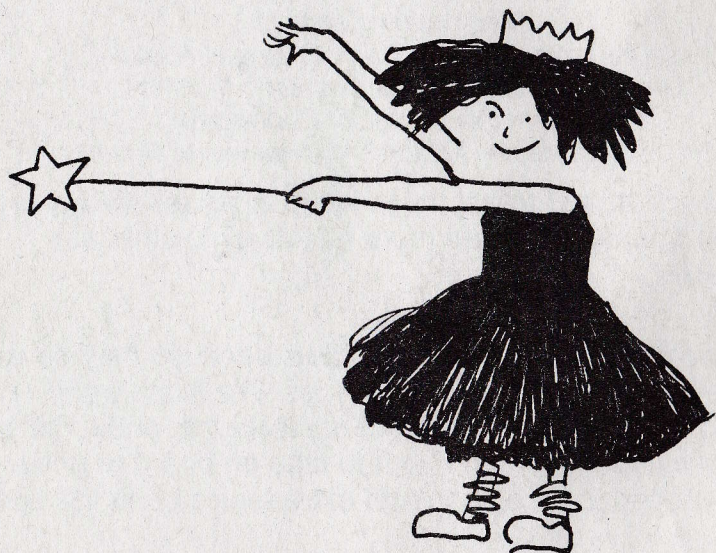


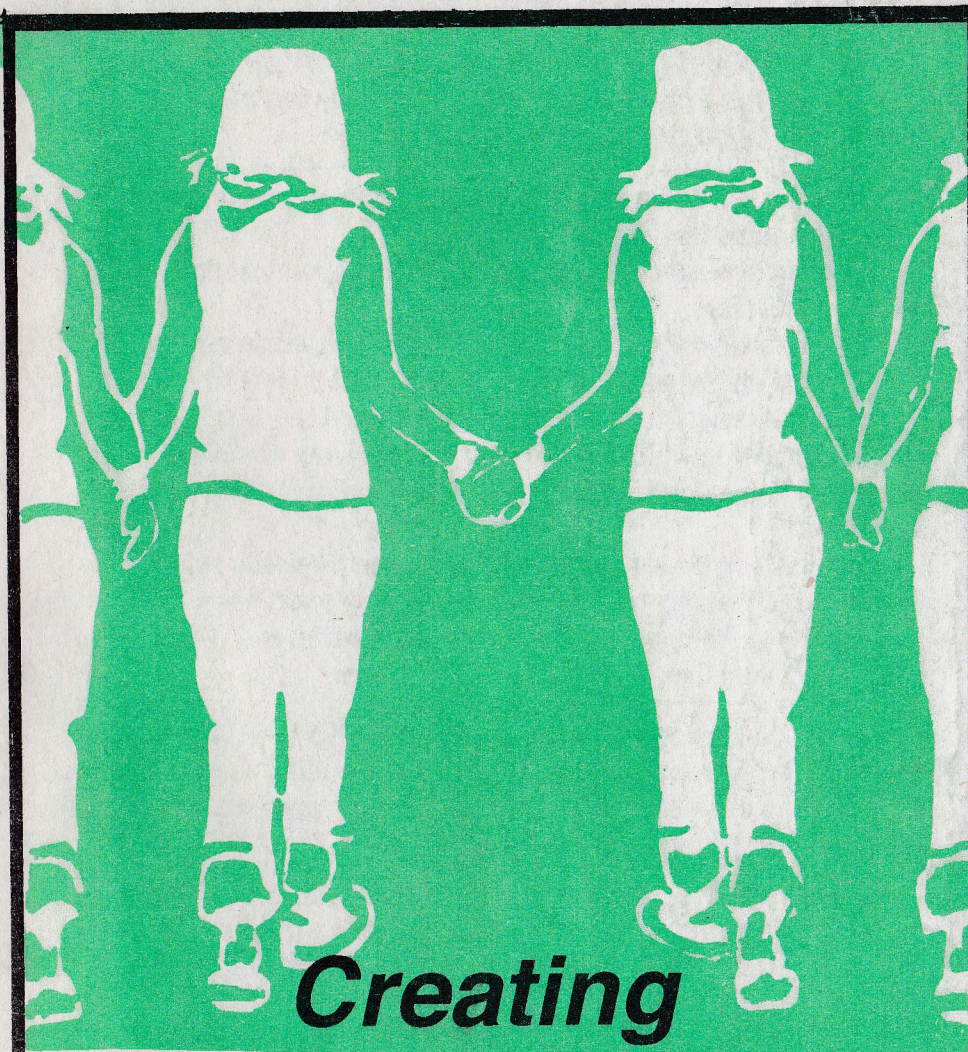
"We talk about revolutions a lot, we talk about another world being possible, about radical communities. to me, safer spaces policies and interrogating and changing our behaviours and interactions is about creating this other world, is about undergoing a constant revolution, a personal revolution, a revolution in our spaces, is about building community, a culture of support"

This pamphlet aims to explain the concept of "safer spaces policies", an idea that's been used by a growing number of activist/ anarchist groups in Australia.



Printed July 2008. More copies available from us:
Radical Practical Feminist Self-Defence
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We teach self-defence classes (and safer sex workshops) – get in touch for more information about these. We're based in London but are sometimes up for travelling.



Creating Safer Spaces

what are "safer spaces" and how do we make them?

**an anthology of australian activists' experiences
and the safer spaces policies they created**

This pamphlet aims to explain the concept of "safer spaces policies", an idea that's been used by a growing number of activist/ anarchist groups in Australia.

