

To Care (*verb*)

To care is to give a shit
To care is to feel involved,
affected, implicated,
invested in what happens

To take care of something is
to be responsible for it
To care for something,
some place, or someone
is to protect, cultivate,
nurture, and sustain life
helping it grow healthy and strong
reaching its full potential

To take care, or to be careful,
is to pay attention, to be alert,
to be mindful, to use caution,
to act with full awareness of
surroundings and consequences

Caring is the work of love

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by the *Perspectives* editorial collective

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Organizing with Care

adapted from *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*
Vol.13 N.2 “Care: Introduction”
by the *Perspectives* editorial collective

When we talk about care in the context of anarchist organizing principles, including both responsible self care and mutual care for one another, what we are ultimately talking about is seeking an integrated balance between individual and collective, ecological and social, mind and body. These principles are then echoed in the structures we seek to build, the meals that we share, the stories we tell, and the relationships and networks we form.

When we are tired or afraid, when we feel despair or exhaustion or apathy, we often find that we have moved away from these principles, or have forgotten their importance. Both the integration and balance are fundamental concepts, touchstones to which we can return time and again as we find our way together through moments of collision and action, through stagnation and rebuilding and learning.

In the context of racialized historical trauma, perpetuated through continuing structural violence, mutual care is an active process of rebuilding and survival; here healing becomes a component of resistance. What the state seeks to achieve is tearing apart the very fabric of our lives that makes it possible for us to come together and collectively act to change the world.

What Does it Mean to be Active?

adapted from

“To Care is to Struggle” by Kevin Van Meter

Where we have strong bonds based in common politics and shared life experiences, the state wants to instill suspicion and paranoia. Where we have friendship and a sense of camaraderie, the state wants to foster distrust and uncertainty. The state does not want us speaking our minds, organizing demonstrations and direct actions, raising the social costs through militancy and fighting back. They fear a social movement that is unafraid.

By focusing on care, we not only root our work in love, but we promote the kind of longevity and commitment that our work demands collectively. Our aspiration to form a new and better world together is a creative impulse, one that comes from a desire to defend what we care about, as well as to develop a culture and practices that reflect our love for freedom, for equality, for transformation, and for each other.

We do this because we give a shit. We are invested in what happens—in our relationships, our communities, our environment, and our world(s). To take care of something is to be responsible for it; we are all responsible for the lives we live—not only our own, but those we touch, those we work with, those we rely upon, those we affect, human and otherwise. By embracing the notion of care and its implications of integrated balance, solidarity, and mindful activity, we can collectively advance contemporary anarchism into its fullest strength and potential.

Often lost in the slogans, chants, and feverish excitement of a street action, or the ideological and semantic battles waged by radicals, is the richness of human relations. It is the ‘in between’ of these relations—expressed, in part, as care—that reproduces both the social order and revolutionary movements... This question of care can never be answered in the abstract, but only in the context of our lives, our stories, and the challenges that such lives and stories bring to bear.

Different minds and bodies react differently to crisis, trauma, and the common shocks of life; they are acted upon, imposed upon and produced differently as they fit into different relations of power—as gendered, racialized, sexualized, et al bodies; particular minds and bodies have different productive desires, resist differently, and produce new worlds together differently.

As long as being active is synonymous with activism and the figure of the activist, there are those who will not become active. Gilles Deleuze commented on this subject, “The question of the revolution’s future is a bad one, because, as long as it is posed, there are going to be those who will not become revolutionaries.”

For the question for care, we are concerned with how the definition of being active limits the participation of individuals who cannot partake in demonstrations because of PTSD, cannot sit through long meetings due to chronic pain, are physically ill and regularly miss events, and other similar experiences. This is certainly not to discount the use of direct actions by those in the disability rights, deaf autonomy, and neighboring movements, but rather to call attention to a structural problem within radical movements that emphasizes the involvement of able-bodied and able-minded individuals that can escape the imposition of care-work. Additionally, by incorporating care-giving strategies and challenging “what it means to be active” we strengthen our movements vis-a-vis capital and the state.

Our task is to care together as we struggle together. By pushing forth the complexity of experience and realities that arise in caring for those who are mentally and physically ill, traumatized, dying, survivors of intimate violence and incarceration, addicted, suffering from chronic pain, struggling against the imposition of binary gender, and working in the care and medical industries our movements deepen our relationships with one another and construct new fronts for revolutionary struggle. It is these everyday realities that need to be considered on the long arc of sustained organizing and revolutionary change.

A movement-building strategy will require both the amplification of current struggles as well as the creation of new organizational forms addressing how a movement reproduces itself; thus will include care-giving projects as well as related means of survival: housing, transportation, food, and education. Approaches that are utilized among radicals currently to decrease housing and food costs, so time usually dominated by waged work can be used for organizing and other activities, can be amplified to a movement-wide strategy. Collective houses, food buying clubs, community gardens, various cooperatives, resource and income sharing, neighbor care-giving strategies become weaponized when taken from their current subcultural and friendship-networks and are applied as an approach to organizing and movement-building. Here we care and we struggle forward, together.



Mutual Aid

“When a redwood is damaged by fire, wind, or human activities, the tree’s root system sends out sprouts around the remaining stump. This is the most prolific way for redwoods to reproduce. [...] Other plants, like ferns, also grow on tree stumps and logs creating a “living stump.”

— Armstrong Redwood National Reserve

How can learning to address each others’ needs everyday help us learn what to do when those needs are intensified by crisis?

subversive.thread | thecomradecloset



Collective Care

Redwood trees support separate but interdependent ecosystems: One on the redwood forest floor and another suspended hundreds of feet in the air among the trees’ upper branches.

