

Guidelines for support work with survivors of right-wing violence

This information is aimed at people who are already involved in support work with those affected or who would like to become involved in this area. Some points are based on the brochure "Support after a right-wing, racist or anti-Semitic attack. A guide for relatives of those affected" by the VBRG and has been expanded with our own additions. You can find the complete brochure [here: VBRG guide for relatives](#).

We would like to point out that these instructions can of course be adapted for your own use according to your needs or different circumstances and are only intended to provide assistance or food for thought.

Things you can do in support work with those affected:

- Take their feelings seriously and show understanding.
- Realise that working with those affected requires long-term commitment and reliability.
- Trust that you will be told the truth.
- Be aware that this form of support involves relationship work and be there for the person concerned, take your time and be willing to talk.
- Be patient. The healing process takes time, and some wounds will never close completely.
- Support the person's own initiative and respect their wishes and needs.
- Find out about trauma and its consequences so that you can provide better support.
- Point out to the person concerned that there are (albeit few) specialised counselling services and help them to find them if necessary.
- Accompany the person concerned to counselling if they wish.
- Make it clear that the public visualisation of the traumatic experiences of the person concerned can also be anonymised. In this context, point out that this can also lead to dangers.
- Accompany the person concerned in a spirit of critical solidarity if there are media enquiries, for example, and point out any possible risks of appropriation and misrepresentation. If the person concerned wants to do the interview anyway, respect their decision.
- Respect the political views of the person concerned and do not impose your personal political convictions on them.
- Ask the person concerned what they need and offer help. If the person concerned does not want any offers of help, respect their decision.
- Network with other supporters to avoid duplication of work and utilise resources efficiently. There is a solidarity network of campaign groups that can be contacted.
- Be aware of your own stress limits and seek support if necessary to avoid burnout.
- Keep reflecting on your own role, power relations and discrimination mechanisms and ask yourself why you are getting involved. Provide support without undermining the autonomy of the person concerned.
- Realise that you can become a projection surface for those affected in the event of a conflict and that you have to deal with negative feelings.

What not to do in support work with those affected:

- Do not force the person concerned to talk if they do not want to.
- Avoid excessive sympathy, as it does not help the person concerned.
- Do not trivialise the crime and its consequences. Relativisation can hinder the healing process and trigger re-traumatisation.

- Do not take rejections personally.
- Do not put pressure on the person concerned to “function” again quickly.
- Do not patronise the person concerned, even if you have lots of ideas.
- Do not urge the person concerned to report the offence to the police if they do not wish to do so.
- Do not urge people to change their appearance or style of dress in order to avoid being recognised in the future. This kind of demand could convey to the person concerned that they themselves were to blame for the attack.
- Do not do anything without consulting the person concerned – they decide!
- Do not raise your hopes too high. Be honest and provide realistic support.
- Do not name the perpetrators if the person concerned does not want you to.
- Do not undertake anything without consulting the people concerned – this is work WITH the people concerned.
- Do not expect recognition and reflect on your motivation – the work is not about you, but about the people concerned.
- Do not share sensitive data of the persons concerned with outsiders.
- Be careful to whom you address your own feelings: Exchange ideas with other supporters and do not direct this at those affected.
- Do not take on the feelings of those affected and realise the different ways in which you are affected and your role as a supporter.
- Do not ask the person concerned about the offence and do not talk about it in too much detail.