

‘Safer space’. Sounds important, but what does it mean?

In a safer space, we try our best to be free of all the oppressive shit that runs rampant in this world. It means trying to create safety, both mentally and physically, for everyone who comes to the Alarm! events.

A safer space means focusing on the needs of survivors, it means not tolerating abuse, (sexual) assault, or any other kind of oppressive behavior. It means that people who are perpetrators of interpersonal violence, assault or harassment aren’t welcome, unless they are really committed to working on their shit and learning how not to fuck up in that way again.

We say ‘safer’ because we realize there’s no way a space can be completely safe. We are all still learning and we all fuck up sometimes. We don’t want people to wrongly assume nothing bad can happen here. We are committed to making this space more safe, and to taking action when people do act in a way that oppresses those around them.

Coming to a safer space means agreeing to take the responsibility to be aware of your language and behavior. This is no space for violence, for touching people without their consent, for being creepy, sleazy, racist, ageist, sexist, heterosexist, transphobic, ableist, classist, sizeist, or for any other oppressive shit.

If we all agree to be aware of this, we can create an atmosphere in which we can work together in effort not to oppress those around us. By calling each other out, and by being

accountable for our actions instead of getting defensive, we can learn without perpetuating oppressions.

Okay, but why is this so important?

We say we want to battle racism, sexism, classism and all other sorts of oppression in society. We might identify as anarchists, feminists, queers, etc. We might go to demos and discussions, or organize them ourselves. None of this makes sense, though, unless we also try to break the oppressive behaviors we ourselves are taught and replicate. We should try to interact with our friends, lovers, comrades and others in non-hierarchical ways. We need to recognize that oppressive behaviors, assault and abuse aren’t only perpetuated by ‘others’. We ourselves, and the people we know and love and share ideologies with, can also do these things.

Shouldn’t we just be nice to everyone, and not create more conflict?

Sure, getting called out on your behavior is never fun. And yes, it sucks when you or someone you love might be asked to leave, or isn’t allowed to come back for a while. Temporarily excluding people who said or did something violent, abusive or otherwise oppressive is a way to protect survivors and others in the community. Often, survivors and their friends don’t want to be in the same space as perpetrators of violence and oppression. They can be scared the perpetrator fucks up again, or seeing them can bring up bad memories or strong feelings. It can be a

reminder of the shit they have to deal with every day, and should be safe from within their community. So practically, the presence of the perpetrator often means that survivors are excluded. If this makes them feel unsupported by the community as a whole, they might even never want to come back. So, by temporarily excluding the perpetrator, we try to prevent losing survivors!

How do we do this?

Consent

It’s actually pretty simple: we try to make this space safer by using the guidelines of consent. This means asking, listening to and respecting people; it means no coercion, expectations or assumptions. Consent isn’t just the absence of a “no”, but the presence of a “yes.” It is based on clear communication in an environment where people feel comfortable saying “no” and “yes”, and where they can trust that their boundaries are respected. Consent isn’t only important in sexual situations; it’s important in all of our interactions, sexual and nonsexual, physical and nonphysical.

We have agreed on some guidelines and action plans, which can help us make Alarm! events a safer space. When someone acts emotionally or physically violent, or refuses to take accountability for oppressive actions, this person will be asked to leave immediately. If necessary, we will always give the benefit of the doubt to the survivor: we prefer having to apologize to a wrongly accused ‘perpetrator’ than not supporting a survivor!

Some guidelines:

- **Respect everyone's physical and emotional boundaries.** Ask first before touching, or before talking about or asking about topics that might be triggering. If someone tells you that you are making them or other people uncomfortable, listen and change your behavior.
- **Respect everyone's names and pronouns.** Don't assume pronouns, gender, sexual preference, survivor status, economic status, background, health, etc.
- **Be responsible for your own words and actions.** Your actions do have an effect on others, and this can be different from what you intended.
- **Be aware of prejudices and privilege.** Notice if you're falling into any kind of fucked up standard, like male identified persons doing most of the talking and none of the cleaning or cooking.
- **Look out if there are kids or nonhuman animals.** Try to not leave anything around that might endanger them.
- **Don't bring nonhuman animals to events** that might be very crowded or loud, like dance nights.
- **Alarm is not a sober space, but we expect everyone to regulate their intake.** Be aware that intoxication can make discussions less constructive and interesting, and might make others around you feel uncomfortable.
- **Do not take photos or video recordings during info nights.** During dance nights, you may take pictures of yourself and your friends, but do not include others without their consent.

When you or someone around you experiences or witnesses harassment, abuse, (sexual) assault or any other kind of consent violation or otherwise oppressive behavior while you are here, you can come to us. Also, if the presence of a perpetrator of (sexual) violence is making you uncomfortable, you can come to us. There's always at least one safety person present and recognizable by wearing colourful hair flower clip to support you in whatever way comfortable for you.

We can offer you:

- Support, caring, and listening.
- A quiet, private space to talk with us or a friend, or to process on your own.
- Contacting a friend or family member, or for instance, calling a cab.
- We can talk to the perpetrator for you, or mediate communication between you and the perpetrator.
- Removing the perpetrator from the event.
- Resources for further support and/or action.
- If you have other needs, we will do our best to help you with them!

If you don't feel comfortable talking to us in person, or realize later that something made you uncomfortable, we're still there for you! Also, if you have questions, comments, additions, etc. about our safer space policy, feel free to contact us!

You can email us or message us on facebook:
safety.alarm@riseup.net
facebook.com/alarm.acu

This policy is adapted from Safer Spaces NYC. Check out their website for more info:
saferspacesnyc.wordpress.com

ALARM!

SUBVERSIVE POLITICAL NIGHT AT ACU



THE
**SAFER SPACE
POLICY**