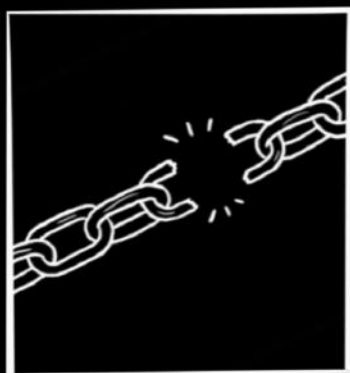


ABOLITION:
HOW WE
KEEP US
SAFE



A ZINE BY ABOLITION ACTION

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We are a collective of abolitionists. We fight for the abolition of policing, prisons, and imperialist armed forces. We believe in the power of the people. We are grounded in the past, present, and future of Black and Indigenous liberation.

The goal of this zine is to share information, skills, and a collective vision of true public safety. We can meet each other's needs. We can keep each other safe. The state refuses to meet the basic needs of the people. Police don't stop violence—they use it against us. Prisons don't provide justice or rehabilitation—they isolate and disappear people from their communities.

We need to transform the root causes of interpersonal violence, such as white supremacy, intergenerational trauma, and the state's exploitation and, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls it, "organized abandonment" of systematically oppressed peoples.

We need every person's basic needs guaranteed, like housing, food, water, education, and mental and physical healthcare.

We need new systems of accountability that center and support trauma survivors.

Our vision is of a world beyond capitalism. We want a world in which everyone's unique abilities and needs are fulfilled; a world in which people can pursue the public good out of a deep sense of solidarity and community, rather than contribute to profits out of coercion and fear of punishment. We envision a world without cops, landlords, prisons, bosses, or borders — for and by the people, united in solidarity, and finally, finally free.

We can come together and learn how to protect each other when cops harass us, when ICE intrudes on our neighborhoods, and when landlords try to evict us.

We can learn how to keep friends and neighbors safe in situations of interpersonal violence, provide for one another's mental and physical well-being, and build strong communities to strengthen us against the forces of the state.

We can look out for each other. We keep us safe.

**ABOLITION
ACTION**

Land Acknowledgment

Our work, including the production and development of this zine, takes place on the stolen land of the Lenni Lenape people. We acknowledge the violent force of European colonization on this land and the legacy of that colonization in our lives today. As members of Abolition Action are predominantly non-Indigenous, we recognize our status as occupiers of stolen land, and seek to work in solidarity with Indigenous liberation and as accomplices against the settler-colonial US state.

The basis of mutual aid is relationships rooted in shared experiences. Living in the same neighborhood is one source of common experiences. However, just living in physical proximity to someone else does not mean your experiences are the same. This is something readers who benefit from gentrification should be especially mindful of when engaging in mutual aid with neighbors. Recognize your position as that of someone who has benefited from the theft of land. The theft of land through gentrification by the monied (and majority white) is a contemporary version of colonization. The force and manipulation used against Indigenous peoples in order to steal the land continues in the form of policing non-white and less-wealthy people who are the original residents of a neighborhood. In the interests of capital, the ownership and “development” of private property is protected and served by the police.

Land acknowledgments are a starting point to on-going work that challenges the norms of colonization. If you are new in your neighborhood, or are unaware of the history of the land you already occupy, we encourage you to educate yourself as part of your mutual aid work. This not only includes better understanding the militarized colonization (and gentrification) of the land, but informing yourself of existing mutual aid practices and organizations. Mutual aid is a term that describes practices of collective care that predate capitalism and colonization. The vast majority of our education about mutual aid comes from the work of survival amidst the violence enacted by the US state and policing in the interest of protecting property and whiteness. Mutual aid must work to undermine and uproot systems of white supremacy.



Ways to Build Relationships/Community with Your Neighbors During COVID

A world without policing and prisons depends on community. Before we can begin keeping each other safe, we must get to know each other, then earn each other's trust. The pandemic makes that harder, but also much more important, because times like these are when we need each other most. Here are some ways to establish or strengthen community ties and solidarity with those who live and work closest to you.

1. Talk to the neighbors or local friends you already know, and invite them to collaborate with you on some of these ideas to build community. Ask them to reach out to neighbors they know. Make flyers for events, make a post in the Facebook group or listserv for your neighborhood block association, talk about it in your new building group chat. Ask the neighbors you see at the mailbox and your kids' playmates' parents questions. Ask how they've been doing and about their dream vision of community. If you are newer to the neighborhood or otherwise disengaged, take walks and (distantly) introduce yourself to people hanging out outside; research to see if you have a neighborhood block association or a tenants' association and get involved. They may still be meeting virtually or have a Facebook group. Share of yourself, and support with your labor, but do not seek a leadership role if you are brand new to the neighborhood, especially if you are white and/or wealthy.
2. If your neighbors and you speak different/multiple languages, try starting a language-learning partners buddy system. Setting up regular conversational calls will help you get to know each other and learn more of each other's language. Also make sure that whatever events you plan are as multilingual accessible as possible. For example, use Google Meet to provide live captions for deaf folks over videochat; or watch a movie in English with Spanish subtitles and a movie in Spanish with English subtitles. If you are looking to set up a solidarity network, make sure the languages spoken in the group reflect the language(s) spoken in your neighborhood. Your solidarity network is not accessible if it's only accessible to people who speak your language.

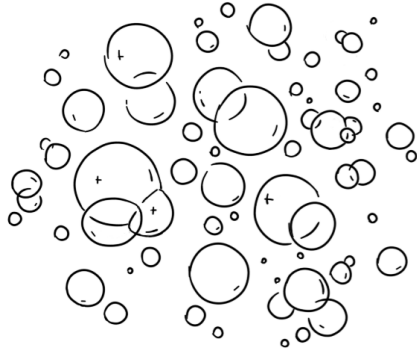
3. Join the local food co-op. If your immuno-risk level allows, help out at a food distribution/tutoring center/community garden, and get take-out from local (especially Black-owned) businesses. Make friendly (masked!) conversation at/ outside your local bodega, take walks and greet people on stoops, and hang out at the park.
4. Invite people to a socially distant picnic in a park (with individual servings, or carefully prepped food, self-served). Think about how to make it accessible and kid-friendly.
5. A virtual movie night: you can all start at a certain time, and share reactions either via text or out loud on Jitsi/Zoom. If you wear headphones, you won't hear each other's movie audio.
6. Get into groups of three, and set up weekly calls or socially distant walks around the neighborhood (especially if you have dogs to walk, or kids that want to play outside!)
7. Start a buddy system for elderly and immuno-compromised neighbors, with phone check-ins.
8. Set up or attend an online game of trivia, spades, poker, or charades.
9. Start a reading group with essays, podcast episodes, short fiction or poetry accessible for free online, and discuss on the phone or via videochat. Vote or take turns picking the reading.
10. Start a regular, socially distant read-aloud or game hour for kids in the neighborhood (this will also provide some relief for parents and caregivers!).
11. If you don't have access to a community garden, plan to each grow a few things on your fire escape, roof, or indoors. Share seeds, seek advice, send each other pictures of the growing sprouts, and exchange portions of the harvest and recipes!
12. Plan a socially distant open mic music night in an outdoor space, and stream it for folks who can't come.

Example Note to Start a Building Group Text Thread & Phone Tree

Hi! My name is _____ and I am your neighbor at the address _____, and my number is _____. I'm reaching out because I know that the coronavirus and police presence have spread in our area, and that state services are not protecting us from disaster, hunger, or harm. I want to be connected with you and our other neighbors so we can stay in touch, pool resources and skills, and support each other with any needs that may come up. I am going to start a group text message thread and phone tree so we can be in communication. Please text or call me when you get this if you would like to be part of this network! If you think we speak different languages, let me know and we can work together to find another person or tool to help us communicate.

Scenario Questions for Your Solidarity Network

- 1) What's your time in this neighborhood been like for you? Do you know neighbors well? What are some things that a relatively new neighbor should know? What are ways folks support each other that I might not know about?
- 2) What is a dream or idea you have for something to create in this community? (ex. childcare collective, tool library, block BBQs, wheelchair accessible sidewalks)
- 3) Is there anything you enjoy that you might like to share with neighbors or nearby friends? (ex. painting a mural together, regular soccer games in the park, Words With Friends, teaching someone Spanish)
- 4) What is a major challenge in your life right now?
- 5) How could neighbors support you in facing that challenge?
- 6) Do you or your household members have any medical/mental health conditions that are helpful for others to know about? What might be signs of an emergency? Signs that might be alarming to others but are actually just your normal?
- 7) What is the best way to approach you if someone wants to address a concern? Do you prefer texts, a knock on the door, one-on-ones, a present third party?
- 8) What would you want me to do if I heard yelling and banging in your apartment?
- 9) Are there situations in which you would feel you had no choice but to call the cops?



Care Network

We cannot rely on the cops to keep us safe or hold us accountable in ways that don't leave us traumatized, shamed, caged, or dead. Violence, harm, and trauma happen; we must start having conversations with one another to build trusting relationships and networks of support.

This resource comes from Mia Mingus and the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective. The circles here are called a "pod." Your "pod" is made up of the people that you would call on for support in case of an emergency – for example, if someone harms you; or if you want support in taking accountability for violence or harm that you've done; if you witness violence; or if someone you care about is being violent or being abused.