"Safer spaces is a concept that talks about actively creating spaces and relationships that are safe.

Spaces that are respectful of each of our stories, our experiences, our pains and fears.

Spaces where we can explore our privileges, and within our relationships and interactions, live towards a world free of oppression, assault, marginalisation and inequality.

They are spaces in which people who are survivors of sexual assault, and other kinds of oppression and hurt, have their needs prioritised.

Safer spaces acknowledges that no space can be totally safe for everyone, but that through self-organising, self-awareness, and willingness to challenge and change our own behaviour, we can create spaces that are SAFER".

This is a collection of "safer spaces policies", each one written by a different group (some were made for temporary gatherings, some for more permanent spaces/projects), and reflecting that group's needs and language.

The actual written policy is important – it gets put on the wall as a visible statement of the group's commitment to the concept – but not as important as the collective process of writing it.

This involves everyone in thinking about their own behaviour and interactions, examining issues like privilege and oppression, talking together, figuring out what a "safer space" might feel like, or mean for other people.

We've also included some individuals' thoughts about, and experiences of, the whole process. A few years on, it sounds like the creation of "safer spaces" has actually resulted in some positive changes (in both attitude and actions).

We think the idea's worth more discussion here in the UK..

And now, some examples of the Safer Spaces policies being created and used in Australia

Safer Spaces Policy from 2005 Belladonna DIY Fest

The Belladonna Collective is working to create Safer Spaces at all of our events. We say "safer" realising that no space can be entirely safe for everyone. Although there is often a discourse on 'equality', we realise that not everyone experiences spaces in the same ways as others. We are hoping to shift the discourse to that of 'respect' and 'responsibility'. We are experimenting with this Safer Spaces Policy (SSP) to put this discourse into action.

Safer Spaces are welcoming, inviting and engaging. They are about creating an accepting and supportive environment. Safer Spaces require that people not only respect and accept one another but actively look out for the welfare of each other and the whole community.

There will be clearly identified Mediators at all the events, ie during the daytime events and at the shows in the evening). The Mediator's role is that of a contact person. They are there to be approached if someone is feeling unsafe. They can act as spokesperson &/or mediator if someone needs to be called on their unsafe behaviour. They are there to talk to folks about what the SSP is and how it works for the Belladonna DIY Fest.

What is creating a Safer Space all about?

- Respect people's physical, mental and emotional boundaries.
- Always get explicit verbal consent before touching someone or crossing personal boundaries.
- Respect people's opinions, beliefs, differing states of being, and differing points of view.
- Be responsible for your own actions and the effects they have on others.
- Take responsibility for your own safety and get help if you need it.

This is a safer spaces policy.

We say 'safer', not 'safe', recognising that not all spaces will be safe at all times for all people. But that together we want to work to constantly challenge our own behaviours and the behaviours of others to create a space that is SAFER.

A safer spaces policy is not a set of rules. It is not restrictions or guidelines imposed by other people telling you what to do. It is a dream, a vision, of safety. Of what it might look like, might feel like, to be safer in a space, to feel comfortable, supported, to feel free, autonomous, without fear, without need to withdraw, or to leave, if you don't really want to.

This policy wants you to imagine that space. To imagine safety and to think about what it would take to realise your dream. It wants you to think about your privileges, your behaviour, your words and the impact they have on others. To really look beyond the obvious, to open your mind to the possibilities that you may make others feel unsafe, to recognise that THAT IS NOT OKAY, and to challenge and change that. To create an environment where people feel safe enough to speak up when they feel unsafe, to confront others on things that they are doing, to say NO, to say STOP, to ask for what they want, they need, they desire.

So this dream goes way beyond anything that could ever be written down on paper. To treat the few things that we could encapsulate in words as the only things we need to do to create safer space is to reject the idea that safety is a fundamental aspect of any so-called "radical" community, of ANY community at all, and that to achieve it requires a constant personal critique, evaluation and revolution.

More than anything, a safer spaces policy wants us to be the radical self-critical people that our visions of another world need us to be.

So the following is not an exhaustive list. It can't be. Safety can't be written down on paper..

But some things we think of when we dream of safety...

Respect for others space, this means space to talk, space to dance, space to move, space to be silent, space to be themselves, to make their own decisions, physical space, and emotional space.

No discrimination, oppression, exclusion or marginalisation based on sex/ gender, race, sexuality/ orientation, class, age, ability, religion, parental or relationship status.

This means way more than using 'politically correct' language. It means interrogating who feels comfortable to enter spaces you create or are in, who speaks most, in meetings or social situations. Who takes up space, on the dance floor, in the mosh pit, in the room, physically or in presence. Who feels safe around alcohol and how can you make those that don't feel safe, feel safe in a space?? What kind of language are you using, who can understand it, and who feels alienated by it? What processes of organising, of meetings do you use, and what understandings do these reflect? What normative understandings guide your behaviour, your conversations, your thoughts, your ideas?

We recognise that this is not easy to do. It is hard to see our own privilege or the ways we oppress others, but it is necessary to interrogate and challenge ourselves and each other. As part of this we need to accept and be responsive and open to the possibilities of being challenged.

What does "inclusive" mean to you? Does it mean people need to feel comfortable and want to participate in and feel safe in YOUR environment, within your structures, ways of organising, political beliefs, ideas, plans? Or does it mean dialogue? Adaptation? Asking people what they think, what they do, why they don't feel included? Don't participate? Addressing their concerns, trying to fit in with their modes and structures? Being open to change, to learning, to alternative ways and experiences?

