticed and ask if I'm
sure that I'm not just imagining
it, I might realize that I'm
actually healthy after all!



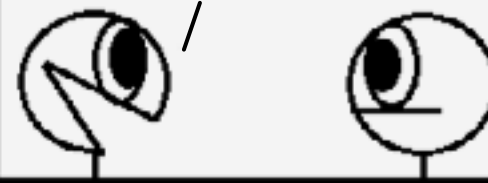
If you ever had one of the
symptoms just the tiniest little
bit, please tell me that you
didn't make a big fuss about it.



Please google the diagnosis and
tell me what the results on the
first page of Google say. I'm
sure the information will be new
for me!



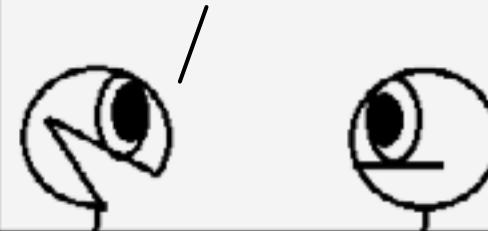
Please use the opportunity to
educate me about chemtrails, the
pharma lobby, dangerous vaccines
or the perfect nutrition that can
heal everything!



If you dislike anything I do or I
am, now is the chance to tell me
that THAT is surely the reason
for my illness.



If you tell me that it's an
invented sickness, I can finally
stop having it.



referred to as inspirational exploitation. Apart from this, non-disabled people are often placed in the spotlight of stories, e.g., emphasizing how they support the disabled person or allowing viewers to identify with someone “normal.”

Many disabled people face complete exclusion from society. This is due to barriers that non-disabled people do not recognize. For example, many disabled children attend special schools and have little interaction with non-disabled children. As a result, many non-disabled people hardly know any disabled people.

Struggle and Empowerment

From around 1980, the “cripple movement” emerged in Germany, following the example of similar movements in the USA and Great Britain. The film “Crip Camp” highlights the organization of disabled activists in the U.S. context.

Disabled people developed the so-called “people-first” language (the phrase “people with disabilities”) to highlight the fact that they are human. This is because disabled people are often not perceived as fully human—and historically, they certainly weren’t perceived as such for a long time.

Meanwhile, the “identity-first” language (the phrase “disabled person”) is intended to show that disability isn’t a bad thing, but is part of a person’s identity. Using “disabled” as an adjective for oneself can express the personal process of embracing this aspect of one’s identity and not seeing it as something negative. This can be empowering for some, while others may prefer the “people first” language. We can never know what labels a person feels comfortable with, so it’s advisable to ask or inform ourselves. There are often different preferences in different communities (e.g., autistic peo-

ple mostly use the “identity-first” language to draw attention to the fact that autism is not an illness).

Today, If anti-ableism activism takes place on social media. Visibility, educational work and networking are possible online with relatively few barriers.

Most disabled people have internalized ableism. When they are unable to certain things (on their own), they may feel shame, uselessness, or as though they are a burden to others. However, it can often be empowering for disabled people to recognize the social factors that shape their experiences and understand that society plays a crucial role in disabling them.

Responsibilities of Non-Disabled People

Non-disabled people don’t notice most barriers, as they themselves aren’t restricted by them. Creating access means more than just installing a wheelchair ramp or rails next to a toilet.

A first step can be to inform yourself and listen to people with disabilities, e.g., on social media. It should be noted that there are many different ways in which people are disabled. No disabled person can speak for everyone.

Disabled people are often dehumanized. They are often either treated with pity or mystical admiration, where everything they do is seen as inspiring. Non-disabled people can reflect on and consciously change their perception of and interaction with disabled people. Never assume what a person may need. Let them make their own decisions.

In our ableist society, there are certain norms about what bodies should look like and what they should be able to do, how people should think and how they should feel. These norms are also linked to other power relations, such as **sexism**, **racism**, and **classism**. These norms should always be recognized and questioned, whether in everyday life, in (political) groups, at school, college, work, etc. There are always barriers that can be broken down further. Some changes require large amounts of money and effort, while others can be dismantled quickly and easily.