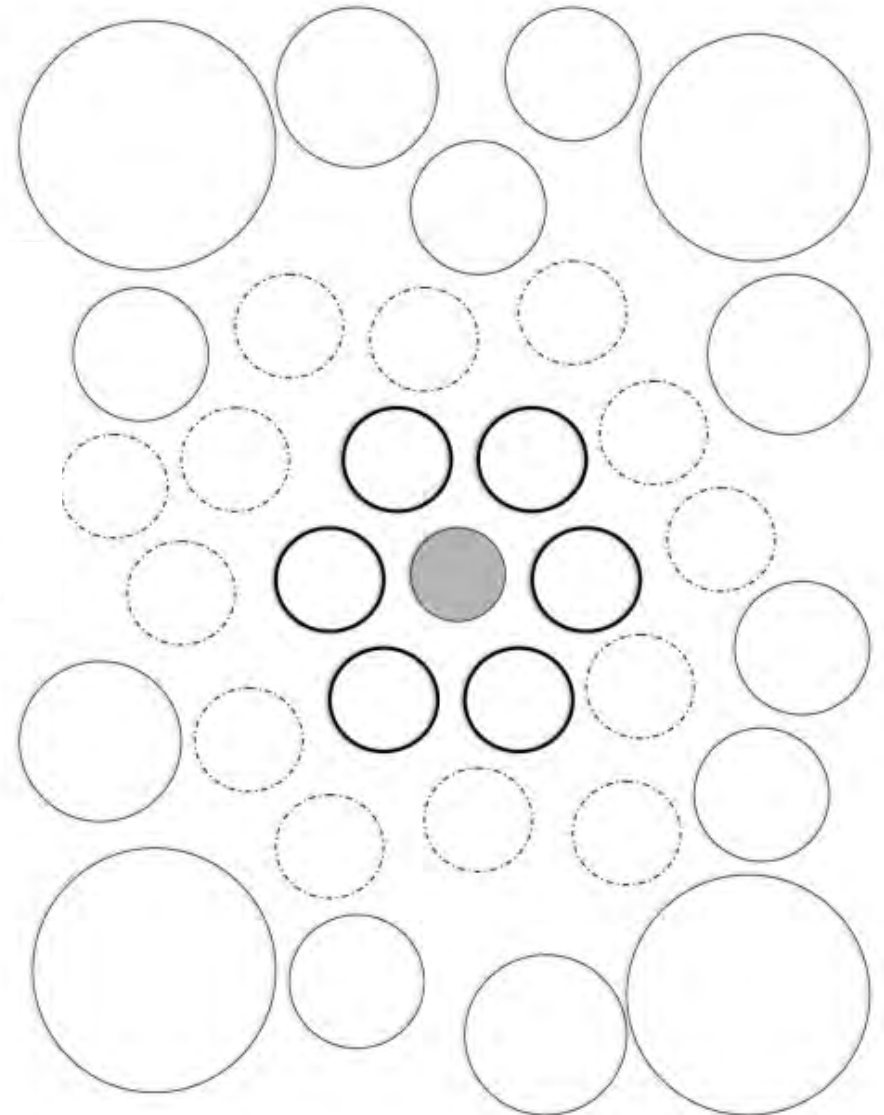
This tool is intended to help you think about who you would call for support. It is also a concrete way to see who's in your community. An important part of this is talking to the people you write down before moments of crisis, and asking them if you can rely on them when in need.

- 1) Write your name in the middle grey circle.
- 2) In the surrounding bold-outlined circles, write the names of specific people in your life who you trust and can rely on. Write what support they might be able to provide, for example, a close friend you can always call, a neighbor who can bring you food when you're sick, a cousin with a couch to crash on, etc.

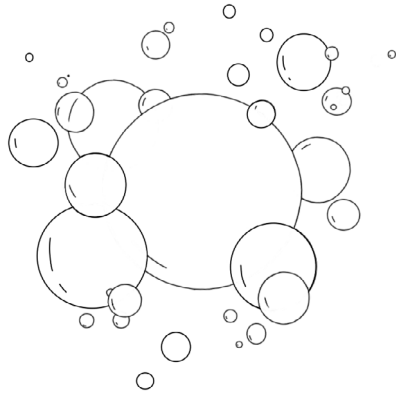
Talk to your people and ask what they feel able to provide. Then ask them what they need from you, or let them know what you can offer. Mutual aid is mutual.

- 3) The dotted line circles are for people that could be in your circle, but need a little more time or intention. For example, you might need to build trust with them or start having more conversations about care and support for one another.
- 4) The larger circles at the edge of the page are for communities or groups that could be resources for you. It could be your classmates at nursing school, the community at your church, or people from an organization you're a part of.

Thinking about who you can rely on can help you open conversations with the people in your life about caring for one another, building trust and reliability, and putting the structures in place so we never have to call the cops, but instead can provide support and safety for one another.



Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective Pod Mapping



Providing Care

Under capitalism, “disability” is an artificial and political category. We know that everyone has their own needs and capacities, with a range of abilities. It is capitalism that puts the label of “disabled” on people whose labor it has deemed *unprofitable* those who can't work so cheaply for so long that some boss can easily make money off them.

To move beyond this, we have to understand that everyone has unique needs and a unique capability to fulfill each other's needs. *The more we understand about each other, the more completely we can care for each other and the more resilient our communities will be.* We can start with this tool, inspired by the Sick Bed Visioning of famous choreographer Verónica Bayetti Flores.

What does a mental health emergency/crisis look like for you?

What kind of intervention would you like to have someone give you in the event of the aforementioned emergency?

Are there specific people who you are able to intervene?

What kinds of acts of service would be helpful to you in the aftermath of an emergency? (receiving meals, going to appointments, picking up groceries/prescriptions, doing laundry, getting rides):

What kind of care would you like to receive in challenging times outside of crisis moments?

What qualifies as a physical emergency for you?

Name:

Address:

Phone number:

Who has keys to your house/car (include contact info):

Underlying health concerns:

Meds (prescription and otherwise):

Doctor (include contact info and any info you don't want shared with your doctor):

How would you want to get to the hospital in an emergency:

Instructions for family of origin (any info you don't want shared?):

Anyone else who needs to be notified (include contact info and what info to pass on):

Who can drop food/supplies for you:

Who can come into your house and care for you:

Childcare needs (contact info for childcare providers):

Pet needs (contact info for caretaker):

Laundry needs:

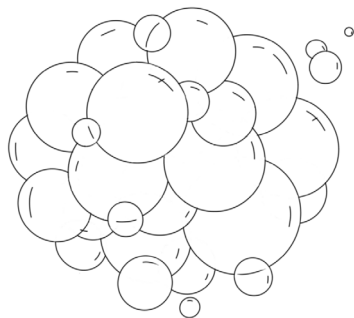
Favorite meals:

Favorite desserts/sweets:

Dietary restrictions/allergies:

Favorite sick activities:

Other comforts:



Longer-Term Mental Health Support

Abolition is a struggle against the carceral-capitalist state that has been fought for centuries. Mutual aid requires long-term engagement between the people involved in order for it to be truly mutual. When it comes to personal wellness, more impactful problems and dynamics might manifest throughout a person's life, so as community members we need to build enduring networks of care that stick around through highs and lows.

One example of longer-term care: Mutual Aid Self/Social Therapy by the Jane Addams Collective

Mutual Aid Self/Social Therapy (MAST) is a collection of techniques curated and designed by a collective of therapists, activists, social workers, and other members of the Jane Addams Collective. The goal is to provide accessible mental health support for people involved in struggles against the state. By participating in MAST, a group of people provide intentional support for each other equally, taking turns to both counsel and be counseled. Participants in MAST are guided by the belief that everyone knows their own body and mind best. MAST considers itself an "ongoing project" in which each session/triad is an experiment from which feedback and critique is welcomed. Its tools can be a resource in our communities outside of formal MAST sessions.

How It Works

MAST consists of regular meetings (preferably weekly) of a group of people who spend time each meeting learning the skills of the toolkit and then using them with each other in three or four person groups. Each smaller group remains the same week to week and within these groups, each member serves both as a supporter and as a person being supported. There are three phases of MAST in which the goal is to identify an existing thought and behavior pattern (called a generating belief) that gets in the way of a person being able to take care of themselves, and replace it with a different belief and behavior that reduces harm. Phase 1 is about identifying that existing belief, phase 2 is about mapping how it impacts the person's life and coming up with an alternative generating belief, and phase 3 is the longer term process of bringing the new belief into a person's life and using the support of the sessions to hold oneself accountable. One of the main systems of tools used throughout the MAST process can be summarized as attentive and reflective listening.

Attentive and Reflective Listening

This type of listening is a summary of a system of tools that MAST participants use to identify the existing belief that results in a person feeling and acting in a way that gets in the way of their well-being. The goal is to allow someone the space to be heard and to map out what they're feeling and thinking, and to gain insight into what about their situation is a result of their internal feelings and thoughts and what is a result of external factors. This practice can be a helpful part of longer term support (in or outside of MAST sessions) because it centers the person's own understanding of their experience while giving them the opportunity to hear an outside perspective. Here are some examples.

Context: Your friend isn't as responsive as usual to your texts and has been expressing frustration and other difficult emotions about a relationship. They call you to talk about it.

1. *Check in with yourself:* Are your basic needs currently met? Are you going through a mental health challenge yourself? Can you offer attention and time to this friend at this moment? How personally involved are you in the situation? Are you prepared to listen non-judgmentally?

These questions are important to consider when offering support because if you're not prepared to be careful and intentional with the support you give, there is greater risk of increasing harm, both to yourself and the other person. In order to care for each other we must trust in each individual's ability to care and show love for themselves. Crisis situations are different because someone's immediate safety is in danger.

2. *Establish Informed Consent:* Let your friend know you're going to employ attentive and reflective listening, a tool you read about in the MAST toolkit. Ask if they're okay with that.
3. *Listen Attentively:* Allow your friend to speak. Give your full attention and reduce distractions. Offer signs that you are listening to encourage them.

Pay attention to:

- moments when your friend shows they're feeling something intense (crying, slower/faster speech, raised voice, exclamations, nervous laughter/fidgeting, etc.)
- repetition of certain phrases
- generalizing statements ("this always happens to me," "I would never do something like that")
- "black and white thinking"—when someone views something/someone/ themselves as either completely good or completely bad
- catastrophizing—when someone is over-estimating the impact of a situation ("if I fail this test, my life will be over")
- "mind-reading"—when someone assumes that others agree with negative views they have of themselves ("I can feel they all think I'm annoying")

4. *Reflect Back*: Summarize what you've just heard, sharing what you noticed about how the person is feeling and how they're thinking about the situation. Affirm strengths and validate concerns.

Don't:

- Offer advice or make suggestions ("you should," "what if you,")
- Make it about you by adding in new information (especially if you are familiar with the person/situation being described) or comparing the situation to something you've experienced
- Shame the person ("if you're so worried about it then just stop over-thinking," "you really shouldn't let them bother you so much")
- Assume you understand what the other person is feeling

Do:

- When summarizing, omit details if you forgot or ask them to briefly clarify
- When offering your impressions of the person's thoughts and feelings use the "I" perspective ("I hear that you think ____", "What I'm hearing is that you are feeling ____")
- Affirm emotional experiences, if the person shows or says that they're feeling a certain way, validate those experiences as real ("This sounds like a very scary situation for you, and from an outside perspective, it does seem scary," "from what I understand about what you've told me, I can see why you'd be upset")

After attentive and reflective listening: in MAST, this system of tools serves a specific function that is the beginning of a longer process. Consult the MAST toolkit to learn more. As mentioned above, attentive and reflective listening is a tool that can be used outside of MAST to have more intentional conversations about difficult issues our friends and community members are facing. Though attentive and reflective listening isn't about giving advice or offering solutions, it is a starting point to helping the people we're supporting to find out what is best for themselves moving forward.