Community means taking responsibility for actions and effects. This includes accepting that no-one has absolute rights, including absolute rights to be in this space. By this we mean that if someone is feeling unsafe in your presence you need to be open to the possibility that you may have to leave the space. It is important that you don't see this as an infringement on your freedoms but as an essential step in building radical communities.

Community means trust, open-ness, and equal participation.

It means SUPPORT for those that feel unsafe and the things they need to happen. Believing, talking, asking, following through. Being willing to confront people on their behaviours if they are unable or unwilling to do it themselves, whether they are your friends, family,

people you respect, or not. Separating the person from the behaviour, but accepting that this is not an excuse. ACCOUNTABILITY, to yourself and to others. Even if you or your friends are amazing in so many other ways, sometimes you or they might do something that hurts someone, that makes someone feel unsafe and you -WE ALL- need to take responsibility for that.

Radical love xx

Safer Spaces

We recognize the Nyoongar peoples as the traditional and ongoing custodians of this land. Sovereignty was never ceded.

WE want to create a space together. A space that is safe. A space that is respectful of each of our stories, our experiences, our pains and fears. We want to open a space to explore our privileges, and within our relationships and interactions live towards a world free of oppression, assault, marginalisation and inequality.

We want to acknowledge the varied journeys that have brought people here today. We want to celebrate our successes and honor our scars. We want to do this together.

We dream of living towards a classless society, a world without sexual assault. A world without intimate violence. A world without racism in its institutions and all its disguises.

We need to recognize that people have very different experiences of even the same spaces. And also that people have many different ideas about how we will make changes in the world.

We want to open the space for those whose voices who are often drowned out to be able to speak and share, and for others to truly listen.

We ask, please- are you speaking too much? Are you a white middle class man dominating discussion? A man standing over a womyn? A highly educated womyn speaking too much? We ask that you look around and wonder who is not being heard? And then open up a space for them to speak.

We want to challenge each other, in our relationships and in our ways of being and behaving that play out what we have learnt growing up in a capitalist and patriarchal society; to compete, to see all things as objects, to submit to the rule of another.

We want to seek out the capitalist, the racist, the rapist, the dictator within and relearn our ways of being with one another and in the world that respects our dreams and desires for a better way. We want to do it together.

WE need to accept that no space can be totally safe for all peoples. However, we need to believe that through self-organizing, community agreements and a willingness to challenge and police our behaviours that we can create a space that is SAFER.

We want to acknowledge the widespread sexual and intimate violence that so many peoples, and mainly womyn and children experience. We need to examine how this impacts upon our, upon their lives. Upon where and how we feel safe, about how complex our bodies, and sex becomes.

We want peoples to share and explore amazing relationships, to seek active consent for all sexual and intimate activities and eliminate the occurrences of sexual assault.

We want to accept and celebrate people's different sexualities, be they transgender or queer, heterosexual or questioning.

We want to share spaces with peoples and all their abilities and disabilities and work out how to live together.

We want to know who is not being heard, who is absent, who has been forgotten, what issues people have with our language. We want to know what we don't know that we don't know.

We want to explore how this might operate, how this will function. What this might look like, how we could know whether people felt safe, felt included. We want to explore creative ways to work with and through conflict. We want to know what it might be to actually appreciate all the differences, all the hopes and fears we bring to these spaces.

We want to have guidelines for what to do when bad things happen in our communities; What to do when sexual assault occurs? How to get someone to leave a space? How to actively seek someone's consent? How to pull someone up on racist behaviours? How to silence someone in a meeting? How to make sure that caring and cooking and cleaning and child-care do not continue to be the work of womyn? How to challenge gender roles?

We dream of revolutions in our spaces.

We want to do it together.

a draft safer spaces policy for 'Out of the Silence' gathering

Introduction

The idea of creating a *safer* space, rather than safe, is a recognition and understanding that not all spaces will be safe at all times for all people, and that safety is experienced in different ways by different people. But that we will work together to challenge, confront, address and eliminate oppressive behaviour, our own and that of others, to create a space that is SAFER. Remember that there is only one person who you can change: that is yourself.

We would like to see a safer space that respects all of our experiences, our boundaries, our fears and our pains. We would like this space to be welcoming, inclusive, supportive, caring and free of assault, marginalisation, oppression and inequality. This is a survivor-centric space. This space recognises that the Wurundjeri people are the traditional owners of this land and that sovereignty was never ceded.

A safer spaces policy is more than just a set of rules, or a document, or imposed restrictions. It is a dream – a dream of safety, a dream of communities we want to live in, and ways in which we relate to one another. It is a goal that we work towards and an ongoing process. It is a dream we ask you to participate in.

Safer spaces is a key part of 'Out of the Silence', because without a safer space people will not be empowered to share their stories and experiences, or be motivated to work on their own prejudices and intolerance. We need a safer space to help bring us together to build a positive outcome for everyone at the conference.

Some things we dream of when we dream of safety:

As a part of this conference we reject power structures of privilege and oppression, whether they are based on gender, sexual expression, sex, age, relationship orientation, race, parental status, wealth, social position, education, ability, ethnicity, language, religious affiliation, ideology, cultural or historical precedent... – or any other injustice against persons. We would like to see no discrimination, oppression, exclusion and marginalisation in our space. This means more than just using 'politically correct language'. It means challenging and interrogating our own

normative understandings and our own privileges that guide our behaviour, our conversations, thoughts and ideas. It means being aware of who feels comfortable to enter spaces we create, or are in, who dominates, who speaks the most, who has trouble listening. It means being aware of the language we use, who can understand it, who is alienated by it. Above all it means caring about others and valuing their contribution, it means being open and honest with yourself. It means recognising the human value of others and behaving in a positive way towards all.

We would like you to examine your prejudices and privileges and to recognise that while we are oppressed, we are also the oppressors. We also recognise that whilst it is hard to see our own privilege or the ways in which we oppress others, it is necessary to challenge ourselves and each other. As a part of this we need to be accountable, to accept, be responsive and open to the possibilities of being challenged – and we need to be responsible, careful, and loving in our challenging of others.

In this space we ask you to respect people's physical and emotional boundaries. We ask that you always get explicit verbal consent before touching someone or crossing someone's boundaries. And that you practice active consent before, during, and after sex. We ask that you have respect for people's space, in talking, in their ideas, opinions, experiences. And to have respect for others' space to be silent, to be themselves and to make their own decisions

When we talk of a survivor-centric space, we mean to listen, believe and support survivors. We mean that individuals that are called out for any kind of assault, including sexual, physical, emotional, and so on, to be accountable for their behaviour, to take responsibility, to respect survivor needs, autonomy and space. We mean that in this space, survivors' needs are respected and listened to. This includes accepting that no one has absolute rights to be in this space. By this we mean that if someone is feeling unsafe in your presence you need to be open to the possibility of leaving the space. It is as important that you do not see this as an infringement on your freedoms but as an essential step in building radical communities.

At this space we ask that you do not assume anyone's gender identity. If you don't know, ask. Be aware of how much gender binaries are embedded in our language. Allow each person to define and redefine themselves as they wish.

In this space we ask you to think about inclusivity. We would like for everyone to examine their own behaviours and be pro-active about inclusivity. Are there ways in which you make people feel unsafe? Are there people isolated from these spaces? We ask that each person is valued and accepted for who they are. We ask that you think about ways in which you organise, language you use. Does 'inclusivity' mean to you that people need to fit within your structures, political beliefs, ideas, plans? Or can we create dialogue between people so that we create spaces that are everyone's spaces, that we all make and are a part of, feel included in, belong to, and can participate in?

Stuff about community....

Community means trust, means openness, means equal participation. It means just and equitable treatment and handling of grievances for all. It means **support** for those that feel unsafe and the things they need to happen. It means **believing, talking, asking, and following through**. It means being willing to challenge people on their behaviours, in a loving way that is careful of both of your safety, in cases where they are unable or unwilling to do it themselves, whether they are your friends, family, people you respect, or not. Separating the person from the behaviour, but accepting that this is not an excuse. It means taking the time to listen to those who are challenging themselves and asking for your help in the process. It means **accountability** to yourself and to others. Even though we are **all** amazing in so many ways, sometimes any one of us might do something that hurts someone, that makes someone feel unsafe. **We all** need to take responsibility for that, and we all need to participate in the process of handling that and creating a safer space within our community.

Alcohol and Drugs

Some drugs damage people's ability to control their impulses and their behaviour - these include, but are not limited to, alcohol and amphetamines. Use of these drugs can create an unsafe space for everyone. We need to acknowledge that people who will be attending the conference may have traumatic past experiences with alcohol and drugs, or with people who have been under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and that our use of these substances may trigger flashbacks, panic and anxiety, or make people feel otherwise unsafe. For this reason some spaces at this

conference - workshop spaces, and the performance night - have been designated as "dry", and we ask you not to consume drugs or alcohol in dry spaces. Please do not take drugs that seriously impair your ability to participate before coming to the conference. Please remember that Out of the Silence venues are smoke free.

Love love....

This was a draft of a policy - attached at the end was the following list of points - an example of how making a safer spaces policy is a collaborative, collective process and works best when everyone is included and involved - we haven't seen the eventual result that actually got used at the gathering

Things not included:

- ☐ really thorough grievance/resolution process
- ☐ spaces where our experiences and stories as survivors of sexual assault, mental health, are heard and respected
- ☐ safer spaces is about supporting and affirming and protected human value and accepted and respecting diversity.
- ☐ safer spaces affirm universal human rights to justice, equality, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- ☐ i want us to learn to call people out when they say or do something fucked up, and to be able to cope with being called out, without either going on the defensive or falling apart in guilt.
- ☐ i want us to remember that everyone's at different political and emotional stages and that sometimes when people say or do something hurtful or offensive, it's done out of ignorance not malice. this doesn't make the behaviour any less hurtful but it does partly excuse the person.
- ☐ we want to actively create our spaces.
- ☐ wish list :components of the policy: what's included/high priority/ nice to have?
- ☐ implementation plan
- ☐ what resources are needed to support the policy? eg, grievance handling - processes and people resources, child minding, processes for taking action if necessary
- ☐ wish list; to state and publish the policy
- ☐ avoidance of undesirable discrimination
- ☐ identify: is any form of discrimination desirable? eg exclusion of any person for any reason not appropriate to the conference. is this the case? or, if not how to handle people who for some reason may not support the conference or collective.
- ☐ inclusion policy for people with further marginalisation eg disability, with children, special enviro/dietary needs, language difficulties, gender sexuality, relationship orientation. disability is in itself a diverse realm: physical; communication/learning
- ☐ managing conflict: including conflict between separate "safe-space" issues. eg pressure of children - creating disruption vs. inclusion of parents with children.
- ☐ questions: how to manage? resolve? consensus? priorities / precedence?
- ☐ coping with: violence, assault, fear, paranoia, anxiety, depression, marginalisation, discrimination.
- ☐ avoiding the tyranny of structurelessness

This was printed in the Festival programme -

Safer Spaces Statement from Live and Let Live DIY Fest

The Safer Spaces Statement has been written by the Live & Let DIY Collective to take a positive, proactive, preventative step towards stopping sexual assault, sexual harassment and violence in all its forms. We are committed to creating a space that reflects the ideals of the festival - autonomous spaces that are supportive, respectful and free of harassment. As people who try to bring about change in the world, we recognize that our own personal behaviour needs to reflect this change.