Many books, articles, podcasts, videos, discussions, and films have accompanied us in the debates that led to this guide. In the German guide, you will find a list.



Testimonials on the Topic of "Power Dynamics in Discussions"

Here are a few "sound bites" that reflect the experiences of participants at seminars over the past few years. These are their observations and impressions. Please consider them as an invitation to observe or reassess certain aspects: Perhaps you'll recognize situations you've encountered yourself. Perhaps you'll read about feelings that are unfamiliar to you. The quotes have been anonymized, but we included the identity labels related to **race** and gender that the participants indicated in the survey. The letter (f) stands for female, (m) stands for male, other genders are spelled out.

"It was helpful for me that the topic of power and communication was addressed by the team right at the beginning and that this wonderful handbook was developed. It showed me that the team members were aware of their position of power and tried to deal with it openly and made it clear that no one in this seminar can or wants to claim wisdom. The coaching slots, the safer space, and the awareness team made me feel very comfortable (even if I didn't use either of the latter, as I didn't experience any discrimination during the seminar and mostly felt good)."
(genderfluid, **white**)

"From time to time I had the feeling that the participants were subliminally expected to have an academic background, as a lot of knowledge was often assumed. I sometimes had the feeling that I wasn't as smart etc. as the others. I learned for myself that it's still important to ask questions and that others often felt the same way as I did..."
(f, white)

"I would have liked a safe space for **BIPoC** at some point, especially in relation to the topic of Ukraine. I found it difficult to share thoughts and feelings about the disparity in empathy and solidarity for white refugees in contrast to everyone else [other refugees] in the predominantly white group. Or I didn't feel like explaining."
(f, BIPoC)

"I felt much more comfortable and confident in this seminar than in other seminars. It was also because you never felt forced to say anything, and communication was always clear. Also, there were no people who carried more of the conversation or participated much more than the rest. So everyone had roughly the same share of the conversation."
(f, PoC)

"I wanted to give an answer to a question on a topic I know a lot about. After I had said the first sentence, a joke was made about it by a male participant, followed by general laughter. Although his comment was based on false statements, I didn't have a chance to say any-

thing about it afterwards. I then asked the guy about it and got a negative reaction."
(f, white)

"It was nice that one participant in the small group asked whether the others understood everything when people who don't have German as their first language didn't say much. That made me even more aware of the need to speak more clearly and to be considerate of my choice of words."
(f, white)

"I find it overwhelming when I'm expected to constantly reflect on my spoken word. I have blind spots when it comes to my language, and I don't always have the energy to be totally mindful and attentive in this regard. I would like it if people who don't understand something (e.g., technical terms) would ask."
(m, white)

"It was helpful that the team emphasized how they want to create an error-friendly space and also that we can give feedback to other people if they want it. In addition, there was usually also good attention paid to who had how much speaking time. I noticed that people who sometimes spoke very little actually always had something to say when they were addressed directly and asked for their opinion. I think that if someone had asked me that sometimes, it would have helped. Then you can see that others are interested in your opinion or your ideas, and then you don't have this hurdle of starting to talk on your own initiative. I don't think this always works, but perhaps it's useful for group work in smaller groups, where everyone should say something."
(f, PoC)

"I myself am rather shy and reserved when it comes to speaking in front of many people in a large group, and therefore I hardly took part in the discussion in large groups. However, I found it pleasant that I wasn't pressured to do so. I was able to fit in with the group and feel comfortable."
(f, white)

"The wonderful 'mate serving' [the ritualized passing around of Paraguayan mate tea] is also a real means of power. Who is handed the cup = who do I see as part of the group? Or who do I invite? Most of the time, the people serving were unaware of it."

(m, white)

"It was usually observed that male participants, although outnumbered, took up most of the speaking time (and space). However, it was usually difficult to talk to them about this. For example, some felt attacked at a seminar and were offended at being perceived as a 'man' instead of an 'individual.' Although it was often more difficult with male participants, the exchange with other participants in particular did a lot of good in this regard. At one seminar, some of us even did a little woman-spreading activity, where we sat there for a change and took up space."