There are other forms of long term mental health mutual aid that aren't explicitly MAST: healing circles, 12 step-programs, mental health check-ins with friends, shared rituals geared toward emotional well-being.



Mental Health Crisis Response

Cops are inherently incapable of responding to a mental health crisis. It is often the case that domestic abuse and suicide hotlines, as well as therapists, social workers, and even teachers, are legally obligated to report sensitive information to the cops. We must learn how to provide care for strangers, neighbors, and friends in challenging times and in times of crisis without putting them at further risk. *Abolition is not creating new authorities in place of the cops*, but building the relationships, skills, and trust necessary to take care of one another.

Each person is the expert of their own mind, body, autonomy and experiences. This tool from Project LETS provides grounding guidelines for de-escalation, crisis intervention, and collective care.

De-escalation and Psychological First-Aid for Strangers

Try not to react to crisis with fear, panic, control, or anger, but rather with care, openness, and patience. Act in collaboration with the person in crisis.

Don't assume folks talking to themselves, pacing, engaging in repetitive activities, or neglecting their appearance/hygiene require immediate help or are in an acute crisis. Unconventional does not mean dangerous.

Agitation, physical aggression, irritability, suicidal gestures or threats, self-injurious behavior, and obvious intoxication may require intervention. If we take it upon ourselves to intervene, the goal is to de-escalate the situation.

De-escalation consists of the mindset, language, and actions that a person takes to connect with someone in a state of emotional distress, with the goal of lowering the risk of harm caused to any of the people involved.

It's helpful to start by introducing yourself and making sure the person knows who you are. This demonstrates openness and empathy, and can calm tension.

Often people experiencing a mental health crisis know what can soothe them, and their own expertise about their bodies and minds shouldn't be discounted. Ask the person if there are any techniques or tools that they use to self-soothe ex: "Is there anything I can get you to help you feel a bit better right now? / Do you have a safety plan? / Is there anyone we can call who would be helpful? / Do you want a glass of water? / Do you want to go for a walk?"

Avoid using a loud voice, whispering, laughing, lengthy complicated questions (stick with yes or no questions), talking about the person to others in front of them, making decisions for them without consent, and standing over the person. Listen non-judgmentally and assure the person of their safety while avoiding making promises you can't keep.

Providing Care for Friends in Moments of Crisis

You don't know everything and you can't do it alone. But be conscientious about who you bring in to help; make sure no one would break trust and call the cops or try to institutionalize the person against their consent.

Work in teams, create sanctuary and meet basic needs, consider factors such as drugs or lack of sleep, and center what the person wants and needs.

Don't: Blame, accuse, lie (about who you are, what you can do for them, who you are getting involved), demonstrate disbelief about their experience, make demands, touch/transport without consent, stand in their personal space, block door/exit pathway, force them to speak

Do: Try to understand and reflect on what the person is experiencing and what they're communicating about

Do: Ask simple questions, one at a time, and use plain language

Do: Be direct! Ask if they're considering killing themselves, if they have tools or plan. Ask if they're comfortable enough sharing that plan or giving you/getting rid of the tools. Ask if they have already executed their plan.

Do: Consider moving to a different environment; be conscious of body language (non-threatening posture, open arms, relaxed hands)

Do: Ask what will help them to feel safe and in control, offer choices



Ask yourself

- Have you compassionately asked them what they need?
- Have you created and held space to just talk about their experiences, emotions and suicide without judgement?
- Have you made sure basic needs are met? (example: food, sleep)
- Have you assessed the risk of suicide/danger (intent, means, plan)?
- Have you checked if they have an existing provider/support system?
- Have you checked to see if there is an existing crisis/safety plan, or Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD)? (If not, build one)
- Have you sought out urgent, community based crisis resources?

Suggestions for a Friend Experiencing Panic, Mania, or Psychosis

- Getting adequate sleep will likely bring this person down from their mania/psychosis. Eating can also help with this.
- Being around people they trust who validate their experience will also help and act as a circle of protection around them.
- Having loving and affectionate time with people they love will help profoundly with the paranoia and, likely, the delusions. This can also calm the trauma responses that may be subconsciously triggering this situation.
- You may also suggest that the person take a break from using drugs like weed, alcohol, acid, etc.
- If you are texting the person, try to strike a balance between validating, remaining calm and loving, speaking kind of casually so the friend won't take on our panic, and introducing some steps that may bring them down, with consent for suggestions.
- If your friend has a psychiatrist or therapist, ask them if they have an appointment this week. Assess how likely their mental healthcare team is to involuntarily hospitalize them.
- If your friend takes meds that work well for them, try to encourage them to keep taking them, on the grounds that suddenly stopping medication can really throw your body and brain out of whack and make it hard to take care of yourself and do the things that fulfill you.
- Centering your friend's pursuit of and personal definitions of wellness and joy is key if making suggestions.



Treating an Overdose with Narcan

People of color are far more likely than white people to face violence and incarceration at the hands of police for drug use or for seeming to be under the influence. We know the police react violently to situations where harm-reductionist interventions are needed. A life-saving development has been the invention of Narcan, a nasal spray (or injectable) that can reverse an opioid overdose (of heroin, Fentanyl, morphine, codeine, Oxycodone, or Vicodin). You can get a Narcan kit in any New York pharmacy, over the counter or with insurance, or get free kits from community organizations. Carry it with you all the time or keep in an easily accessible place. Remember that you have no idea what is leading someone to use, and it's not your place to judge or advise them – only to offer support if you can actually give it, if it's desired, or if there is a crisis.

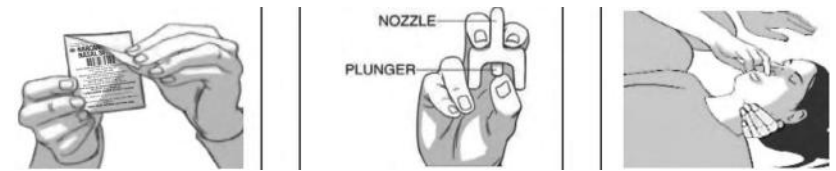
Know the Signs of Overdose

- Person is passed out and you cannot wake them up.
- Breathing very slowly, making gurgling sounds, or not breathing at all.
- Lips are a blue or grayish color.

Check for a Response

- Shake them and shout to wake them up. If there is no response, grind your knuckles into their chest bone for 5-10 seconds.
- If the person still does not respond, call 911. Report the symptoms, not the cause, ex. "I am with someone who is unconscious and not breathing!" rather than "Someone's overdosed!" Under the Good Samaritan Law in New York, you and the overdosed person are protected from felony charges for possession of substances, underage drinking, and/or sharing drugs. This law does NOT protect charges of possessing 8 ounces or more of an illegal substance, sale or intent to sell substances, open warrants for arrest, or violation of probation or parole.

- Take Narcan Nasal Spray out of the box. Peel back tab with the circle to open the Narcan Nasal Spray. Do not remove Narcan until ready to use or test the device.



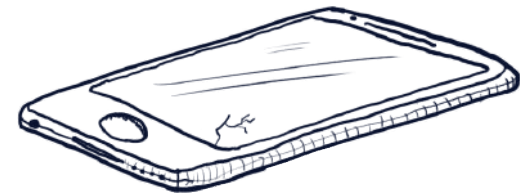
- Hold the Narcan Nasal Spray with your thumb on the bottom of the plunger and your first and middle fingers on either side of the nozzle.
- Tilt the person's head back and provide support under the neck with your hand.
- Gently insert the tip of the nozzle into one nostril, until your fingers on either side of the nozzle are against the bottom of the person's nose.
- Press the plunger firmly to give the dose of Narcan Nasal Spray. Remove the Narcan Nasal Spray from the nostril after giving the dose.
- Wait and watch the person closely. If the person does not respond in 2-mins, repeat the steps and give the second dose of Narcan Nasal Spray in the box.
- Roll the person on their side and place them in the "recovery position."
- If the person is not breathing, do rescue breathing (or CPR if you know it). Some Narcan kits come with rescue breathing masks to make mouth-to-mouth a little safer.
 - Tilt the head back, lift the chin, and pinch the nose.
 - Start with two breaths into the mouth. Continue with 1 breath every 5 seconds. The person's chest should rise and fall with each breath; if not, check to make sure the head is tilted back and the mouth is clear.
 - Keep doing rescue breathing until the person breathes on their own or until medical help arrives.

Rescue Breathing Steps



- When the person wakes up, explain what happened. Let them know that taking more drugs in the immediate future could cause another overdose later, and that the Narcan in their system will prevent them from getting high regardless. Let them know that you called for help but only reported medical symptoms and that they are protected under the law, even if they have drug paraphernalia around.
- Naloxone, the medicine in Narcan, wears off in 30 to 90 minutes.
- **Stay with the person** until after they receive medical attention, especially if cops come with the ambulance. If they decide to leave before medical help arrives, do not coerce them into staying, but do offer to wait with them somewhere else to make sure they are okay, or ask if they have someone else who can wait with them. They may experience withdrawal symptoms and may be angry that you woke them up. Don't expect to make friends in this situation. Do expect to save lives and, aim to honor people's consent as much as possible when they are awake to give it.**

*1: If it turns out someone is not breathing for another reason, Narcan will not have any negative effect.