LLDIY is a DIY event – everyone who attends has a role in making the fest what it is. We want all people here to feel comfortable and free from the threat of violence, so we must work to make each other comfortable. That means having awareness around our individual actions and words, realising the impact we can have on others and having ownership over these actions. The point of the “guidelines” is not to be boring fun-stoppers, and we do not intend to micro-monitor people’s behaviour while they are at the fest.

Everyone attending LLDIY is asked to take responsibility for their behaviour at all times, and also to help make the festival a comfortable, safe(r) space for everyone attending.

PLEASE HAVE A READ THROUGH THESE POINTS AND CONSIDER THEM IN RELATION TO YOURSELF:

*Don’t presume you know someone’s gender, ethnicity, sexuality, beliefs etc.

*You need to take responsibility for any shit attitudes/phobias/etc that you might have eg. sexism, racism, age-ism, able-ism, homophobia, fat-phobia, queer-phobia, transgender-phobia etc. You need to understand that if you display these prejudices at the festival, it will not be tolerated.

*You may have specific contexts in which you use derogatory/disrespectful language where you consider it to be ok. This context is not the festival. You don’t know who will hear you, and what reaction they will have, and you will be expected to bear full responsibility for it.

*Pay attention to people’s body language. Look for things like: someone constantly turning away from you; avoiding eye contact; making excuses as to why they need to be away from you; not responding to your physical advances. Any of these can be possible signs that someone is telling you to back off/leave them alone – so pay attention and use good judgement and if in doubt ASK.

*Pay attention to boundaries. Different people have different boundaries when it comes to personal space and physical contact. Most of us want different things at different times, or different things from different people. Please do not make assumptions about other people’s comfort or desires. Get verbal consent before touching people in a way that may be considered intimate

*If you know or have been told that you become violent or disrespectful under the influence of drugs or alcohol – take responsibility for that (ie. consider not using or limiting your use of drugs/alcohol while you’re at the fest)

*Violence is not tolerated at LLDIY - sexual assault, sexual harassment, threats, harassment, physical violence, bullying etc. Anyone engaging in this behaviour can be thrown out of the fest. The police may be called.

*Consider the privilege (from being older, an “established” member of the punk/activist/blah blah community, a certain gender/race/sexuality, etc) that you may have and how it may enable you to take up more space than others. It’s your responsibility to make sure that your not taking up more than your fair share of space or devaluing/disregarding other peoples experiences or views.

*Making jokes about “safer spaces policies” can make it difficult for people who do experience problems at the fest, and who do want to use the mechanisms we have put in place.

IF YOU NEED ASSISTANCE

If you experience any behaviour that crosses your boundaries or makes you feel uncomfortable, or if you have a problem/issue with someone else, or if you feel unsafe - please come to the info-desk at the front of Ahimsa House (or the desk where you pay to get into gigs in the night) and ask to speak someone from the grievance committee. Members of the grievance committee will be wearing green armbands and will be at every major event. Or please call:

here were some australian phone numbers.

We can talk with you about what you want to do and give you assistance, help you sort things out, act on your behalf etc.

WORKING PREVENTATIVELY

We want to work preventatively in terms of “safer spaces” – by having a “safer spaces statement”, by having a chill-out space, by offering safer accommodation arrangements to those who need it, by opening up discussion during the festival (several workshops will be offered on topics related to sexual assault/consent/positive sexuality/safer spaces/gender).

We want **everyone who attends the fest to be aware of the Safer Spaces Statement** - information will be on the website, in the program, displayed around the venue, in announcements during gigs, on flyers, and hopefully it will come up in discussions. We hope that the very existence of this information will work preventatively and help create a positive environment.

CHILL-OUT SPACE

The LLDIY Collective recognises that it can be overwhelming/upsetting/exhausting etc to visit a new city / be out of your comfort zone / not have a space to call your own / to see many old and new friends and lovers in one place / to be somewhere you hardly know anyone very well / to feel awkward or alienated / to participate in an intense 3-days of workshops/gigs/parties/hanging out/sleep-deprivation etc. etc.

When you're out of your “comfort zone” and/or not in your “home-town”, it is important that you have a space to go when you freakout, feel anxious, feel vulnerable, feel sleep-deprived, feel the need to avoid conversation for awhile, or just need to collect your thoughts.

For all these reasons and more, we offer you “the chill-out space”. This is a room where you can go to get some quiet time, sleep, rest, read, drink tea etc. There will be mattresses and cushions, and hopefully some things like herbal tea, essential oils and Bach Flower Rescue Remedy.

SAFE(R) ACCOMMODATION

We recognise that many unwanted/non-consensual sexual encounters occur when people don't have a place to stay and/or end up sharing sleeping space with someone out of necessity/because they have nowhere else to go.

