

WORKSHOP: Strengthening Civil Society work. Mutual Aid

A Workshop brought to you in the framework of the project "Skills4Crisis": www.skills4crisis.org

This workshop is inspired and conceptualized by Dean Spade and Anti-War Hub, supported by Educat Kollektiv

Title of the Workshop:

Strengthening Civil Society work. Mutual Aid

- Duration: 7 hours with 1.5 hours lunch break
- Online or offline: offline
- When (fill in as host):
- Where (fill in as host):
- How many participants (fill in as host):

Invitation text

What is the workshop about?

In the context of worsening ecological crisis, rising fascism, and expanding war, we need to build communities and movements that can take care of each other and fight back. Mutual aid is the work we do in communities to meet immediate survival needs autonomous from government and NGO's. It is where we practice skills of collaboration, generosity, and co-stewardship, engage in political education to expand our solidarities, and move from being passive observers of political crises to active participants in preparing for and addressing the disasters being caused by capitalism.

What skills and capacities do we need for mutual aid? Besides strong group culture, knowledge of how to deal with conflicts, leadership, ability to manage and organise structures, empathy and ability to give direct feedback, it is also important to learn basic first aid skills. How can we develop structures parallel to the state that can be an alternative to family doctors, large clinics,



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where everything is controlled either by the state or private companies? How horizontal medicine or alternative medical structures can provide more stability in crisis situations and become a support for survival during large-scale crises?

For whom is this workshop?

This workshop could be helpful for everyone, regardless of whether the participants are already part of some groups or not. For the participants who are part of mutual aid groups or generally activist spaces, the workshop could help reflect on existing processes and group culture. And for those, who want to be part of mutual aid groups, this workshop could be an inspiration to look out for some stuff and prevent potential conflicts.

In order to take part, participants don't need to have a prior knowledge on the topic.

Starting time (depends on when you start)	Duration	Topic & goal of this part	Proposals for Method & content inspiration	Materials needed	Name of facilitator (if you are more than one)
	30-45 min before start	Preparation: create a welcoming atmosphere	Make the space comfortable with a variety of sitting options. Not everybody feels comfortable sitting in the same position all the time. Yoga matts or cushions could be a good alternative. Bring covid-tests and masks. Corona is still there, but is being ignored by many. Some people might be particularly vulnarable to this sickness,	Cushions, covid tests and masks, flipchart with the title of the workshop	team

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			<p>so, it's nice to not exclude them and make sure that the space if covid-free.</p> <p>Bring snacks and prepare some tea/coffee/water. The costs are usually not so big for that, but they are a great sign of care.</p> <p>Stimming toys (fidget toys) are a nice-to-have. They help many people concentrate and also release anxiety.</p> <p>Prepare a flipchart with the name of the workshop and a schedule of the day. It's particularly important for a whole day workshop to let people know about shorter and longer breaks.</p>	<p>and the schedule of the day</p> <p>Stimming toys</p> <p>Snacks & Drinks</p>	
e.g. 10:30 am	20 min.	Introduction and welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Say hi to participants and ask if they are ready and if their basic needs are fulfilled- Read out „Brave Space poem“ (see attachment 1) or/and „Welcome meditation“ (see attachment 2)		
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">- inform participants about yourself, from which perspective you're talking, introduce the space and purpose of this workshop- at this point we presented the project and the framework, in which it was implemented. It is	<p>Best if there are some slides prepared.</p> <p>A flipchart with the plan of</p>	

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			<p>also a suitable time to present your organisation, what you do and how/where people can read more about your work</p> <p>-after that present the flow/plan of the day. Remind that it's just a draft and the plan depends on very concrete discussions and the mood of the group</p>	the day.	
	20 mins	Getting to know each other and warm-up	<p>Check-in method and getting to know the participants. You can use any method that you prefer.</p> <p>The methods we used on the workshop were:</p> <p>1) you have 4 minutes in which you have to talk to 1 person and discuss with them the questions „One thing you are working on or have worked on in your community“ and „If you had to become infected by a vampire or a werewolf, which?“</p> <p>2) you say a statement and if people agree with it, they make a step forward and then step back.</p> <p>The questions can be general like „I like dogs“ or more closely connected to the topic „I find it</p>		

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			<p>hard to give direct feedback" or something more meta-level „I know exactly what I expect from this workshop“.</p> <p>You can also do the „positioning“ method for this. When you use the room as a scale from yes on one side to know on the other side and participants position themselves depending on teh answer.</p>		
	1 hour	Intro to the topic of mutual aid	<p>Introduction to Mutual Aid 101 and horizontal groups. Examples of Mutual Aid, principles and values of it and how it is different from charity.</p> <p>Myths about social change and mobilisng.</p> <p>The information can be taken from the book of Dean Spade „Mutual Aid 101“ or from the slides https://skills4crisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Strengthening-Civil-Society-Work-Presentation-Dean-Spade.pdf</p>	Presentation	
10 min Break					
	1 hour	Intro to the topic of alternative medical	Introduction to alternative medical structures, examples of them. As well as putting emphasis on the very concrete skills we need to acquire to	Presentation	