Instead of Calling the Cops

When cops enter a situation, especially an emotionally tense one, it is likely that they will bring violence, either through direct brutality or the threat of incarceration. Cops are not deployed to de-escalate – they are trained to see Black, brown, neurodivergent, and/or low-income folks as threats, and to incapacitate people through whatever means necessary. *As abolitionists, our duty is to not turn to police or carceral solutions when we have a problem, but to build our skills and networks to create alternatives.*

- 1) It's 3 AM and your neighbor is blasting music. Your baby can't sleep, you have a big presentation in the morning, the porcelain is falling out of the cupboard, and your dog is panting like it's the 4th of July. But you also know that calling the cops seriously risks the lives and mental health of your Black and brown neighbors (even if the music-playing neighbors are white), and no amount of sleep is worth that risk!
 - a) Take a deep breath and let your neighbors have a little joy. Ignore it as best you can. Try earplugs, headphones, white noise audio, etc. Remember that adjusting to noise may help you or babies tune it out and become deeper sleepers over time.
 - b) Knock on your neighbor's door. "Hi, I'm your upstairs neighbor, _____! It's good to see you. Seems like a fun party! I hate to interrupt, but the music is coming through really loud to my bedroom, and I/my baby can't sleep. Do you think you could turn down the volume some, please? Thank you!"
 - c) If asking on your own does not help, ask for help from other neighbors, especially those who have a relationship with the neighbor playing the music. Ask for their guidance or mediation for a small conversation either about this issue, or, with more neighbors, more broadly about each person's concerns and ideas around quality of life and community. Try to find common ground and figure out how you can come together to make an environment that is workable for everyone. Transformative justice tools might be helpful. Do your best to go into this process seeking not punishment or authority, but understanding and resolution.
 - d) If this is a regular situation that is really disturbing your routine, and you are not a long-term resident, and if talking to your neighbors doesn't help, consider moving somewhere else, and make sure to spend some time in the neighborhood at night before signing a lease.

2) Someone has begun sleeping outside your stoop, or maybe in the stairwell of your building. Often they are talking to themselves. One of your neighbors wants to call the cops. You know that this might lead to death or jail for your unhoused neighbor, and that shelters are unsafe places for many, especially transgender and gender-nonconforming folks, and people with mental illness, disabilities, or immunodeficiencies.

- a) Point out that this person is doing no harm, just causing discomfort. There is a big difference (and, in general, houseless people and people with mental illness are far more likely to be victims of violence than to harm others). Ask if you all really need to do anything to change the situation, or if this peripheral space can be a refuge for your unhoused neighbor for now.
- b) Approach your unhoused neighbor, and if they appear distressed, use some of the mental health first aid tools in the Mental Health Crisis Response section. Introduce yourself and ask if there is anything they need. You might organize your neighbors into a meal rotation of either inviting in your unhoused neighbor for meals or bringing them food. Perhaps you can assist them in navigating social services or finding housing if that is something they want.
- c) If your neighbors find this situation unbearable, stall them enough to go up to your unhoused neighbor, introduce yourself, and warn them that some people in the building are bothered by their presence and want to call the police. Ask them to leave, and offer any assistance from option (b) with help from some neighbors or friends.

3) You hear yelling in an apartment on your floor. You hear noises of drawers and cabinets getting slammed. You hear words from another voice, "Let me go!" Yet you know that cops almost always make situations of domestic violence worse for the survivor (cops are not trained to de-escalate, and their presence can cause the person doing harm to retaliate against the survivor). Survivors often choose not to call the police for a variety of reasons including fear of police, fear of the person doing harm, financial dependency, and disbelief in the police and social services' ability to stop abuse. What can you do?

- a) Knock on the door of your neighbor's apartment, and use some of the tips in the Conflict De-Escalation section. If you are afraid for your safety, ask a roommate/other neighbor to come with you, especially if they have more of a relationship with these neighbors than you do. If you can tell from the voices or through previous experience who is being harmed, try to speak directly to them, or if possible give them a temporary escape option from the situation— but don't assume you know on the basis of gender. Abuse can happen within a variety of gender dynamics.
 - i) Direct but non-threatening: "Hi, I heard some loud noises, and just wanted to check and make sure you were okay. Is there anything I can help with?"
 - ii) Indirect, through distraction: "Hi, I got locked out of my apartment without my phone, and was wondering if I could use one of your phones, please?" / "Hi, I'd like to talk to you about the neighborhood block association/our mutual aid pod/plans for a community garden! Can I ask you a few questions and give you my phone number?"/ "Hi, I thought I smelled gas in the hallway, would you mind coming to take a look with me?" / "Hi, I think you might have some of my mail?" Even a relatively brief interruption to violence might serve to bring energy down.

b) Later follow-up: if you cannot intervene in the moment, reach out to a local organization that supports domestic violence survivors and ask for their support. They may be able to provide resources or personnel to de-escalate the conflict. You could then check in the next day, introducing yourself if you don't already know them. This is easier if you know who was harming whom, or could recognize that by voice upon meeting your neighbors. If you knock and the person who answers the door is the one who was doing harm, you could make up an excuse per the distraction method, and try again another time.

- i) Once you connect with the person you believed to be in danger, introduce yourself, and describe what you heard, with the direct/non-threatening tactic. It is important not to say anything judgmental or accusatory of the other person; your neighbor will likely jump to cover for them, especially if they don't know you, and if the other person is home and overhears, they may block your neighbor from talking to you again. You might leave your phone number with your neighbor and invite them to text you if they ever need anything, or maybe you could say you are trying to get to know more neighbors and invite them on a socially distant walk or a virtual movie showing for the building. The best thing you can do is build a relationship over time where they know that you are a safe, nonjudgmental person to come to for help. If you already have that relationship, skip to the Creative Intervention Tools section to make a safety plan, and read more of the full pdf online to learn about supporting survivors and interrupting harm.
- ii) Tell a neighbor that has more of a relationship with this neighbor.

c) Do nothing. This is the lowest-effort option and is not ideal, but is still safer for your neighbors than bringing in a police presence.



Conflict De-Escalation

A commitment to abolition means starting from the self and building out. As we work to dismantle prisons and policing systems, we must learn how to approach interpersonal conflict with an anti-carceral mindset. Often, people are tempted to call the cops when they see a conflict escalating: voices rising, body language growing tense. Cops don't address the harm created by a conflict — they often intensify it. When we learn to de-escalate conflict ourselves, we discourage bystanders from calling the police and build the foundation of a world in which harm is addressed through care and community knowledge, not cages. Bystander intervention can be a helpful tool for addressing instances of harassment or hate that you witness in public.

From Hollaback!'s Bystander Intervention Training, the 5 Ds of Bystander Intervention are: Distract, Delegate, Delay, Direct, Document. First, notice the scenario and assess your safety. Think of any personal concerns that put you at higher-risk. Decide if there is something you can do.

- Distract is an indirect approach. Start a conversation with the person experiencing harassment. Ask questions that will draw attention away from the situation. ("Excuse me, what time is it?" "I need help with directions, can you help me?") Pretend to be a friend or neighbor. Drop something, or do something loudly to distract the harasser and people watching.
- Delegate is when you tell another person who can help, i.e. a bus driver or store owner. Or, you turn to the person next to you and ask for help, distracting or directing in teamwork. Be sure this person does not call the cops.
- Delay. Once the harassment is over, check in on the person to see how you can help. Ask what they need and if they are okay. Non-verbal examples include sitting next to them or gesturing.
- Direct means directly naming the behavior ("This is racist"), naming what you observe ("Are you okay? You look uncomfortable"), or addressing the harasser ("Why don't you leave them alone?"). Do not engage the harasser in conversation; keep it brief. This is not about them or your opinions. Your priority is to keep the person being harassed safe.
- Document by filming the event. While recording, stand back. Capture landmarks of place (i.e., street signs). Clearly state date and time. Give it to the person being harassed. Let them decide what to do with the footage. Don't immediately share on social media. Be mindful of not wanting to hurt other people by widely spreading upsetting footage. Think through your motivations.



Creating a Safety Plan

Policing and prisons contribute to cycles of trauma and violence, rather than addressing the root causes of harm. As abolitionists, we acknowledge the harm, crises, and other traumatic experiences that happen in our communities. We examine the factors that influence the difficulties people experience, and in consideration of those factors, we think proactively about how to address those challenges and threats to our community members' well-being. A safety plan is a measure people can take *before or during a crisis* to figure out what they need to take care of themselves and how they want to be helped by their community.

The **Creative Interventions Toolkit** is a collaborative document produced by individuals and organizations who have studied non-carceral solutions to interpersonal violence and worked to implement those solutions in their communities. It is available for free online (link found in the back of the zine). The toolkit provides a framework for identifying sources of violence and then pulling together community members to both stop that violence and to transform the relationships that once allowed it to happen.

Below is one such worksheet from the Toolkit that can help you create a safety plan:

Creative Interventions Toolkit Section 4B: Staying Safe Tool B2: Safety Plan & Action Worksheet

What are safety plans & actions?

Safety Plans:

Safety plans are often considered "What if" situations. Once the potential harms and risks are considered, think about plans to gain safety.

Safety Actions:

Actions may need to take place immediately in order to keep people safe - particularly important in crisis / high danger situations (including physical, emotional, sexual, or financial danger).

Safety Plan and Action Worksheet

This Safety Plan is for the following Situation:	This Safety Plan covers the time period:
--	--

1. Risks, dangers, harm:			
2. Who / what is the cause: (What do we need to look out for?)			
3. Target of risk, danger, or harm (Who can get hurt, and how?)			
4. Who is looking out for safety?			
5. What safety actions and under what circumstances? (What can we do to stay safe?)			

Who is responsible for what part of the safety plan?	
Do we have all the bases covered? Do we need to bring in more people?	
What is the emergency backup plan? How will we know we should go into emergency mode? Is there a signal or code?	

How to use the Safety Plan and Action Worksheet

1. Get together with another person / group / community

Because Safety Plans and Actions are taken in dangerous situations, any action should involve at least one other person, preferably more, for planning, support, and follow-up.

2. Brainstorm and assess risks. Consider getting more info on what dangers might be.
3. Create a safety plan for each risk (Prioritize highest-emergency risks).