(Source: Pacific Forest Trust)

How do we connect autonomous networks at a macro-level while also paying attention to the intimate, interpersonal ways in which we materially support our closest comrades and pods?

subversive.thread | thecomradecloset

Navigating Despair: Notes for the Journey

via @subversive.thread

1) It's okay to let the distant future be unknown if we know we are building what we can now. There are no one-size-fits-all "solutions" for the future which do not foreclose on the possibility of liberation by shackling it to hierarchy. We have to challenge ourselves to think about the future as away of aspiring toward possibilities rather than feeling attached to the "successes" or failures of systems and institutions that we didn't create and that don't seek our liberation. For us, we began to ask "What if pockets of the future already exist alongside the present? What if people have been organizing autonomously already? Could we connect with them? Is there a history of autonomous organizing? What if our future depends less on something distant and more on how well we are cultivating what exists in the margins where we live?"

2) It's okay to say no to the types of organizing that drain our capacity to organize around what brings us joy. All capitalist institutions are inherently ableist. By extension, organizing spaces that haven't divested from a capitalist work ethic make sustainable organizing impossible. They set expectations that produce burnout and replicate the same exploitation they say they want to destroy. If we begin to see ourselves not as disposable objects to be used up in the struggle for liberation but as people worthy of liberation too, then it becomes rational to say no to the types of organizing that constantly ask us to martyr ourselves.

**All liberatory struggles are struggles
for life, joy, and connection —
not despair and not death.**

3) It's okay to listen to our bodies, to make space to be sad, to grieve, and to heal. Our bodies hold the collective wisdom of our ancestors. We can begin disrupting the ableism of settler colonialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy by listening to them. When we are feeling alienated, our bodies are telling us that building community is vital to our individual and collective survival. When we are burned out, our bodies are telling us that there is more work to do than we can possibly do alone. And when we want to give up, our bodies are communicating a need to rest that doubles as a reminder that we need communities in struggle that can step up when we need to step back and heal.

4) It's okay to make boundaries that respect our limited capacity as individuals. No matter what we do, there will usually be more than one right choice to make — and as individuals we cannot make them all. One person didn't create the oppression we are fighting, so we shouldn't expect an individual to end it either. When we expect too much from ourselves or our small communities of resistance, we replicate the oppressor's world for them by replicating the ableism that fuels it. If we feel small or alone, it is not a testament to our inability to make a difference as individuals — it is a testament to the need for community and connection, to build the places where we can realize our full potential as communities in struggle together.

5) It's okay to prioritize building with the people you've built affinity with and who understand your needs. We've been told that it's our task as radicals to "radicalize the people" too — without much regard for our own mental health and capacity. But there are no truly safe spaces in a world of hierarchy and domination. The large majority of our time is navigating, interacting with, and finding small ways to pushback against people with harmful perspectives. Family, co-workers, people on the street — most of these people have perspectives that are opposed to ours, that are hurting us. But we're forced to engage with many of these people because the alternative is to be punished, to lose our livelihood, to be outed and targeted. We're always already doing the work because we have no choice.

6) How does creating boundaries not make sense for our safety and sanity? What's wrong with being very intentional and deliberate with the people we actually want to build with— who want to build with us, who honor our time and our full selves? What's wrong with building between people who actually bring meaning to our lives and who spending time with is generative rather than depleting? These are the people who have shown us that mutual compassion is the most sustainable form of resistance, and that we do not need to "convince the masses" or sacrifice ourselves to create substantive change.

In what we build with each other we are demonstrating that a better world is not only possible, it's happening.

Cariño

adapted from “Cultivating Blossoming and Healing
Ecologies via Radical Virtue Ethics con Cariño:
Encouraging Learning, Care and Restorative Justice”
by Andrea Ortiz

La perseverancia y tenacidad de mis familias
germina de nuestro cariño infatigable.
Su cariño me inspira y me motiva a apreciar la vida,
aunque sus enseñanzas no me someten ni me dominan

Hábilmente, al demostrar cariño, alcanzan a tocarme
y incitándome a mejorar y a cosechar solidaridad
Nos empoderamos juntamente,
aun cuando andamos aparte y diversamente
florece en terrenos distintos pero relacionados

Siempre te necesitare, siempre estarás con migo:
por eso te dedico mi proyecto con ánimo
Ni las fronteras, ni una intersección o simple asociación
Ni los sistemas de opresión nos podrán derrotar
Ni la nacionalidad, ni la política corrupta
nos desmoraliza,
porque nuestra conexión es tan profunda
que prefigura cambio con las preeminencias del cariño
y ejercita el tratamiento ético de nuestra tierra

¡Consta que ya estamos cultivando
(inter)conexiones con cariño!
interpersonales e imperfectas — que diversamente
nos empeñen a resistir relaciones perniciosas y
transformar sistemas opresivos!

Perseveraremos con cariño
y quizás un día coexistiremos y
sobrepasaremos estas barreras
Con amor y mutualidad pero sin pavor!

Vigorosamente, nuestro cariño es nutritivo y
nos sustenta, aun cuando sobresalen
las desigualdades de nuestros contextos
nos apartan nuestras facultades corporales.

¡Que privilegio crecer enlazada al cariño!
Coordinándonos con cariño
cultivamos nuestros huertos ecológicos.
Subsistimos ajustando, conservando y
rediseñando límites de nuestro huerto interior.

With audacious hope,
an ethics of *cariño* could be:

- the basis of our social educación
- the motivation for our mindful learning and unlearning
- the virtuous character needed to critically evaluate and incite better development
- the stimulating force behind our pursuits for survival, justice, and mindful joy
- the nourishing and nurturing force that can end domination