(f, white)

"It was helpful to know that there are people in the team who know 'my' forms of discrimination themselves. Also the offer of the awareness phone was good, even if I didn't dare to use it."

(non-binary, white)

"I noticed at several seminars that there was often a clear male dominance of speech (although there were usually more female participants). Sometimes I have the feeling that I have to/want to stand up to it, which then often leads to me dominating the conversation myself, which isn't a great feeling either."

(f, white)

"It would be nice for me if, at the beginning of the seminar, we could once again agree on respectful cooperation and get out of the 'we can't do anything wrong because we are the ones trying to improve things' perspective. I think this would make it clear that self-criticism and reflecting on positions of power and one's own prejudices are also important in this context of togetherness."

(f, BIPoC)

"When two participants spoke at the same time, the female participant often took a step back to let the male participant speak first."

(f, white)

"[I would like] open-ended formulations, especially when men speak, so that they shed their explanatory monopoly and recognize that there may not always be only one truth and make room for other views."

(not specified)

"With this one person, the conversation often turned into a monologue. I can imagine she had little contact with 'sensitive language,' Nonviolent communication, and I-centered statements. Nevertheless, I found it difficult to perceive her in a concentrated and equal way in the long term... In retrospect, I had thought about drawing this person's attention to the option of using 'I-statements'—but then I might also have been exercising 'power.' In the group as a whole, I noticed that I and other participants tended to turn away from this person. In the future, I'd like to manage to remain open and patient with her and, if necessary, confront her..."

(not specified)

"I've noticed that I keep interrupting people. I apologize immediately afterwards and ask them to continue what they were saying. That's something I need to work on."

(f, white)

"People often used words like 'human' or 'person' [instead of gendered terms] or tried to use inclusive language, which I noticed positively."

(f, BIPoC)

"The seminar created a very good safe space, and we were often asked how we felt and what we thought. I therefore felt very comfortable and valued in my comments and remarks."

(f, white)

"Binary language, often gendered, but still only the male and female form, always hurt me slightly."

(non-binary, white)

"In the small group, I noticed how I was ignored a few times, which triggers me a lot more these days than it used to."

(f, BIPoC)

"In the small group discussion, one person emphasized that she did not want to present herself as if she had more prior knowledge and that she did not know everything and was in a process. She had already dealt with the topic more than I had. She encouraged me to get more involved. I perceived this as very positive."

(f, white)

"At the seminar, we often do energizers and exercises that require us to move. As a fat and unathletic person with chronic pain, this was often very uncomfortable for me. Starting with the fact that I often couldn't do the exercises very well. But then I always felt particularly uncomfortable afterwards, when I was out of breath and sweaty and didn't dare to join in for the next few minutes. I had the feeling that if the other participants noticed that I was out of breath, they would judge me for being unathletic and fat."

(non-binary, white)

"During the FAQ sessions in which we participants were supposed to hand over to one another, I noticed that white people mostly handed over to one another and that we BPOCs were often the last to speak up. This probably happened subconsciously, but I noticed it negatively in the group. I would like white people in the training series to become aware of the way in which they take up space and thus deny it to others."

(f, PoC)

"I can't explain exactly what it was, possibly the clear communication at the beginning or the personalities involved in the training in general, but there was a very open and pleasant atmosphere in which I wasn't afraid to speak up—which is usually difficult for me, as I often feel like I don't have enough general knowledge to contribute meaningfully and am afraid that my gaps in knowledge will be exposed."

(f, white)

"Online seminar: I had the feeling that online seminars offer opportunities for many people to participate who would otherwise tend to be held back by power dynamics in the room. I was surprised at myself for how much I participated."

(f, white)

"At the end of the seminar, when it came to tidying up and cleaning, I noticed that some of the male participants didn't feel addressed."

(f, white)

"During mealtimes, there was a lot of talk about studying, almost with the assumption that everyone went to college. I found that a bit annoying after a while because I'm not in college and would have liked to talk about other things."

(non-binary, white)

Online seminar: "Online, it's very difficult to assess whether you can/should be the first to speak—I'm often afraid of cutting someone off/ignoring someone. However, by defining the rules of communication and a list of speakers, this worked very well."

(f, white)

Several Perspectives On The Same Seminar

"Throughout the seminar I noticed that there was a male dominance of speech (not only in particular situations, but in general)."

(f, white)

"One participant started keeping a list of how many times people of different genders said something, and it was clearly male dominated in relation to the number of participants. On the one hand, I thought that [such a critical list] was good, but I generally had the impression that the discussions were very sluggish in the first two days and that very few people spoke up. I also had the impression that, as a female, I raised my hand more often than the majority of the men present. So I wasn't quite sure what to make of the situation. Equality is important to me, and I'm also very concerned about power relations—but in this situation I was really over-

whelmed, because I had a lot of speaking time in the seminar myself, as I said, I think more than most of the men, and I also know from some of these people that they are already holding back anyway."

(f, white)

"One participant counted the times different genders spoke on Saturday and Sunday morning to prove the male dominance she perceived. She expressed this. No comments followed. On Sunday afternoon, the facilitators commented on this. They said something that (I felt) was shared by the vast majority of the group—that the contributions were often very slow and that sometimes no one spoke up. I was usually very grateful when people did speak up. We never actually had such a blatant discussion that more than two or three people spoke up (and that was really very rare)."

(m, white)

"I had the feeling that the first two days of the seminar in particular did not really get the participants involved—I think partly because it was an online seminar and also because most of the participants said that they had no experience with the seminar topic. It tended to be certain people who dared to speak and had a higher speaking share. The discussions were quite lengthy at the beginning, and sometimes nobody volunteered to answer questions. On the third day, however, things relaxed, and I had the feeling that the communication worked better—the share of speech was distributed better, and there was generally more talking—I found that very positive."

(f, white)

"I am aware of the dominant behavior in the communication of male-passing people, but this topic dragged me down at the weekend and unfortunately also the last few days, because we were a group in which there were silent male and female as well as communicative male and female people. This division into male and female bothers me immensely because, in my opinion, it creates a toxic divide between men and women, which firstly disregards people who define themselves as diverse (or whatever the person may want to call it)

and secondly creates two pigeonholes that I can't relate to—not necessarily in terms of gender (because I do identify as a cis man), but rather because I find that behavior can be so diverse."

(m, white)

Review after one month:

"Problem 1: Male dominance of speech.

Problem 2: I doubt myself and question my perception by asking myself whether I am just imagining the male dominance of speech. I therefore started a tally sheet in which I counted the shares of speech of the participants. The tally shows a clear male dominance of speech. I shared this anonymously with the group, and the reactions were: 'Yes, I think so too, but there is generally little participation going on' and 'I think it's a shame that there is so little participation happening and your comment is not very appreciative of the speakers.'

Problem 3: My objection wasn't really accepted because the answers missed the point.

Problem 4: I also received a feedback from the facilitator that gave me the impression that he was ignoring the topic I wanted to address. Like some of the participants, he also failed to categorize what was happening in terms of power dynamics. (He said it was everyone's responsibility to deal with disruptions and that he was happy about every contribution because there was so little participation).

Problem 5: The two facilitators acted as moderators throughout the weekend. Their moderation consisted of calling up the messages in the chat in chronological order. (So how could I/we have ensured a more balanced proportion of speech?)

Problem 6: Due to these constant reflections on the patriarchal power structures present and how I deal with them, I was so busy that I could hardly work on the content and found it very difficult to get involved in the actual seminar topic.

Problem 7: In order to find the courage to address this, I looked for confirmation from a friend of mine. And even though this friend is very reflective in terms of his own masculinity and is just as queer feminist as I am, I was still looking for confirmation from a man to criticize patriarchal power structures.

Problem 8: If not everything I want to say is one hundred percent watertight, then I don't dare to express criticism. I have a lack of confidence in how much my opinion is fundamentally worth, so I try never to express a mere 'opinion,' but to present arguments that cannot be accused of subjectivity so easily. That is why I converted the absolute figures into relative figures.