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		structures	be more prepared for crisis. The skills can be found here https://skills4crisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Strengthening-Civil-Society-Work-Skills-set-we-might-need-to-self-organise-medically.pdf		
			Longer Lunch Break - 1.5 hrs		
	1 hour 15 mins	Working and making decisions together	Why Horizontal Group Structures and the complicated dynamics in Mutual Aid groups. Concept of group culture. Making decisions together - consensus Facilitation The information can be taken from the book of Dean Spade „Mutual Aid 101“ or from the slides https://skills4crisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Strengthening-Civil-Society-Work-Presentation-Dean-Spade.pdf	Presentation	
			15 min Break		
	1 hour 15 mins	Dealing with conflicts and finding purpose	Conflicts and abolitionist approach to do our work Giving direct feedback vs. gossiping	Presentation	

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		<p>Quick Pairs and Shares-4 min Each</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Share a time when you got feedback that helped you grow and change.• Share a time when you got feedback that you didn't want, couldn't take in, wasn't grounded, didn't work for you.• Share a time when you gave feedback and it didn't go well, and any reflections about what you would want to do differently.• Share a time when you gave feedback that you think was heard and made a positive impact. What went well? <p>Method of gaining a perspective when being too agitated and practicing belonging at work</p> <p>A note on procrastination and perfectionism</p> <p>The information can be taken from the book of Dean Spade „Mutual Aid 101“ or from the slides https://skills4crisis.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08</p>	
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			/Strengthening-Civil-Society-Work-Presentation-Dean-Spade.pdf		
	25 mins	Wrapping up	<p>Share in pairs:</p> <p>1) what is your take-away / a-ha moment?</p> <p>2) what is the question you're taking with you and want to keep thinking about it?</p> <p>A group discussion.</p>		

Attachment 1

"Safe" Brave Space Poem by Beth Strano

There is no such thing as a "safe space"—

We exist in the real world.

We all carry scars and have caused wounds.

This space

seeks to turn down the volume of the world outside,

and amplify voices that have to fight to be heard elsewhere,

This space will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But

It will be our space together,

and we will work on it side by side.

Attachment 2

WELCOME Reading Group MEETING

Alessandra Pomarico, Esther Poppe, Yayra Sumah, Maya V. El Zanaty. Curators' introduction

<https://youtu.be/SP88ciXrfX4?feature=shared&t=525>

TAKE A MOMENT RIGHT NOW TO ALLOW YOURSELF TO FULLY ARRIVE

ALLOW THE DUST SETTLE IN YOUR MIND

BRING ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY, TO YOUR BREATH IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT

YOU HAVE ARRIVED?

WELCOME!

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.

YOUR CULTURE IS WELCOME

YOUR SOCIAL ORIGIN IS WELCOME

YOUR TRADITIONS, YOUR SKIN COLOR, RACE, GENDER, EDUCATION, LANGUAGE, ACCENT, SYTLE AND

ALL OF THE COMPLEXITIES THAT MAKE UP YOUR CULTURAL IDENTITY ARE WELCOME HERE

WE WELCOME ALL THE WAYS YOUR SEXUALITIY HAS AND IS UNFOLDING

WE WELCOME ALL THE WAYS YOUR GENDER HAS AND IS UNFOLDING

WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR IGNORANCE

WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR PRIVILEGE

WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR GRIEF

WE WELCOME YOU IN YOUR GUILT AND IN YOUR SHAME

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

WE WELCOME YOUR WOUNDS AND YOUR SCARS

WE WELCOME YOUR PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

AND THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC DISEASES YOU SUFFER IN YOUR PRESENT

AND ALSO THE SPECTRAL PAIN YOU CARRY ACROSS GENERATIONS

WE WELCOME YOU AT WHATEVER LEVEL OF PHYSICAL AND

MENTAL WELLNESS ARE YOU CURRENTLY FUNCTIONING

WE WELCOME YOUR INTROVERSION AND YOUR EXTROVERSION

WE WELCOME ALL THE EXPERIENCES THAT LED YOU TO THIS MOMENT

THANK YOU FOR SURVIVING

WE WELCOME YOU AT WHATEVER LEVEL YOU'RE CURRENTLY DECOLONIZING

WE WELCOME YOU IN WHATEVER MOMENT YOU ARE IN DIVESTING FROM SYSTEMIC PATRIARCHY, WHITE SUPREMACY, ABLEISM AND ALL OTHER FORMS OF INTERSECTING FORMS OF OPPRESSION.

WE WELCOME YOU AS YOU UNLEARN INTERNALIZED ANTI-BLACKNESS AND CULTURAL NORMS, CONSUMERIST ADDICTIONS AND EXPLOITATIVE HABITS THAT NO LONGER SERVE THE HEALTH OF OUR INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITIES AND ECOSYSTEMS.

WE WELCOME THE PARTS OF YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE STILL FIGURING OUT.

HAVE YOU ARRIVED?

WELCOME, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE