

Awareness Text

glossary below

The FemWo preparatory group is not a homogenous group - our* minimal consensus is that the FemWo wants to provide a space for women*, trans*-, inter_- and gender-queer people where everyone should be able to feel well (as far as possible) and no one should be discriminated discriminated or harassed.

Below you find some thoughts on awareness in the widest sense which are meant as an input for discussing, learning and taking action:

Awareness - what's that?

to be aware = being conscious, sensitized for certain problems, to inform ourselves

Awareness is a concept about respectful behavior towards each other. It's about mutual support by identifying hurtful and boundary-crossing actions and discriminations, naming them as such, and learning to change them.

Assumptions/stereotypes

We* often assume we know which gender a person is, whether they are healthy or sick, whether they are „local“ or not, ...

Also, society shapes ideas we connect with e.g. being fat; normative „good“ looks; with womyn* with hairy legs, armpits, faces; with persons with mental/physical (dis)abilities or illnesses; people who are very small/large, etc. Stereotypes are closely linked to discrimination and we reinforce them by repeating them.

Privileges

Being privileged does not mean being happier, it means not having to deal with certain problems. Privileged positions are e.g.: being assumed to be *white*, male, heterosexual, cisgendered, thin, healthy, having a middle class background, money, higher education, time, ...

Privileges can differ in different contexts.

Hierarchies

Especially in groups and contexts which wish to work without hierarchies, it's important to consider the existence of other hierarchies than e.g. tasks, senior positions, etc.. There are people in every group who know more, are there longer, are considered ‚cool‘, people who are new and uncertain, etc., all of which creates different positions of (at least temporary) authority. Social standards and privileges don't spare emancipatory or radical contexts.

Activism and resources

Assuming everybody has the same resources and conditions leads to people with fewer resources (e.g. not having money, health, time, networks, a middle-class background, being discriminated against, ...) not being able to participate equally in different kinds of activism. This is a problem we can only challenge together, especially through exchange

and by sharing resources.

Position und Empowerment

What empowers one marginalized person maybe doesn't empower one in another position. For example: If one person affected by sexism feels empowered by walking around naked, another person affected by sexism may feel empowered by covering her* body. If a feminist uses the word ,slut' for her*self to overcome the hurtful meaning, this doesn't mean that it's working for everyone.

Concrete proposals:

Translations, Language

Try to include people, either by speaking slowly and clearly, changing the language or translating. At the beginning of a workshop/event it would be good to schedule a few minutes to organise whisper translation or if you have loud translation to take regular breaks for translation to catch up.

Images of violence

Consider how you depict violence (in images as well as in words), because it is a sensitive issue. Heads-up in advance can help.

Pronouns/addressing

Please respect the pronoun(s) people want to be addressed by: there are e.g. she, he, sh_e, ze, they, hen, none, only the first name, and many more.

If you do a round of introduction, we* propose you include name and pronouns(s) preferences. Each participant* decides for themselves if they want to talk about their pronoun(s).

Words shape us and our thinking

e.g.: visibilizing different positions...

... choosing examples which include different identities, different forms of relationship, different basic assumptions about „origin“, education, experience with discrimination.

*e.g.: talking trans*inter_genderqueer inclusive...*

... if talking about womyn*: e.g. pronouncing the asterisk *; e.g. saying ,womyn, trans*, inter_ , genderqueer', ...

... the ,generic femininum' (using the female form, males are supposed to be included) can be used as an emancipatory practice. Add * asterisk and _ underscore to include trans*-, inter_ and genderqueer people. Language and terminology are changing over time. Practicing means making mistakes and learning from them!

The FemWo is commonly organized and all are equally responsible for a friendly and

benevolent atmosphere.

If we* notice a situation that's not ok for one person or for several, we can ask them whether support is required and in which form.

It would be good if we* call each other's attention in a constructive and friendly manner to discriminatory behavior and language. „calling out“ may have the effect that we feel „bad“ or „unwanted“, because we have made a mistake.

***** We* all make mistakes, even the ones with the most practice! *****

If a person isn't well: to „be there“ for someone can also mean to find out together how to cope with the situation, what they need in the moment to feel a bit better, and how they could stay or become able to act.

In addition:

+++ Safer / braver spaces +++ Feminist space politics – whether open to all genders, for lbtq, lbtqia... – try to actively change discrimination. lbtq_ spaces want to provide a setting for an exchange in a safer/more protected space.

Why not „safe“? Since we* are all part of society, we can not exist „outside“. We co-construct the conditions. So there is no ‚safe‘ space and even less a safe space for all the different positions. We can create safer spaces for different positions temporarily, in which we learn to act more bravely.

+++ Consent +++ As far as possible we* want to realize the consent concept. This means acts and conversation take place in mutual agreement, rather than on the assumption an action is ok if there is no resistance (e.g. touching a person without asking first if that's appreciated, etc.).

Please speak up if you have questions and answers, if you need something, wish to offer support, etc. ... let's discuss!

Glossary

** The asterisk visibilizes here there's no uniform „we“, it can show not only cis-women are meant by „women“, etc.*

_ underscore shows the diversity of identities between and outside of „man/woman“

Asexual and **aromantic**: absence of sexual or romantic attraction.

Cis women / cis men: (*cis = lat. „this side“*) women or men, whose sex assigned at birth matches with their lived identity. The term cis woman/cis man is also used

to show there are categories beyond woman/man. It's also trying to prevent that e.g. woman is considered the standard and trans*woman a deviation.

Genderqueer: refers to people who in terms of social gender categories (appearance, clothing, performance, etc.) or gender identity don't fit or don't want to fit (completely) into the binary norm

Inter*: People, whose sex (physiological, endocrinal) is medically considered to be ambiguous. The term „intersexual“ is rejected by many inter* people, because it's on the one hand very pathological (it refers to people as „sick“). On the other hand, intersexuality has nothing to do with sexuality, which is confused especially in german and french.

lbtq* LesbianTransInterQueerwomen

lbt*i_qa LesbianTransInterQueerwomenAsexualAromantic

PoC: People of Color is a self description of people who are affected by racism.

queer: „Queer“ was used as an insult for homosexuals. The movement has appropriated and reinterpreted this word so queer today is a positive self-description.

Transgender, trans*: (trans = lat. on/towards the other side)

Terms used as self-description by trans* people and that question in different ways the idea there being only two genders.

Self-definition of people whose sex assigned at birth does not match their lived identity – the self-definition of the person is central, not a validation from the outside.

The term transsexual is rejected by most trans* people, because for one side it's pathologizing (a „mental illness“) and for the other side because trans* has nothing to do with sexuality, but often is confused/equated, especially in german and french.

Trans femininities / trans women: live in the self-chosen female sex/gender (assigned male at birth).

Trans masculinities / trans men: live in the self-chosen male sex/gender (assigned female at birth).

this is a work in progress.