



# Support for Survivors of Sexualized Violence

Many refugees have experienced sexualized violence in their countries of origin or during their flight. Painful memories of this can come up in everyday life and can be very burdensome.

Please take care of yourself, friends and roommates and support each other in times of difficulty.

**Here we will introduce ways in which you can deal with emotional injuries and which contact addresses in Germany can help you.**

## **What is Trauma?**

Sexualized violence and other terrible experiences can cause serious injuries to the soul, which sometimes barely heal and leave scars ('trauma'). Those affected often have the feeling of experiencing the terrible situations again and again ('flashback'), for example when they are reminded by something ('trigger') or in nightmares. Some are tense all the time, stressed or become angry quickly. Anxiety, jumpiness, difficulties with concentrating and sleeping problems are other possible consequences. Such consequences of trauma are also called post-traumatic stress ("PTSD").

**Post-traumatic stress is a normal, human emergency reaction to extreme, terrible events. Anyone can be affected by it.**

## **How can you Cope with Trauma?**

Acknowledging emotional wounds and dealing with them is an act of courage and strength. Many people find it helpful to talk about it with others or to spend time together. It is also often helpful to remind yourself of what is important to you and what you are good at: What are your strengths? What have you accomplished in the past? What do you enjoy doing? How can you do something good for yourself right now? (This also works if you don't want to or can't talk about your wounds at the moment).

More tips and advice on how you can cope with trauma yourself can be found here in many languages:  
<https://www.refugee-trauma.help/en>



## **What contact addresses exist?**

There are counselling services in Germany to help you deal with experiences and memories of violence. The contact addresses can help to relieve symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

In this article, we will inform you about contact addresses. These counselling services are mainly located in larger cities. Write an email and make an appointment. Support your friends in visiting these counselling centres.

We give the titles of the contact addresses in German. Google them in your area:

### **"Fachberatungsstellen für sexualisierte Gewalt"**

These centres advise people who have experienced sexualized violence. It doesn't matter how long ago this violence happened. They advise people of all genders (people often think that the counselling centres are only for women, but they are open to everyone). The staff are usually social workers who have been trained in this field. These counselling centres were mostly founded by women's rights activists.

Here you can find a hotline and an overview of the counselling centres in Germany:

<https://www.frauen-gegen-gewalt.de/en/local-support-services.html>

### **"Psycho-Soziale Zentren" für Flüchtlinge (PSZ)**

These centres were created specifically to meet the needs of refugees and their specific experiences of violence in their countries of origin and during their flight. Usually social workers and doctors work there, including psychologists.



These centres are accessible without a health insurance card. They were mostly founded by human rights activists.

The respective counselling centres in Germany are listed here:

<https://www.baff-zentren.org/hilfe-vor-ort/psychosoziale-zentren>

### **"Trauma-Ambulanzen"**

These centres are for people who are under acute stress due to traumatic experiences. They are affiliated with medical facilities, for example in hospitals. As they provide acute care, you can also visit them if you do not yet have a health insurance card (although the doctors may not know this because they have little experience with refugee patients. It may also be that the appointment of a translator takes time). As this is about acute care, you need to explain how past experiences of violence are affecting you at the moment. These services will refer you to psychologists for a few sessions of counselling for acute therapy and stabilization. It usually takes a long time to find a psychologist yourself, as there are too few psychologists in Germany.

You can find an overview of therapeutic counselling services here: <https://www.hilfe-portal-missbrauch.de/en/home>