Consider:

- a. What do we need to do to be safe or reduce risk? Eg:

- Prepare for escape
- Tell trusted people about the situation
- Ask trusted people to take certain roles
- Prepare or gather necessary items
- Get locks or change locks
- Keep certain items in protected areas (friend's home, safety deposit box, workplace)
- Take action to remove weapons
- Distract someone dangerous to de-escalate or buy time for others to escape / work on their safety plans,
- Call friends and family to involve them in providing a safety network
- Move children to a safer location
- Find and contact resources / organizations (Violence intervention programs, counselors, knowledgeable family/friends, lawyers or legal services, workplaces, unions, schools)

- b. Communication plan, including:

- Safe, confidential ways to contact people
- Signs or signals that things are ok / not ok.
- Who can one call in an emergency.
- Follow-up communication that things are ok / not ok
- Follow-up communication for next steps
- Agreement on who can know what—and who cannot

- c. Safe transportation if needed:

- Safe forms of transportation
- Safe place to park car
- Safe routes to take if needed
- Back-up transportation if needed
- Pick up plan for other allies, family, friends, children
- Safekeeping of items if someone needs to escape

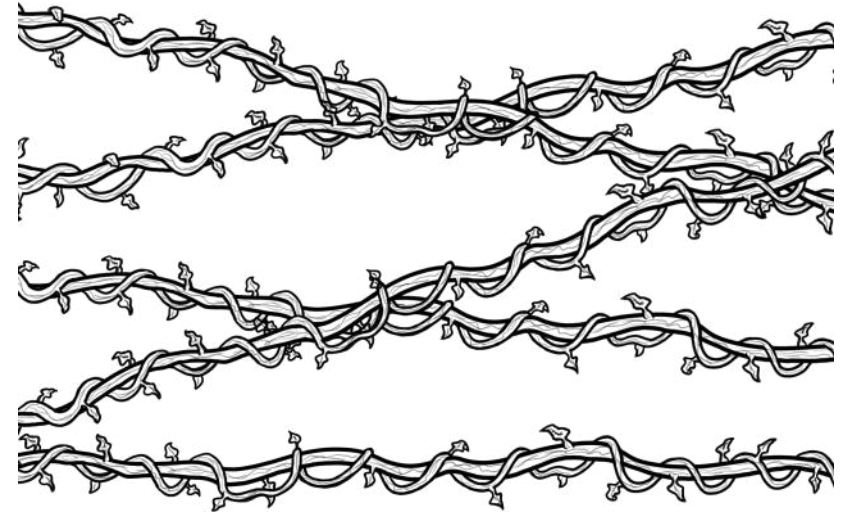
- d. Safe places to meet if needed:

- Think about confidentiality, making sure people are safe to talk.
- If you are contacting the person doing harm / someone potentially harmful, think about meeting in a public place with people around.

- e. Safe places to escape to or hide if needed

4. Think about what requires immediate action.
 - a. Examples of situations where you may need immediate actions:
 - Someone needs to escape from immediate risk of harm (injury, entrapment, physical or sexual assault, kidnapping, arrest, deportation, death)
 - Children or youth need to be removed from risk of harm
 - Weapons need to be removed in order to decrease high level of danger
 - Emergency health or mental health concerns require immediate action
 - Someone causing harm needs to be immediately removed from a situation, asked to stay away, distracted from entering a situation, locked out, banned, physically restrained.

5. Brainstorm who can best play various roles. Eg:
 - Keep watch for danger
 - Emergency person to call
 - Help brainstorm in times of confusion or crisis
 - Be there to remember plans and details
 - Check in on regular basis (stopping by, calls, text)
 - Share a "special message" as a cue to get emergency help
 - Offer physical protection
 - Offer emotional or spiritual support
 - Be around to act as a "witness" to harm
 - Distract or reason with person/people doing harm
 - Confront people doing harm to prevent further harm
 - Go get / take care of children or dependents or pets.
 - Offer a safe place (home, workplace, church)
 - Offer to keep emergency items in a safe place



Self-Defense

(Content warning: references to violence) Practicing self-defense can help us redefine safety and expand our comfort zone. For example, we may feel comfortable trying to de-escalate a fight, or intervene in physical abuse, if we know that we can defend ourselves if turned upon. Also, self-defense is not only about physical moves, but can also include strategy and conversational tools. We include these tools for use when you or someone else is in danger, with the important caveat that no matter how you behave, whether or not you use self-defense strategies, you never deserve violence. It is also important to acknowledge that a) statistically, violence is much more likely to come from someone close to us than from a stranger, b) people with mental illness are much more likely to suffer violence than to enact it, and c) people in power deliberately spread false ideas about groups of people being violent (ex. immigrants, Black men, houseless people, people with schizophrenia) in order to justify oppression of those groups. Lastly, this tool is just a basic introduction; to learn more about self-defense we encourage you to research classes in the area, watch videos, and practice, practice, practice.

How do we define danger and which strategies to use for staying safe? Try thinking in these colors. Note: we all feel differently in different situations; you might feel anxious in a totally safe situation because of generalized anxiety, or comfortable in a crisis because crisis is familiar to you. The "How You May Feel" column are simply sensations that may be signs from your body about the safety of your situation.

Color	How You May Feel	What May Be Happening	What to Try
Green	Relaxed, comfortable	You're in a familiar place with people you trust.	Enjoy yourself! Stay aware of changes in the setting or yourself.
Yellow	Uncomfortable, quickened pulse, feeling hot	Verbal harassment (unwanted sexual advances, crossing your physical/ conversational boundaries, comments on your size/skin color/ religious clothing)	Look for exits from the space, look for potential allies, gradually back away, lower your voice, practice conversational escape tactics (See 1)
Orange	Lots of adrenaline, hyper-alertness, tensed body, heart pounding, fear	Explicit physical aggression (someone will not let go of you, is hitting/kicking you, is attempting to force sexual contact)	Breathe, yell (may startle the attacker or attract help), plant your feet for balance, use stingers (self-defense moves on secondary targets—see 2) then run
Red	Fight/flight/freeze impulse, hyper-focus on the attacker	Immediate threat to your life: someone is choking you, hitting your primary targets (see 2), trying to move you to a 2nd location	Breathe, use self-defense moves on primary and secondary targets (see 2), run. If someone is about to choke you, lift up your shoulders to your ears so they cannot cut off your air/ hit your throat easily

Conversational Escape Tactics

Many of us are socialized to let people down easy, out of fear of violence from people with more power (cis men, white people, able-bodied people) if we say no. If it feels safe to do so (if there are people around, if you don't think the other person will become a serious threat to your safety), directness will communicate your desires quickly and simply—and leaves no room for the other person to claim they misunderstood. It makes it very clear to the other person that they are acting without your consent, and makes it uncomfortable for them to continue pushing.

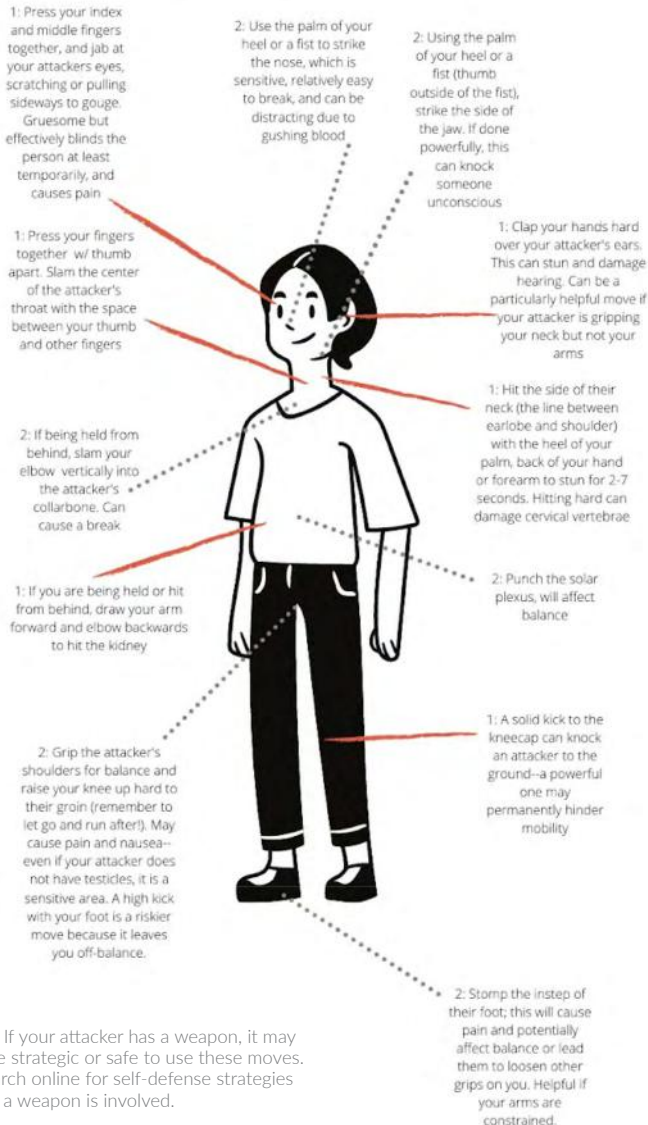
- Clear, firm refusal: ex. speak in an audible voice without hesitation or making it sound like a question. "No, you can't have my phone number," "No, you can't touch my hair," or "Don't touch my wheelchair" rather than hedging ("Uh, I don't know" or "Not today," or "I don't really need help").
- Not smiling or laughing: see above. Some of us smile when we are uncomfortable, or to appease others. When we don't smile though, people have less room to claim we are "playing hard to get" or joking.

- Repetition: don't engage with pressure or uncomfortable jokes the other person is making, just clearly repeat your refusal until they get it or until you can get away.
- Playing dumb: "I don't get it, can you explain the joke?" or "Why would we need to meet on our own? No, I don't know." or "Huh? Why would you need to know that?" This is a less direct tactic, but forces the other person to become direct and reveal their intention. If someone is forced to admit the offensive idea behind their joke, or the ableism/fatphobia/racism/transphobia in a question about your body, it can embarrass them into stopping, or at least shift the power dynamic.
- I-statements: ex. "I don't like to be touched," "I am social distancing to avoid getting coronavirus," "I feel uncomfortable when you text me late at night." When we make broader or more subtle statements or signals (ex. backing away, or saying "We should get back to the group"), someone intent on crossing your boundaries will come closer or argue with your statements. But people can't argue with what you feel.

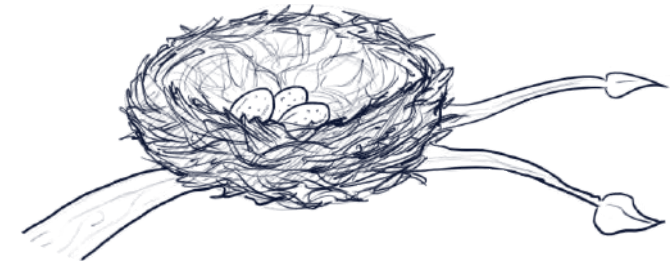
Targets and Strikes

1/solid line = primary target
2/dotted line = secondary target

Note: We cannot predict people's bodies, medical issues, or what will happen if they fall to the ground. Powerful strikes to any of these targets have the potential to result in permanent damage or death, though striking secondary targets is less likely to do so. Of course, this is for self-defense: if your life is truly at risk, you have to do what you have to do to get safe. Hitting two targets is a reasonable strategy to temporarily take the attacker out of action, buying you time to get free and run away.