We understand that when people are in a precarious or vulnerable situation where they don't have a place to stay, it is easy to take whatever accommodation/shared bed is offered.

Therefore, we would like to offer safe(r) accommodation to anyone who needs it during Live and Let DIY fest. During the fest, please speak to someone at the info-table (at the entrance to the venue) for assistance with this. Or please call:

NOT JUST AT THE FESTIVAL VENUE

We hope that you keep the idea of “Safer Spaces” in mind while at all LLDIY events. Please continue to keep the guidelines in mind while you are away from the festival venue eg. at the house you are staying at, at the other places you are hanging out at etc.

IF YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL WE'RE ON ABOUT OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION

If you don't understand why we need to have a Safer Spaces Statement, and you would like more information, please feel free to approach whoever is on the info-desk at the front of the venue.

When writing “safer spaces guidelines”, it is often difficult to be exact and explicit about what IS or IS NOT ACCEPTABLE behaviour. If you require further information/clarification, again, please feel free to discuss with festival volunteers (at the info-desk)

Also, keep an eye on the workshop program, as there will be discussion-based workshops on topics related to gender/sexuality/safer spaces that we can all learn from.

If you would like to ask any questions, or to discuss anything related to the LLDIY Safer Spaces Statement (or related issues), please get in contact with us. Before the fest, you can email us at liveandletdiyfest@riseup.net. During the festival, you can approach the info-table and ask to speak to one of the organisers/volunteers.

Grievance

“Grievance groups”

are maybe better known here as “mediation” or “tranquility” teams.

The grievance group exists as a collective of people available for anyone experiencing difficulties at 'XXXXXXX'. It doesn't matter how big or small your issue is, we think that it is important that it is heard and respected. Our role is to listen and to explore with you the ways that you would like it to be addressed. It is important that we all recognise that individual's issues, problems and feelings are our collective concern.

The creation of radical communities requires that we acknowledge that our personal lives and relationships and the way we interact with others is just as political as our critiques of capitalism. We will be present throughout the weekend, including in the evenings, and anyone is welcome to approach us for whatever needs you may have.

What is grievance? Grievances might occur around issues of oppression and discrimination, interpersonal issues such as conflict with facilitators or other conference participants, or they may relate to any issues in someone's life that are brought up in the space. The grievance group are not professionals, but our main concern this weekend is to be responsive to the safety and well-being of everyone here. The grievance group offers listening and respectful and confidential support including informal conciliation and mediation.

Awareness and Respect. The grievance group is committed to making real what is outlined in the Safer Spaces Policy. Please read it. Please think about it, please talk about it, please take it on, please add to it and change it. We want revolutions in our spaces.

Disrespect. Part of making our spaces safer is being able to deal with and respond to behaviour that we don't want to happen in our spaces. In the event of any such behaviour, behaviour that goes against the vision of the Safer Spaces Policy, the grievance group is here to respond to the situation according to the wishes of the person or people who have experienced the grievance. This may include police involvement if that is what the person wishes. Inappropriate behaviour could include, but is not limited to; not respecting someone's personal space or boundaries, dominating a space, offensive or oppressive language towards others, coercion, manipulation or other forms of psychological abuse, physical or sexual intimidation, threat or violence, irresponsible use of alcohol or drugs or anything else that may cause discomfort or distress to someone else.

Resources. Grievance people are available throughout the entire weekend. We will introduce ourselves and be around throughout the weekend. We are constantly approachable even if we are doing something/in a workshop. There will always be at least one grievance person at loophole and two during the evenings. We are also all available on call and will be close by. Our numbers are: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Further Support. *Here followed a list of local support services...It's a good idea to do the research into what resources exist in your neighbourhood now, before any crisis.*

"Grievance collectives are temporary groups that get together for events, or in particular centres or other spaces, or in particular groups of people, to help facilitate autonomous conflict resolution and community responses to sexual assault. The group exists for anyone experiencing difficulties, and their role is to listen and explore with the person the ways they would like their issue to be addressed. The group offers listening, and respectful and confidential support. This can also include conciliation and mediation, or excluding other people from the area. Part of creating safer spaces is everyone learning how to deal with and respond to behaviour that makes us uncomfortable. This might necessitate police involvement, if that is what the person with the issue wants, or it might necessitate some kind of autonomous restorative justice process"

A few things to think about before you come inside...

this is a SAFER SPACE:

People attending events at 'The Yard'/Brereton St are asked to be generally aware of their language and behaviour — including awareness of body language/personal space issues. Consider whether your behaviour might be considered by those around you to be non-consensually violent/creepy/non-consensual/unwanted/inappropriate/etc. Please also consider whether drugs/alcohol etc could blur your ability to gauge how your behaviour is affecting others.

Queerphobia, homophobia, sexism, racism, transphobia, heterophobia, body-phobia, ageism, able-ism and non-consensual behaviour will not be tolerated in this space and community.

If a problem arises, please feel empowered to pull people up or let an organiser know what is happening. It's up to all of us to create safer spaces.

There may be performances tonight that you find challenging: we acknowledge that people are triggered (have negative emotional reactions) by infinite things. If you feel that performance content might be triggering, or challenging for you, please consider taking the steps necessary for you to feel safe, whether this means going upstairs to chill out or finding someone to talk to.

Excerpts from 'a zine about safer spaces, conflict resolution & community'

"So once you've written a safer spaces policy, then I guess you have to use it in a space... communicate it... get people to engage with it... Lately, I've been trying to think of different ways to do this... One of my concerns is that sometimes safer spaces become too procedural and formalistic and the personal part of it, the political part of it, the dream or something, gets a bit lost. There needs to be a way of communicating the policy/the idea, that isn't just the people who made it telling everyone else the rules, or going through all these processes that can seem quite abstract".