Problem 9: The fear of being met with incomprehension and hurtful insensitivity made me unable to engage in a real conversation to a certain extent, so I then asked the facilitators to give my feedback to the group, but it wasn't acted upon.

Problem 10: Whether or not I consider an action of mine to be right depends largely on whether or not I receive benevolent feedback.

I was glad when the seminar was finally over. The whole weekend was very exhausting and frustrating for me. What's more, I couldn't let go of what had happened afterwards.

Problem 11: Instead of getting angry about the male dominance of speech, which would be completely justified, I reproached myself for the way I dealt with it. I realized this because even afterwards I ruminated about what the other people from the seminar may have thought of me and my criticism."
(f, white)

Two Perspectives On Another Situation

"During a presentation, interim questions were deferred and not answered directly. I found that very appropriate in this situation, especially as the questions could then be answered in detail with time and peace later on."
(f, white)

"It was decided that we wouldn't ask any questions or start discussions during the input phases so that we could get through with the content. Personally, however, I would have liked to have been able to give my ideas space directly. One option would have been to ask the group how we wanted to proceed or to open up 5-minute slots per topic for comments or the like. Afterwards, I didn't feel like communicating anymore because I didn't think it was right and because I wasn't in the mood, but actually I would've liked to get more involved in the discussion. I couldn't formulate it properly at the time—and I only really noticed it later."
(f, white)

Final Notes

As mentioned in the introduction, there's one last chapter in the original German version of the handbook that we decided to keep out of the English translation. That's because it mainly deals with our writing process and the nerdy discussions we had. The nitty gritty of the journey, so to speak.

Another thing that's missing here is our list of recommendations. In the original version, we collected books, films, podcasts, zines etc. für each category of power described in the "Background" chapter (one list for **racism**, one for **sexism**, one for **classism**, and one for **ableism**). To make this collection as accessible as possible for our German readers, we opted for German resources instead of English ones. The downside of that decision is that the resources we collected are practically useless for this translation.

The good news is: The work of doing one's own research never ends anyway! No knowledge is ever complete and no discourse is ever final. Let this handbook be a first inspirational nudge towards taking an interest in all there is to learn.

We hope that you won't feel overpowered by the work that lies ahead. Especially our fear of making mistakes is something that can be quite paralyzing. Oftentimes, perfectionism stands in the way of the change we want to see. In this handbook, we've

tried to show you that what matters most is not avoiding mistakes but dealing with them responsibly when they happen—because they will happen. Especially when it comes to oppression and power dynamics, there are always many options, and there seldomly is one "perfect" answer. Pat Parker sums it up when she tells us: "The first thing you do is forget that I'm **Black**. Second, you must never forget that I'm Black." (For The **White** Person Who Wants to Know How To Be My Friend).

Let us interpret our questions, doubts, and insecurities as signs that we are on the right path. When guided by empathy and a serious interest in transforming societal structures, every step taken is better than one not taken.

And because we, as the authors, haven't finished learning either, we are thankful for your feedback!

**May the Zapatistas inspire
us beyond this guide:**

**“Through questions we
march on.”**



Illustration: Johanna Eisl

Authors

Clémence Bosselut: In 2009 she googled the words “Global Learning” and “critical whiteness” for the first time to prepare for her job as coordinator of the eFeF training program. Now, it’s clear that she can’t take off her critical glasses no matter where she goes—be it while camping, biking, reading good night stories, in seminars, in dealing with her own queerness or in the schools of her three kids.

Fred Stecher: For several years now they have been dealing with the coloniality of gender, bodies, and mental health. At the moment, they are doing paid and unpaid work surrounding climate justice, **ableism**, anti-discrimination, and net-working in queer and leftist spaces. Sources of joy and power are drag, crafting, creative writing, and making plans for the future. Also, they are passionate about cooking and eating.

Jacob Hess: His radicalization began with realizing that his heartache about the world can not only be poured into poems but also into social movements. Much of his work surrounds colonialism, fascism, mental health, transformative justice, and queerness. Apart from political education, poems remain important, as do pancakes, children’s books, cuddles, and moments of beaming at his new flat chest.