Note: If your attacker has a weapon, it may not be strategic or safe to use these moves. Research online for self-defense strategies when a weapon is involved.



Making Our Communities Safer

While self-defense is important, we know that violence prevention is too; violence and abuse often copy or come out of larger power dynamics in society. Most violence from strangers targets systematically oppressed people (trans people, people of color, immigrants, Muslims, etc), and some (though not all) interpersonal harassment and abuse falls into existing power inequities (caretakers abusing elderly people or children, male landlords harassing women and nonbinary tenants, citizens abusing their undocumented partners). How do we work together and make our block or building safer, so that we can help prevent harm, and better prepare ourselves to defend each other?

1. Create safer-space guidelines in your organizations and community spaces, ex. "Don't comment on someone's appearance unless you have a relationship with them and they have said that's okay," or "Send a text to the group chat if you see ICE officers in the neighborhood" or "We will take turns filling a bucket of free new masks by the community garden, and everyone must wear one over nose and mouth to enter."
2. When you meet someone, say your name and your pronouns, and ask for the other person's. Your pronouns are how you would like people to refer to you when not using your name, ex. "she," "he," "they," or "xe." You cannot know someone's gender or pronouns by looking at them.
3. Ask for people's access needs while planning an event, ie, "What needs to be part of this event for you to be able to participate?" Access needs might include a no-scent space, Mandarin interpretation, or a space without steps/stairs.
4. Start educational movie discussion nights, with a projector and spaced-out seating, or with virtual viewing and video-chat discussion. Rotate facilitators and movie choice, or vote on movies/documentaries.
5. Identify an area of privilege for yourself (ex. white, growing up with enough money, US citizenship, identifying with the gender you were assigned at birth, straight, being able-bodied), start a small group with others in your solidarity network who share that privilege, and commit to meeting regularly and studying materials to learn more about the oppressive systems and beliefs you have internalized, and about justice movements for folks who don't share that privilege (ex. disability justice, racial justice, trans liberation, socialist feminism). Consider how you can make your building/block a safer and more accessible place for these folks. There are great books and syllabi on these topics all over the Internet, including:
 - a. *Disability Justice in the Time of Mass Incarceration*: <https://rb.gy/7mdzla>
 - b. *White Supremacy & Me* by Layla Saad (available as a book and ebook at most libraries)

- c. 4:44 *Syllabus* by Black men and nonbinary people inspired by the vulnerability on Jay-Z's album 4:44 to unpack toxic masculinity and study Black women's perspectives: <https://rb.gy/7yw2i5>
 - d. My Kid is Gay: a website full of accessible articles about the LGBT community and parenting (of course, this can help anyone who wants to make their community safer for LGBTQIA+ adults and children, not just parents): mykidisgay.com
 - e. Indigenous Action Zines and Essays: rb.gy/diabou
 - f. All My Relations podcast, about indigenous American cultures of relating
 - g. Unlearning with CoFED, Unlearning Class & Classism: rb.gy/bfwudv
 - h. Urban Displacement: Gentrification Explained: rb.gy/iolcpi
6. Hold a town hall meeting to brainstorm what safety looks like to each of you, and how you can come closer to keeping each other safe.
 7. Create a culture of accountability and calling-in, rather than calling out--meaning that if someone makes a mistake and says or does something harmful, we approach them privately first, with the intent to help them do better so that they can be in good relationship in the community. This is different from wanting to show that we know more, or acting to embarrass, expel, or punish someone. Expect people to make mistakes, and to learn. Be ready to apologize and research your questions. Identify who may have the energy to answer those questions, if the Internet and your library doesn't help.
 8. Form a small group of people who will practice or learn more about mediation, transformative justice, and restorative justice, perhaps via the Community Interventions Toolkit, transformharm.org, and other resources. With input from the rest of the solidarity network, plan a process for how you will respond when someone causes harm to someone else.
 9. Commit to respecting each other even when you don't understand each other, and to trying to understand better.
 10. Learn the difference between discomfort and danger, and find ways to get more comfortable with discomfort.
 11. Assume good faith but understand that your words and actions can cause harm even with the best of intentions, and that the impact is more important.
 12. Practice mutual aid amongst your friends and neighbors, expressing what you need and what you can give, and follow through.



Eviction Defense

Abolitionists demand housing for all! Evictions show what our current capitalist housing system is designed to do: exploit and dispossess the working class in order to redistribute their power to the ruling elite. Evictions are a violent means of extracting rent by forcing people into housing insecurity and homelessness. Evictions are also a tactic of gentrification that follows rent spikes; they are rooted in racism, xenophobia, and/or transphobia towards the people already living in a neighborhood. Eviction is a form of policing; it uses the threat or enforcement of the police, and it exposes the police's prioritization of property and private wealth over people's health and safety. This tool provides information from the LA Tenants Union and the Autonomous Tenants Union Network.

Preemptive (if you can, do this before any threat of eviction):

If there is not one already, start a tenants' association in your building.

- The name sounds formal and complicated, but the process is not! A tenants' association requires no official designation. If a group of two or more tenants come together, it is a tenants' association. To start, just focus on getting the contact info of your fellow tenants. You can do this by:
 - Talking to neighbors in the hallway
 - Knocking on everyone's door (using masks and social distancing)
 - Slipping notes under everyone's door (sanitize your hands before writing the notes and again before distributing them)
 - Mailing letters to everyone
- What should you say to them? Here's a simple template: *Hello! My name is _____ and I live in this building. [I don't know many of you personally, but] I was thinking that during a time like this, it might be helpful for us to exchange contact info—just in case there are opportunities to support each other and make sure everyone's needs are met. I'm thinking of starting an email thread/Whatsapp group/text group for this building. If you'd like to be a part of it, please email me at _____@____.com or text me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.*
- Use whoownswhat.justfix.nyc to find out the other buildings your landlord owns and mail your note to them or knock on their doors
- Research what block associations, neighborhood-wide or city-wide tenants' unions exist and link up, there's more safety and power in numbers!

Make demands of your landlord.

- Tenants have collective power through tenants' associations (tenants organizing together who live in the same building(s) owned by the same landlord) and citywide tenants' unions (coalitions of tenants' associations coming together)
- Demands could include a right to stay in your home, recognition of your tenants' union, completion of outstanding repairs, forgiven or decreased rent due, or rent without increase.
- Deliver these demands to the landlord in a letter, ideally as a group
- Your group can consider escalating according to the situation. Some examples include:
 - All calling into your landlord's office at once with the same collective demands, applying pressure
 - Put up flyers on your neighbors' doors about what your landlord is doing
 - Hold a demonstration outside your building where you hand out flyers and have conversations about what your landlord is doing
 - Put these flyers around your neighborhood
 - Hold a demonstration outside the landlord's office or house
 - Put flyers in the neighbor mailboxes of your landlord about their actions
- Together through your tenants' association, you and other tenants in your building can decide to collectively withhold rent until your demands are met

If you're being threatened with eviction:

Form an eviction defense group.

- This works best when you already have a tenants' association or a group of neighbors who know and trust each other.
- If possible, talk to neighbors before forming an eviction defense action. Explain the situation, encourage them to become involved, and collect contact info to check in after in terms of safety and needs going forward.
- Talk with your group about goals, risk levels, and roles. Potential goals: to stop an eviction from happening, to show the city and landlords that evictions will cost money, time, and image, to make sheriffs and landlords into a media spectacle, to widely show the violence of eviction

Gather the facts of the tenant facing eviction:

- Name, address, contact
- Whether or not they have a lease, a written or verbal agreement
- What are the tenants' goals? To stay in the residence? To keep their belongings?
- Other needs? Vulnerabilities?

Risk Level

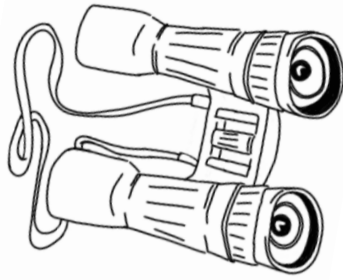
- Level One (lowest risk of arrest) - Speakers, general protestors, spectators - can create a strong presence, give speeches, make noise, hold banners, march, hand out flyers
- Level Two (low risk of arrest) - Protestors who barricade or crowd the entrance to the residence, but agree to disperse when sheriff gives final dispersal order
- Level Three (intend to get arrested in nonviolent civil disobedience) - Affinity group occupies the interior of the residence, understanding risk

Roles

- Tenant Point Person: Ideally someone who has a good relationship with the tenant(s) who centers the tenants needs and safety, who can lead efforts to arrange attorneys/legal support, support tenant(s) in landlord negotiation, and provide post-eviction support (moving, temporary housing, fundraising, etc.)
- Police Point Person: Ideally someone who is not at high risk when interacting with cops, someone who abides by the group's agreements on if/how to talk to the cops.
- Agitator: Someone we trust to lead escalation tactics wisely, someone who will act according to the tenants' needs and wants
- Legal Observer/Jail Support: Someone who can gather everyone's information in case of arrest (legal name, birthday, medication needs, emergency contact) and who can contact people's emergency contact, who can coordinate ongoing support outside of jail, who can lead fundraising for bail if necessary
- Media: Someone who can coordinate a press release, live streaming, filming of police, flyers, social media, outreach to other tenants' unions, tenant advocacy groups, grassroots organizations, etc.
- Coordinator: Someone who can coordinate the influx of people and resources (food, first aid and COVID-related supplies, signs) arrange shifts, who can coordinate a translator/interpreter and/or childcare, if needed

Follow-Up

- Does the tenant feel safe? Have secure housing? Need mutual aid? (Funds, food, repairs, etc.?)
- Does the tenant need help writing letters to the landlord, media, or local representatives?
- Check in on tenants' neighbors
- Reflect as a group (what worked, what didn't, next steps, etc.)



CopWatching

Abolitionists build towards a world with no police. Cops serve no purpose other than to protect property and its elite owners, violently repress uprising and protest — especially among Black and indigenous people — and provoke violence wherever it serves capitalism. Thus, while we work to dismantle them, we also need to know how to monitor them. CopWatching was a core practice of the Black Panther Party during its formation and was intended to show clearly that the cops do not keep us safe, and that instead we need to keep each other safe from the cops. Importantly, copwatching also signals to cops, as well as onlookers, that people are not alone and cannot be made invisible, and that people stand in solidarity against all cops.