"We did one of those workshops on safer spaces at a conference, we talked a lot about why it was important and why it was political, read through it as a group, talked about it. People talked to us afterwards, said they thought it was really good that this stuff was happening. they felt like it was a really positive step, people felt hopeful.

That night, we had to engage in a community response, someone had to be excluded from a party-type event space. I had never witnessed this happening successfully before. With the same person, I had been involved in attempts to exclude them before, but the person had always responded aggressively, forcing those that felt unsafe..to leave. And a lot of those times, a big factor was that we didn't have the support...we were the minority...but this time, it was different. While this person...attempted to get others to support them staying, those..who had been in the workshop earlier that day, said no, we are trying to create a safe space, you have to leave, that was so different and so amazing for me to experience. I feel like a lot of things are changing in our communities and this sort of stuff is becoming more open and talked about and more acceptable. Each of the times I have done grievance over the past few months I have felt supported in the actions that I have needed to or may have needed to take, even exclusion. I've felt like if something had happened, instead of being argued against, put down or belittled, people would respect the process, respect the decisions, and even be thankful that these things were happening".

"Creating safer spaces is about being visible and explicit about what behaviours are ok and not ok. Having a visible safer spaces policy at gigs and events keeps this stuff in people's heads as they rock out. It helps organisers and the community make our spaces safer and more accessible to everyone, but also helps keep the idea in people's heads".

"This safer spaces policy that we wrote is kind of bitter, in parts. I didn't exactly mean it to be like that, but it came out of a lot of experiences and things that I had been thinking about like what safer spaces policies were and what I wanted them to be. At a lot of events that I had been at, I felt like the safer spaces policy didn't reflect what I felt like it should be. It was too much like rules – like a poster saying 'these are the rules of the space, please respect them'... - a lot of the time people thought [safer spaces policies] were more like other people defining the rules of a space, the boundaries of other people's behaviours, or something, and that made it a side issue. It made it not political. a background thing, for something like a conference, it became something you glance at when you walk in before you get to the workshops and talk about the real politics..."

"But safer spaces is political. If we are talking about revolutions, about social change, about challenging prejudice or whatever, then what we should be doing first of all is changing the way we relate and interact in our own spaces, our own communities. Trying to create a community. of support, of listening, of trust, or something. Interrogating ourselves, the things that we say, the things that we do, how we talk to people, our assumptions, our privileges, and also our needs, our wants, our desires, our dreams of radical community, of radical space..."

"And that's much more than rules, to me. Safer spaces is more than the paper. the paper or the policy is almost irrelevant, I think. well, not irrelevant. it creates a culture, it makes safety and challenging ourselves and our friends a priority... this is a political thing, the most direct form of action you can take, something that should be ongoing, all the time, whether there is a policy or not, whether there are people there to respond to or confront your behaviour or not".

"We talk about revolutions a lot, we talk about another world being possible, about radical communities. To me, safer spaces policies and interrogating and changing our behaviours and interactions is about creating this other world, is about undergoing a constant revolution, a personal revolution, a revolution in our spaces, is about building community, a culture of support. it's about 'smashing patriarchy', 'challenging hetero-normativity', 'confronting gender binaries', 'eradicating racism', and all those things we talk about, in a real way, a personal way. There can be real changes, real effects, right now. imagine the possibilities..."

"I don't want only those that have been abused to be involved in responses and support work. I dream of a community where people who are emotionally capable are active in building safer spaces and responding to conflict".

"Safety isn't just found in a physical space, no matter how many locks you put on a door or alarm systems you set up. There are still people within the house. Even if that person is just you.

"Safety is in the people that surround you. Where I live I hardly ever use the locks on the door but that's because I'm in a town with a population of 300 and I know the people here. Safety isn't something that happens instantly but through the spaces people create when they are together. A room isn't instantly safe, neither are a conference, a collective or a community. These places only move towards safety when every single person that is involved makes a commitment to work towards it.

"As a queer woman and survivor I rarely feel completely safe, even if my most trusted friends are around. When I do feel safe I never take it for granted because it is so rare. Even without those labels I think it is hard as an activist to feel safe because the illusion of police protection has gone. I know if there is violence on the streets it is usually going to be police perpetrating it, forget them protecting me.

"Safety is an ideal, belief, a feeling. Safety is radical because it is so rare and because more often than not it isn't considered to be people's priority to make sure everyone feels safe. Safety I think is different for everyone because we've all had different experiences..."

"We are not a safety brigade, we are not a community police force.

Some things that happen with safer spaces and grievance are that the same people tend to end up doing it..." and that others start "assuming that the same people who did it last time can be called on to do it again, each time, because they are the people that do that sort of thing. Assuming that these people want to be doing it - not that they feel obligated to do so because no-one else is doing it and it's really really important - and that they can do it, ...have the energy to do it, ...are stable enough and have enough space in their minds to do it. Which isn't always true. In fact, a lot of the time it's not true. Especially if we're talking about people in groups like 'World Without' [a Melbourne group that's formed to talk about ways of confronting sexual assault], people who are already dealing with intense issues, already potentially feeling drained by this kind of thing...

