

Wir sind UP

Guest: NightLine Potsdam

Title:

NightLine Potsdam

Description:

In this episode, Marla introduces you to the services of NightLine Potsdam. Here, you'll learn about the concerns you can address with NightLine and how it operates.

You can reach the NightLine Potsdam team during lecture times on Tuesdays through Thursdays and Sundays from 9 pm to midnight, via phone: 0331 977 1834 or through chat: <https://www.nightline.ch/chat/potsdam/>. For more information about NightLine Potsdam, check out their Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/nightline_potsdam.

If you're interested in volunteering with NightLine, you can learn more at <https://nightline-potsdam.de/mitmachen/>!

Transcription:

Intro: Welcome to all listeners. In our podcast, we introduce students, faculty, and staff from the University of Potsdam, including individuals with and without disabilities. We aim to explore how inclusive the University of Potsdam is as both a place of study and an employer.

Marla: Welcome to all listeners. I'm Marla from the Accessibility Team, and today I have Bella from Nightline with me, who will tell us a bit about Nightline. Maybe you can start with that. Bella isn't your real name because at Nightline, you keep things anonymous. Could you talk a bit about why that's the case? And maybe also introduce what exactly Nightline is?

Bella: First of all, hello Marla, I'm glad to be here. Right, Bella isn't my real name because we work anonymously at Nightline. Through anonymity, we create a protected and non-judgmental atmosphere for the callers. Additionally, anonymity can lower the threshold for callers to communicate with strangers and talk about their feelings and concerns. That's why anonymity is an important principle of Nightline.

Marla: Okay, thank you. What about the conversation partners? If someone calls you because of a problem or they want to talk to you, do the conversation partners also need to remain anonymous?

Bella: Conversation partners can always remain anonymous. All calls are treated confidentially, and nobody needs to give their name if they don't want to.

Marla: Okay, thank you. And for you, who are you, even though you're supposed to remain anonymous? Essentially, how does one become a staff member at Nightline? And perhaps you can also tell us a bit more generally about the people who work with you and who you all are?

Bella: Okay, so I myself, as I mentioned, am Bella. I'm 24 years old and have been volunteering at Nightline Potsdam for five years, just like many other students. We're all volunteers. We come from various academic backgrounds. And everyone who is active at Nightline, whether answering calls or chats, has undergone a two to three-day training session where the methods and principles of Nightline are taught. It's also important to mention that within our organization, there are students who both answer calls and chat and may participate in one of our internal teams within Nightline. On the other hand, there are

also students who are only part of a team and do not engage in chatting or answering calls, allowing them to be publicly visible, for example, at events.

Marla: So, you're a team made up exclusively of students?

Bella: Exactly, we consist solely of students from various disciplines who have been involved with Nightline for different lengths of time.

Marla: And in volunteering, I suppose you take turns with the telephone service, right?

Bella: Exactly, yes.

Marla: Can you say how many of you there are? And is it likely that if someone calls, they always reach the same person, or does it change?

Bella: Exactly, so I wouldn't want to discuss the exact number of us. But yes, the callers are anonymous to us, and we don't know who's calling, and likewise, the callers don't know who we are or who they'll speak to on the phone or chat with.

Marla: Could you go over it again, because you mentioned you're an association and everything is built on volunteering. If someone wants to get involved with you, how would that work?

Bella: Sure, anyone who wants to get involved with us, we always welcome people who want to actively participate. So, we offer the opportunity to answer calls or chat with individuals who reach out to us, as our chat service is also anonymous. But one can also simply engage in our teams within Nightline. For example, we have a PR team, a tech team, a finance team, a coordination team, and a training team. If someone wants to join us, they can first attend an information session. This will take place again at the beginning of this summer semester. You can also email us for more information about the information session and other details, including the training, which you can find on our website or Instagram. And then, after the information session, if someone still wants to join us, they undergo a two to three-day training where they learn the methods, principles, and values of Nightline, which are also practiced during the training.

Marla: Yes, thank you. Very interesting for people who may want to work there. And again, from the perspective of callers, what can callers expect? What kind of counseling will it be? And what, for example, can't you provide?