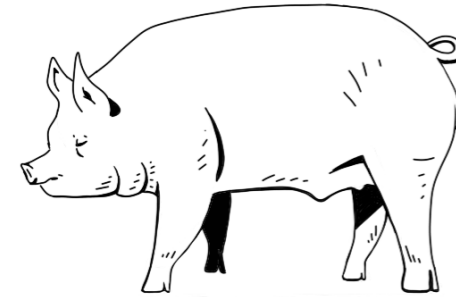
CopWatching means documenting the cops. CopWatching is legal, though there is risk of arrest or targeting by the cops. This tool is inspired by Justice Committee's COVID Cop-watch resource. In New York City, organizations have been CopWatching and training New Yorkers to CopWatch since the 90s. Looking to the legacy of the Panthers, a group called the Black Panther Collective ran CopWatch patrols in Harlem and Washington Heights. The Black Panther Collective trained the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, who trained the Justice Committee, who trained Equality for F and many other NYC organizations and groups.

The goal of CopWatching is to de-escalate and document. Whenever possible, have back-up, whether it's friends or strangers also observing.

In times of social distancing due to COVID-19, keep 6 feet away (or a car's length) from other people and the cops. Make sure you are in the position to get a full-body shot, but that you are not blocking pedestrian traffic.

Remember that you are copwatching because you are in solidarity with the person being arrested. It can be helpful to say, "I'm here to film the cops, not you," letting them know that you are there to keep them safe, and that you won't do anything with the footage other than make it available to them. If the person being arrested insists that they don't want you to film the arrest, you may want to lower the camera. Otherwise, try to keep filming, especially if the person is clearly in danger. Recognize how your race and class affect how people perceive you. Do not speak to the cops unless they speak to you, don't yell, and don't escalate the situation. If a cop tells you to stop filming, assert your right to film.

Assess risk: What is your immigration status? Do you have an open case? Are you on parole or probation? Are you carrying something you wouldn't want the cops to find? Are you feeling calm? Who are you with? Are there other people around? Are they also observing? How hostile are the cops?



What to know about filming:

- Keep your phone ready, charged, and with free storage space.
- Get others around you to observe or record. It can be helpful to say, "Cameras up!"
- Get footage of the badge, vehicle, and/or license plate. Focus on the actual incident, don't zoom in and out. Say this information out loud or have another person collect it.
- Get a full body shot of the cops and the targeted person.
- Do not narrate or add commentary while filming; you might drown out what is being said.
- Do not chant or yell, as it may escalate the situation or make the person targeted more confused.
- Say Know Your Rights information audibly to the person next to you, for instance, "Isn't it true that you don't have to consent to a search? Isn't it true you should say out loud 'I do not consent to this search?'" or "Isn't it always a good idea to exercise your right to remain silent?"
- After, record date, time, location, identifying info about cops, and any info you can remember.

If you can communicate with the person/people being targeted:

- Explain to the person/people being targeted that you are just watching/documenting to make sure they are okay.
- Ask if they need you to call someone for them, get the phone number, and make the call.
- Ask for their number to send them the footage.
- If they are being arrested and you can follow through, ask their legal name so you can follow them through the system.

Good to repeat to the cops:

- I'm not obstructing you in any way.
- I'm exercising my legal right to observe the police.
- I am over 6 feet away. I am practicing social distancing.

Some things to consider before posting footage publicly:

- MovStash is an app to blur faces.
- Do I have consent from the community member or from their family or friends?
- Could I potentially harm the person I'm trying to help or other community members by posting this footage?
 - Ex: Does it include footage of a community member breaking a law? It could be used against them. ICE can also use footage to locate someone they're looking for.

If the cops ask you for your ID: You are within your right NOT to show ID. But cops frequently detain or arrest people who refuse. If you show your ID, keep your distance. Keep your camera running. Disinfect your ID after. Don't touch your face. Wash your hands ASAP.

If the person being targeted asks you to stop filming, reassure them that you're filming the police to make sure they're okay. Do your best to continue filming. You may want to lower the camera or move farther away. Never leave the incident.

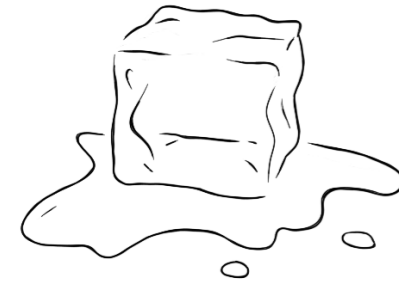
If the cops tell you to get back: Step back. Tell them: "I'm cooperating. I have stepped back. I'm exercising my legal right to observe the police. I am over 6 feet away."

If the cops come within 6 feet of you: Step away while saying, "You have come closer than 6 feet to me. You are putting us both at greater risk of infection."

Text a friend or mutual aid group to let them know you are copwatching, and text them after to confirm safety.

If you have a group chat with your building/block/neighborhood, share copwatching resources.

Send copwatch footage to Justice Committee by email at info@justicecommittee.org or text at 347.752.8070 .



ICE Watching

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement— commonly referred to as ICE— violently uproots people's lives and breaks up families. Undocumented people must often work for negligible wages with few to no workplace protections; ICE exists to instill fear in people to ensure that they remain easy to exploit, as well as to enflame white nationalism and xenophobia in the broader population. The struggle to reduce ICE's power seeks to ultimately render ICE's detention centers empty and obsolete. *Abolition means demanding the decriminalization of survival and the eradication of borders.*

What is an ICE raid? An ICE raid is an effort to deport people in mass. This often means entering homes without warrants (often with fake warrants not signed by a judge), without identifying as ICE (by wearing plain clothes, or by claiming to be police), and using or threatening to use violence. Raids frequently occur early in the morning and are often driven by lies, such as pretending that someone's identity was stolen or is a suspect for a crime, in order to gain information and access.

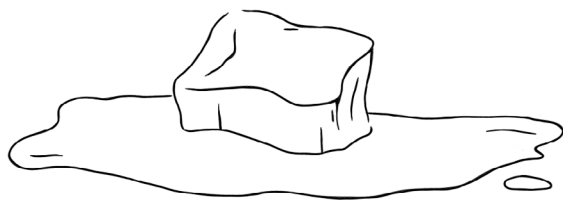
Who is at risk? Anyone without lawful immigration status, as well as people with lawful immigration status who have come into contact with the criminal legal system (including being convicted or even just charged with a misdemeanor, tickets and fines, "misrepresenting" information on government documents, and even for legal cases that may have taken place a long time ago).

Where do raids take place? Raids can take place at jails, homes, courthouses, probation or parole check-ins, highway checkpoints, and even hospitals. ICE wants to make people feel afraid of leaving the house. We must fight against this by learning how to protect each other.

How can people at risk prepare in advance?

Organize your documents / Make copies of documents. Keep original personal identification documents in a safe place, along with your immigration documents and any legal case documents. Make copies of all these documents to carry or leave with someone you trust to access if needed. Note: If ICE asks for your papers and you have them on you, you have to show them.

Make an emergency plan. Memorize or keep your lawyer's phone number on your body, as well as the numbers of any people you have integrated into your emergency plan. Plan for what to do if ICE shows up at your home or harrasses you in public. Plan for your medical needs and childcare if you are detained. Make sure your friends, family, and comrades know your immigration number, known commonly as an "A" number.



How can people who are not at risk help?

Share skills and information. Post Know Your Rights info sheets in multiple languages in your building or around your block. Know your neighbors. Memorize this info.

Help find or fund a lawyer.

Make an emergency plan for what to do if you see ICE in your neighborhood, if ICE comes to your building, etc. If you document ICE agents or DHS vehicles and want to warn others, be sure to include pictures, cross streets, and dates and times. Do not include faces except those of ICE agents.

Be a dependable contact.

Join or set up a reliable and sustainable ICE rapid response team.

What if a cop or ICE agent asks about my legal status?

Unless you are at an international border or airport, *you do not have to answer questions about where you were born, whether you are a US citizen, or how you entered the US*, regardless if they're cops, ICE agents, or other officials.

You have the right to remain silent. State that you are expressing this right. *You have the right to refuse to be searched without probable cause.* If you are not a U.S. citizen and an immigration agent requests your immigration papers, you must show them if you have them with you. Lying about your status or providing false documents could be used against you. If you do not have them on you, remain silent except for saying you need to consult with a lawyer.

If you are driving, a cop can require you to show your license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance, but you do not have to answer questions about your immigration status.

What do I do if ICE is at my door?

Have a plan to keep them out.

Do not open the door. Say: "I do not consent to your entry or a search of these premises. I am exercising my right to remain silent. I wish to speak to a lawyer."

Ask if they have a judicial or arrest warrant signed by a judge. If they do not have a legal warrant signed by a judge, say "I do not want to answer any questions or let you in."

If they have a warrant, ask them to slip it under the door or hold it up to the window so you can see it. Look for your name, your address, and a signature by a judge. If it was issued by ICE, rather than a court, it is not valid. If these are not present, slip it back under the door and say it is incorrect.



Be Prepared for Undercover ICE (Ruses)

ICE agents use ruses to get into homes without judicial warrants, to obtain information, or to arrest people outside of their homes. They might do this in person or over the phone.

A common ICE ruse is for agents to pretend they are local law enforcement. ICE agents will say they are "police," wear police uniforms, and purposefully not identify themselves as ICE agents.

Past examples of ruses:

- Claimed someone is using a person's name to commit crimes and requested to speak to the person to clear this up
- Claimed that a criminal suspect has been using that address or is in the vicinity and cops need to enter and search to make sure the person is not present
- Claimed that the targeted person has been the victim of identity theft and the agents are investigating
- Claimed they need to inspect the individual's body for signs of injury, as the person was suspected of having been in a fight reported to police
- Described the person's vehicle and claimed they need to meet to inspect it, as it is reported to have been in an accident

What if I am arrested or detained?

If you are arrested by police, you are entitled to a government-appointed lawyer if you cannot afford your own. If you are detained by ICE, you have the right to consult with a lawyer, but the government is not obligated to provide one for you.

Say you wish to remain silent and ask for a lawyer immediately. Don't say anything, sign anything, or make any decisions without a lawyer. Don't give any explanations or excuses. Read all papers fully. If you don't understand or can't read them, request an interpreter.

Give your immigration number ("A" number) to your family and comrades to help them find you.

Talk to your lawyer about the effect of a criminal conviction or plea on your immigration status. Don't talk about your immigration status with anyone but your lawyer.

Write down everything you remember, including badge and license plate numbers, which agency the officers are from, everything. Get in touch or get your family members in touch with other witnesses.