And if we're talking about safer spaces being radical and political, about grievance one day becoming redundant, then it means it can't just be out-sourcing safety... it has to be everyone taking it on, rotating roles, sharing the load, and sharing skills, too, and stories, and experiences and knowledge... because I recognise that in doing grievance, in talking about it, you learn things that make you better at it. And that means that you would be good at doing it next time. But it's more important to share those skills and learnings with others so that they can do it next time, and then pass [them] on".

" Try.. to have the discussion in... groups of 4 or 5 and then talking about what a safer spaces policy is, why it's important, how we can make it real. Talking about the idea, the policy, the concrete reality of creating safety in spaces.. is easier in small groups.... the people who are presenting [the workshop] need to be careful not to say too much, to leave space for others, and wait until everyone has spoken... before saying things only that no-one else has said. A lot of the time people will say the things...if you don't take up that space... Getting people to talk about what they think it is and why they think it's important and what it means to them makes it less like rules and more like commitments we are all engaging in together, or at least I hope so..."

"Keep in mind that people who have been called out for making others feel unsafe usually refuse to cooperate or participate in a process. Often they act aggressively, and try to attack you (the people asking them to leave), the person who has called them out, everyone around them. Lots of times in the past, removing someone from spaces has been impossible because lots of other people in that space do not support exclusion - they say that person has a right to be in the space (and yes, these are spaces that are supposedly 'radical' spaces). They do not have to leave. Often the people who get access to and credibility with space are the most popular people. The 'loudest', 'most radical or activist', those who have been around the longest. Other dimensions of privilege and prejudice cut across access to space, including race, gender, class, size, age, 'appropriate gender expression', and so on. This is very hard"

"When we are brought up in this fucked up world...we often overlook the impact that our actions and/or presence can have on others..."

"Think into the future, what exactly are we fighting for? Personally I don't want to live in an autonomous society with leftover aspects of capitalism or patriarchy, I am here to fight for liberation. And this comes through living out our aspirations, I don't believe that some far-off event or 'revolution' will cure our privileges nor do I want to rely on it. We must see that our actions speak louder than words, and that when we work together we must do so in such a way to break down our presumptions and question our own behaviour... "We should all want to challenge our relationships, interactions and privileges to become something better than what's often considered normal in wider society.

Safer spaces are a way to bring attention to this, to give people confidence, make spaces more inclusive and let people know there is a support network willing to help this become more successful.

It's a way of giving credence to people often left behind, ignored or dismissed by patriarchal capitalism, a way of saying we, as a community, can and are willing to create what we want to see. Safer spaces require everyone to take part and everyone's willingness is what makes it work (not that it's infallible or always works) and hence is everyone's responsibility..."

"There are heaps of ideas for raising awareness, & preventative measures, that communities, or groups of friends, can take, including.....

- **safer spaces policies;**
- **collectives of support**

(I think it's important to have ongoing groups of people interested in/ dealing with sexual assault, a place to get together and debrief, support each other and heal);

- **benefit shows**

(which would raise money for a fund -that could be accessed by survivors to use for counselling etc.- as well as awareness);

- **workshops**

(on consent, language, ways of healing, ways of dealing with sexual assault etc.)".

what is safety?

Most people think of safety as a 'feeling' of being safe. Feeling safe is important, and it is one way of judging the safety of your situation. However it's not always a reliable indicator. Someone who's already suffered some form of trauma/ abuse, may not feel safe in a very safe space because they're still recovering from what's happened in the past, but feel fine in a dodgy situation.

what tells you that you're safe? - some things to consider when trying to assess a situation

- how do you feel in your body? do you feel scared, safe, unsettled?
- is your physical environment safe, and free of violence and abuse? (no-one is hitting, punching, kicking or pushing you; no-one is calling you names or threatening you, or anyone else you care about)
- does your partner/ lover/ friend consider your needs, wants, desires as important and relevant as his or her own?
- can your partner/ lover/ friend really meet your needs? do they have the know-how, the tools, and the good intention?
- do you have the power in this situation to act on your own behalf? to fully take care of yourself?
- are you making your own choices? not being pressured, pushed or manipulated?

This information comes from a book about healing/ surviving sexual assault.

"My politics are all about dreams. My dreams are for a future free of subjugation; a world free of the authoritarian state, racism, bigotry, physical, sexual, emotional or financial violence".

This pamphlet is one of a series being printed – so far the others include:

'Consent is Sexy';

'Taking the First Step: suggestions to people called out for abusive behaviour';

'Thoughts about Community Support around Intimate Violence';

'How to Help your Friend';

Taking Risks: Implementing Grass-roots Community Accountability Strategies';

'Going to Places that Scare Me: reflections on challenging male supremacy';

'What is Safer Sex?';

(and, coming soon:

'Some Information about Rape & Sexual Assault'; '

'Some information about Domestic Violence';

'Feminism: the Anarchist Connection'; '

What is Restorative Justice? Alternatives to Prison')

as part of an attempt to get these kinds of issues talked about more (and hopefully tackled more effectively) within our 'communities'.

We made these as separate pamphlets because they cover different – although interlinked – issues. We didn't want anyone to be put off reading them because the whole thing seemed too chunky, or too much to take on board at once. We also wanted to be able to add extra topics on to the series in the future.

However, if you've found this interesting or thought-provoking, please have a look at the others!

And tell us what you think: we'd really like your feedback...

Many thanks to: Jess and Chris, and all the safer spaces crews in Australia; everyone who's contributed their personal stories and experiences at our classes and at activist gatherings over the years; the 56a Info-shop collective for helping with the printing; and London's new anarchy-feminist kolektiv for helping with the collating!