Featuring Contributions By

Antonie Armbruster-Petersen: She’s been bustling around as a supervisor, coach, conflict advisor, and educational worker for over 20 years. Power imbalances, **intersectionality**, discrimination, and the exclusion of individuals and groups are topics that have always accompanied her. The baseline of her work remains the critical confrontation with her own upbringings. She loves investigating and getting to the bottom of things.

Florian Münderlein: Having grown up in the Bavarian countryside, he cherishes every moment that is free of rule. Also, he loves to eat cake with others and longs for the good life for everyone.

Julien Franke: He identifies as a **white**, **intersex**, queer man. For a couple of years he’s been promoting **LGBTQIA+** activism, especially for intersex rights. He works freelance as a counsellor and workshop facilitator. As someone who also has experience with **classism**, he also focuses on raising awareness for intersectionality.

Muyisa Nkozi Muhindo: For Nkozi, the path into educational work was paved by experiences of **racism**, grappling with his own identity, and aiming to make the world a slightly more equal place. Now he is a senior project manager in an organization that promotes lived diversity and the participation of structurally marginalized groups. Additionally, he’s active in municipal politics and as a trainer in political education.

Munshya Nalomba: As a **black** African woman Munshya understands how unequal power structures impact how we communicate with each other and has experienced the consequences of intercultural misunderstandings, **sexism**, and racism first-hand. By co-translating this handbook, she aims to add to a renewed understanding of communication in a globalised world. She brings many years of experience as a communication consultant on various projects across sub-Saharan Africa, the United States, and Europe to the table.

Illustrators

These self-descriptions are from the first edition of the handbook (2020).

Caroline Pochon: Ever since childhood, she has a head full of images and loves to put them on paper! Social roles and power relations are constantly on her mind and an integral part of her life, be it in educational work, drawing, activism, housing... Her favorite activities include learning new things, making music, reading comics, and hiking through the mountains while feeling tiny.

Ellen Gabriel: When she was 16, she learned about intersectional feminism and this influence (as well as the desire to keep learning) wouldn’t leave her work ever since. As an illustration student and an artist, she repeatedly deals with depictions of anti-racist narratives and questions of identity. She likes to experiment with different analog and digital media, including print technologies, 2D and 3D animations, and photography.

Johanna Eisl: In both illustrations and activism, she likes to deal with different forms of power and resistance against them. Her main topics include feminism, anticapitalism, and antifascism. She wishes for a free society and spends her time anticipating it with large amounts of chocolate pudding, biking, and diverse projects. Also, she’s delighted by every cat that crosses her path.

Mira Schönege: For many years, she’s been dealing with global power structures, racism theories, and questions of representation as a linguist and art pedagogic. As an illustrator, she draws lines into the field of “visual power structures.” There’s an almost finished children’s book lying on her desk, and when her head is about to explode, the kid is sleeping and inspiration comes knocking, she enjoys playing guitar or the electric organ.

Nadja Hermann/Erzählmirnix: As a worker’s child, she finds that academic theories remain much of trial and error, even after college. That’s why many of her comics are based on personal experiences, discussions, and thought patterns of her own that she realized were wrong.

Nino Bulling: Has been drawing comics for about ten years, sometimes on their own and sometimes with other authors. Nino’s work is often documentary-style and analyzes current political situations. Since last year, Nino is taking a break from societal topics and is drawing a love story. Nino’s heart beats for self-organized education, parties, books, and friendship.

Tristan Marie Trotz: They love learning and tossing aside their own beliefs while doing so. This is useful because nin likes to act in anti-discriminatory ways. Currently, nin is learning a lot about creating access, post-colonialism, and living together in a shared economy. Nin draws strength from artistic work, courage from structures of solidarity, and joy from nights spent dancing.

Viktoria Cichón: Has been working freelance as an illustrator since graduating from art school as a designer in 2014. She’s been dealing with intersectional feminism in both theory and illustration for a long time. Social media has brought her into contact with anti-racist practices, allowing her to serve these with her creativity and question her own position of **privilege**.

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