Bella: Exactly, it's always important to mention that Nightline Potsdam is not a counseling service; rather, we are truly a listening phone line or chat service. At Nightline, we don't claim to be professional; instead, we see ourselves as offering a listening ear on an equal level. We employ a non-directive approach to conversation, where the caller is supported in independent problem-solving or decision-making through questions and active listening by Nightline volunteers. This method originates from psychologist Karl Watschers. Through active listening, the concerns of the caller are examined more closely through targeted questions, and Nightline volunteers attempt to structure the conversation to better understand the issue at hand. Callers can reflect on their problem and make decisions themselves, without being steered in any particular direction by the listener. Anonymity is always maintained during phone and chat conversations, which are conducted in an unbiased, open-minded, and confidential manner.

Marla: Thank you. When someone calls, do they need to be a student? Or who are you there for?

Bella: Exactly, it's not mandatory to be a student to call us; individuals who are not currently studying can also reach out to us.

Marla: Okay, that's good to know. And what did you mean by not being a counseling service? Does that mean you don't offer advice because of your approach to conversation? Or do you also mean that you're not directly affiliated with the University of Potsdam because you're a nonprofit organization, or perhaps both?

Bella: Exactly, it means both. Nightline exists not only in Potsdam but in various cities across Europe. While we do undergo a two to three-day training where we learn and practice the fundamental principles of active listening, we are not professionally trained. Therefore, we don't see ourselves as providing counseling or giving tips. Instead, we're here to listen to those who call or message us, and then structure the conversation accordingly. We don't offer guidance; we simply structure the conversation and actively listen. That's the important part, and as I mentioned, we're not operating as professional counselors.

Marla: Exactly, okay, thank you. That clarified things. And because you remain anonymous, could you talk a bit about how that relates to safer spaces? For example, if certain individuals have very specific problems and believe that only someone with similar issues could help them. How could this be ensured, or why might it not be possible?

Bella: Right, it's through this anonymity, where as Nightline volunteers, we don't disclose our identities, and the callers on the phone or in chat also can't know who we are. Therefore, we can't guarantee that because it's a fundamental principle for us to have a protected, non-judgmental, and anonymous atmosphere, so the individuals who call or chat with us don't know anything about us either.

Marla: And does that mean that you, for example, provide information about further resources for students or people who call you?

Bella: Exactly, so as I mentioned, we structure the conversation and actively listen, and of course, there's the possibility, as you already mentioned, that since we're not providing advice, we can refer individuals to other resources or professional counseling services, such as the helpline or maybe the university's psychological counseling center.

Marla: Okay, thank you. Now, returning to your perspective as a nonprofit organization, what support do you wish for, and from whom? We briefly discussed what it would be like to work with you. Do you currently need support there? How does it look with your chat, all the calls? In which teams do you need support? And what do you wish for from the University of Potsdam?

Bella: Exactly, we're always happy when people are interested in maybe being active on the phone or in chat. As I mentioned, it's not necessary to do both. You can just do chat, for example, or just take phone calls. If someone is interested and would like to participate, they can contact us via email, attend the information session at the beginning of the semester, and then undergo training. Otherwise, as I said, there's also the opportunity to be involved in our teams without being active on the phone or chat. We're also happy to receive support there. And as I said, feel free to reach out to us via email or maybe on Instagram if you'd like to join us.

Marla: Yes, exactly. So, I'll include the website and how to reach you again in the description for those who are interested listeners. And maybe you can quickly mention your phone number again. I think we've already discussed it, but are there fixed times when you can always be reached?

Bella: Exactly, during the lecture period, both by phone and chat, we're available on Sundays and then Tuesday to Thursday from 9 pm to midnight. You can reach us at the phone number 0331 977 1834. And via chat, which is accessible through our website at nightline-potsdam.de. And it's important for us that anyone can call us or chat with us. As I said,

individuals don't necessarily have to be students. And you can call us or message us, as I said. And what's really important to us is that we listen to you, no matter how small or big your concern is.

Marla: Thank you, dear Bella, for introducing Nightline and this podcast episode. And of course, thank you to all listeners. Until next time.