If you're injured, seek medical attention immediately and take photographs of your injuries if possible.

File a written complaint with the agency's internal affairs division or civilian complaint board. This will leave a paper trail.

What if ICE has a valid warrant?

From the ACLU: "If police have an arrest warrant, they are legally allowed to enter the home of the person on the warrant if they believe that person is inside. But a warrant of removal/deportation (Form I-205) does not allow officers to enter a home without consent."

If you are being arrested and detained, unless the warrant signed by a judge lists specific travel documents, you do not have to provide them.

You may request a copy of the warrant and names and badge numbers of the ICE agents.

Other people in the home whose names are not on the warrant have the right to refuse to be fingerprinted, answer questions, and show their documents.

What should I do if I see ICE coming to my neighbor's door? How do I ICE watch?

If you have a rapid response team, call trusted folks to back you up. Share your documentation with them, pool resources to keep track of your neighbor if they are taken, reach out to trusted organizations to report the raid.

Film the raid if you can without escalating the situation. Avoid filming the faces of your neighbors. Share the documentation (written or recorded) with those who were harassed or their lawyer.

Document what happened. Did ICE enter a home without consent? Did they search the home without consent? Did they dismiss medical or child care concerns? Threaten? Use violence? If possible, collect badge numbers and names.

If your neighbor was taken by ICE, keep track of them via locator.ice.gov, find their court hearing at (800) 898-7180 (Immigration Court).



Creating a Mutual Aid Network in Your Building & on Your Block

Through mutual aid, we create non-hierarchical structures that fulfill community needs that the state and the capitalist economy fail to provide. Mutual aid is different from charity: it means building strong relationships, developing self-sufficiency, and empowering communities through trust in your fellow neighbor. Because mutual aid is *mutual*, each community member plays a role both as a supporter and as someone receiving support.

1. Put up a flyer in the hallways of your building or on the door to encourage folks to start a group chat. Make sure to translate the flyer and put up in multiple languages.
2. Give folks multiple options to stay connected (phone number, email, Facebook, Whatsapp, Signal). Put together a way for everyone to keep in touch.
3. Ask what people need, and what people have to give. (Picking up groceries, picking up a prescription, emotional support, assistance filling out forms like unemployment, fresh baked goods, tools, knowledge about the landlord/management company, etc.)
4. See if there is a local mutual aid group in your neighborhood at rb.gy/xs0axh. Reach out and see if your group can join or ask if they would like to collaborate, share time, knowledge, and resources.
5. Post in existing online local groups not related to COVID-19 relief and invite folks to join your neighborhood support network.
6. Reach out to Mutual Aid NYC for more resources, connection to other mutual aid groups, and to list your group on the site so more folks in your neighborhood can find it.



Local Examples of Mutual Aid

Mutual aid means building and deepening relationships. *It is not charity*; it is not one person with privileged access to money and resources deciding how much to give to another person. It is community providing for community – for us, by us. Mutual aid is inherently abolitionist, reimagining care as a collective act. Here are some existing local examples.

Swipe It Forward campaign

While it is “illegal” to ask for or sell Metrocard swipes, giving swipes is legal. To keep each other safe and expose the NYPD’s racist policing of “fare evasion” – 92% of fare-beating arrests in 2015 were of people of color – this campaign asserts that poverty is not a crime, transportation should be free, and Broken Windows Policing must end.

- *Direct Actions* - Show up and use funds to buy Metro cards to swipe in people at an overpoliced subway station, so everyone has access to public transport without facing harassment, fines, violence, or arrest
- *Call to Action* - Offer a swipe as you leave the subway, especially if you have an unlimited card (18 minute window between uses), so people won’t have to ask

Organized by Why Accountability, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Black Lives Matter NYC, Black Youth Project 100, the Coalition to End Broken Windows

Bail Funds

Grassroots organizations raise funds and gather volunteers to post bail. The pre-trial cash bail system hinges incarceration before trial on people’s abilities to immediately pay a ransom for their freedom. Abolitionists fight for the end of cash bail while also providing mutual aid, using money pooled from the community to set people free.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, *emergency bail funds* have been set up to free incarcerated people and arrested protesters. It’s impossible to follow public health guidelines, such as social distancing, while arrested or incarcerated. As the city itself has been the epicenter of the virus, jails like Rikers Island had a rate of infection 7x higher than the rate citywide. The NYPD also put protesters at risk by holding them over 24 hours without adequate food or water, while putting some through political questioning.

Some local groups include Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, COVID Bail Out NYC, and Free Them All 4 Public Health



Mutual Aid Inside & Out

Abolition means caring for our incarcerated community members, believing no one is disposable, and fighting against the cruelty and isolation of jails, prisons, and immigration detention centers. “Solidarity, not charity” means *building relationships*; for those not already supporting someone currently incarcerated, here are some ways you can get started.

- *Find pen pals and letter-writing guidelines* through Black & Pink (supporting incarcerated queer folks), Survived + Punished (supporting incarcerated survivors of gender/domestic violence), and the Anarchist Black Cross (supporting political prisoners).
- *Volunteer* with Books Through Bars, which sends donated books to incarcerated people across the US by request.
- *Donate* to local community organizations like G.L.I.T.S., which is providing permanent housing for formerly incarcerated Black trans women.
- Support *commissary funds* by donating to organizations or directly by setting up a J-pay account. Commissary funds are based in the idea of self-determination, and are often done by money order, which empowers folks inside prisons and jails to meet their own needs.

Some local groups/organizations include Survived + Punished, Black & Pink, Books Through Bars NYC, G.L.I.T.S.

COVID-19 Mutual Aid

Grassroots organizations and collectives have created mutual aid networks across NYC, working to *share resources, skills, and labor*. People have checked in on their neighbors, made food or picked up groceries, got prescriptions/medicine, did laundry, redistributed money, turned storefronts into free pick-up sites, etc.

Some local groups (some pre-dating COVID-19) include Equality for Flatbush’s #BrooklynShowsLove, Ridgewood Tenants Union, Bushwick Ayuda Mutua, Indigenous Kinship Collective Mutual Aid, Mutual Aid NYC, Club A, People’s Bodega, MayDay Space, Freedom Arts Movement, We Keep Us Safe Abolitionist Network

Citing Sources

Note: We sourced many tools from other places, but we have made some edits, shortening some readings and adding to others.

Podmapping: <https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>

Copwatching: <https://www.justicecommittee.org/covid-copwatch>
<https://www.justicecommittee.org/cop-ice-watch/>
<http://www.equalityforflatbush.org/anti-police-repression/>

Conflict De-escalation: <https://www.ihollaback.org/bystander-resources/>

Creative Interventions: <http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/tool>

Eviction Defense & more resources: <https://atun-rsia.org/resources>

ICE Watching: <https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/kit/>
<https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/raids/>
<https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/immigrants-rights/>
<https://www.immigrantdefenseproject.org/ice-ruses/>

Letter Writing to Folks Inside: <https://survivedandpunished.org/letter-writing-action/>

MAST: <https://janeaddamscollective.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/mast-book-4-12-2020.pdf>

Mutual Aid Map in NYC: <http://manyc.org/>

Phone Tree Building, from Adrien Weibgen: <https://bit.ly/3dRhSHv>

Providing Care for Friends in Moments of Crisis: [Sick Bed Visioning Tool](#) by famous chrome & Verónica Bayetti Flores

Safety Plan & Action Worksheet, from Creative Interventions: <http://www.creative-interventions.org/tools/toolkit/>

Self-Defense: Created with information drawn from classes from the Center for Anti-Violence Education, and the websites of Keeping Schools Safe, and History Travel Fight

People and Collectives Mentioned

Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, Black Lives Matter NYC, Black & Pink, Books Through Bars, Black Youth Project 100, Brooklyn Community Bail Fund, Bushwick Ayuda Mutua, Club A, Coalition to End Broken Windows Policing, COVID Bail Out NYC, Creative Interventions, Critical Resistance, Equality for Flatbush, famous chrome, Free Them All 4 Public Health, Freedom Arts Movement, GLITS, Indigenous Kinship Collective Mutual Aid, Jane Addams Collective, Justice Committee, MayDay Space, Mia Mingus, Mutual Aid NYC, People's Bodega, Project LETS, Ridgewood Tenants Union, Survived + Punished, #SwipeltForward, Verónica Bayetti Flores, We Keep Us Safe Abolitionist Network, Why Accountability

Further Resources

Community Safety & De-Escalation: http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/peacekeeping_handbook_pt_chang.pdf

Abolitionist Organizing: <http://criticalresistance.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/CR-Abolitionist-Toolkit-online.pdf>

Get Narcan free in NYC: <https://rb.gy/eiawfg>

Transformative Justice: <https://transformharm.org/>
[Transformative Mutual Aid Practices: TMAPs](#)
[Transformative Justice Hub NYC](#)

How to Plug In

- Abolition Action will be facilitating online practice spaces to try out these tools and more. By mid-July 2020, there will be calls you can join (ideally with your pod/solidarity network/neighbors/friends) for free to start having these conversations and get more comfortable using these tools together. You can find out about them by following our social media or joining our listserv, which you can find on our website, abolitionaction.nyc, along with further readings and a calendar of abolitionist actions and events happening in NYC. Follow us on Instagram or Twitter at [@abolitionaction](https://www.instagram.com/abolitionaction).
- Follow the groups listed above, and look for trainings, workshops, meetings, actions, and opportunities to put your skills to use.
- Look up the resources above and find a full workbook to learn more from (ex. the 500-page Creative Interventions Toolkit, the 35-pg MAST workbook). Plan weekly meetings with your solidarity network/pod/friends to study the workbook and practice the relevant skills. Talk about decision-making. Talk about power structures. Examine your internalized racism, misogyny, ableism, etc. Trust each other, and show up.

Abolition demands that we are proactive in crisis prevention and planning for crisis response. That we proactively learn and practice tools together for conflict resolution, harm intervention, emotional support, defense against ICE raids, trauma-informed practice, disability justice, and more. That we confront our internalized oppressive, punitive beliefs, transforming them into models of collective care and accountability. A world without police and prisons is not something we can get just by making demands of the state. A world that is genuinely safe and nourishing for us all, one without punishment or exile is one that makes demands of us: that we take care of each other. That we get to know each other. That we get comfortable engaging in uncomfortable conversations, in conflict that is constructive. By building solidarity networks, we can face struggles together, with commitment to each other and strength in numbers. We will build the world we need.

