

Choosing a buddy: the PEARLY protocol

PEARLY is a tool that some street medics use to make sure they and their buddy are a good match and will know how to support each other during whatever it is they're setting out to do. It's an acronym that reminds us of important things to discuss with your buddy before you hit the streets (or wherever). Below are some example aspects of PEARLY.

Physical vulnerabilities

- Do you have any medical conditions that might come up, and how can I help you with them? (Allergies/epipen? Asthma/inhaler? Physical disability?)
- Do any of your identities make you a target for police or counter protesters? (indigenous, transgender, disabled, Black or Brown, fat, religious, etc.)
- How do you feel about buddy-touching? Consent each time? Comfort with holding hands, linking arms, grabbing bag, hugging?

Emootional vulnerabilities

- How comfortable are you feeling with today's action?
- Are there any emotional triggers that you think might come into play?
- How are you doing on HALTS (hungry/angry/lonely/tired/stressed)?
- What self-care and buddy-care will be important for you today?

Arrestability (*always defer to the least arrestable buddy's needs!*)

- Do you have any special legal concerns (citizenship status, under 18, probation/parole, outstanding warrants, etc.)? Details can be private!
- Do you have outside obligations that you can't miss (childcare, work, cat has to be fed)?
- Might arrest jeopardize your employment or professional licensure?
- Given all that, when would you obey or disobey police instructions?

Roles

- What's your comfort with this action, and your role in it?
- How much experience do you have with this kind of work? Which parts are your favorites, which are hardest?
- Do you have special skills (CPR training, language fluency, etc.) that might come in handy?
- What would it take for you to quit this?

Loose ends

- Do you have The Best Anecdote to share? Do you have to pick up the phone if the babysitter calls? Make a buddy team name!
- Swap phone numbers. Make plans to reconnect afterwards?

Yes or no?

- Does this person seem like a compatible buddy? Buddy consent is just like every other kind of consent: it's okay to "just say no" if you're not feeling it!