

Ideologically neutral counselling at  
ZEBRA/BW



# CONTENTS

---

## Contents

1. Introduction to the ZEBRA/BW counselling centre
2. Counselling approach
3. Case studies

My colleague is a Reich citizen.  
He says that the Federal  
Republic of Germany does not  
actually exist.

My wife paid  
€60,000 to a  
success coach.

I was in a cult  
and left it.

My parents believe in  
conspiracy theories

I grew up in a very  
religious group. Since I  
left, I have hardly had  
any contact with my  
parents.



# 1. ZEBRA/BW: Who are we?

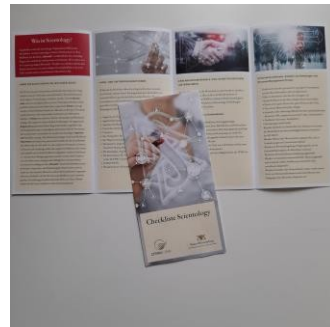
---

- Multidisciplinary team: psychologists, educational scientists, doctor, teacher
- Basic training in systemic approaches
- Flexible working hours



# Services

- Consulting within Baden-Württemberg
- Information material & checklists
- Lectures at schools and other institutions
- Publications





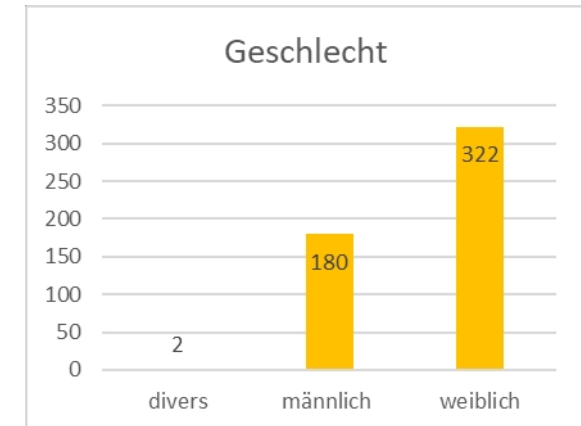
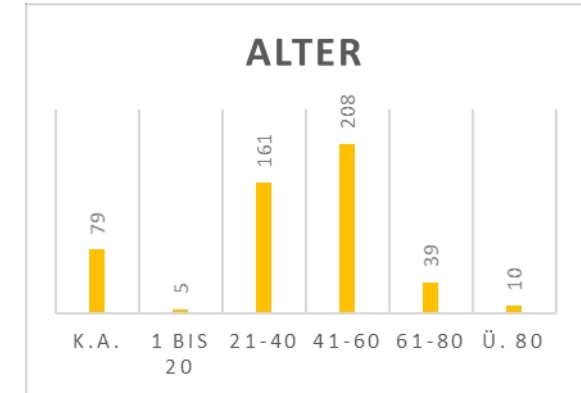
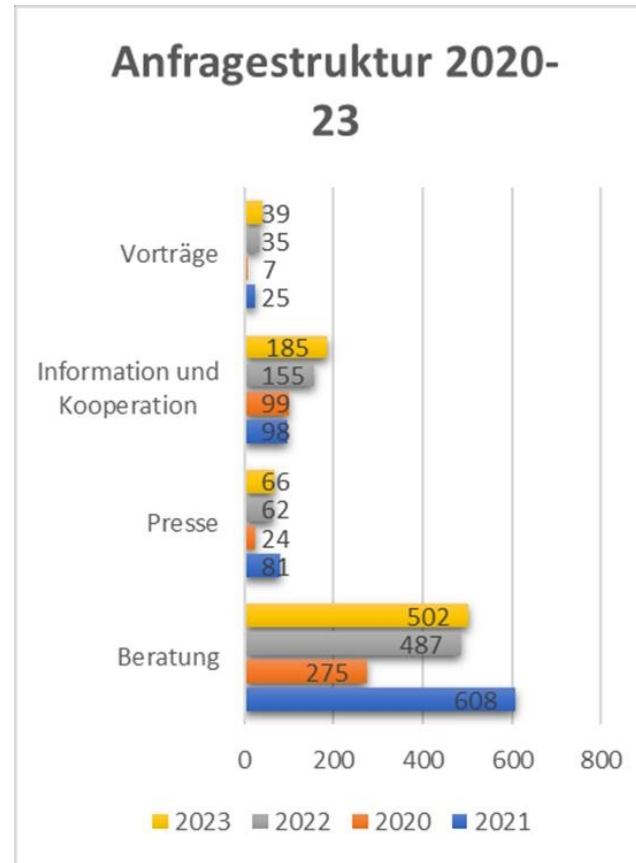
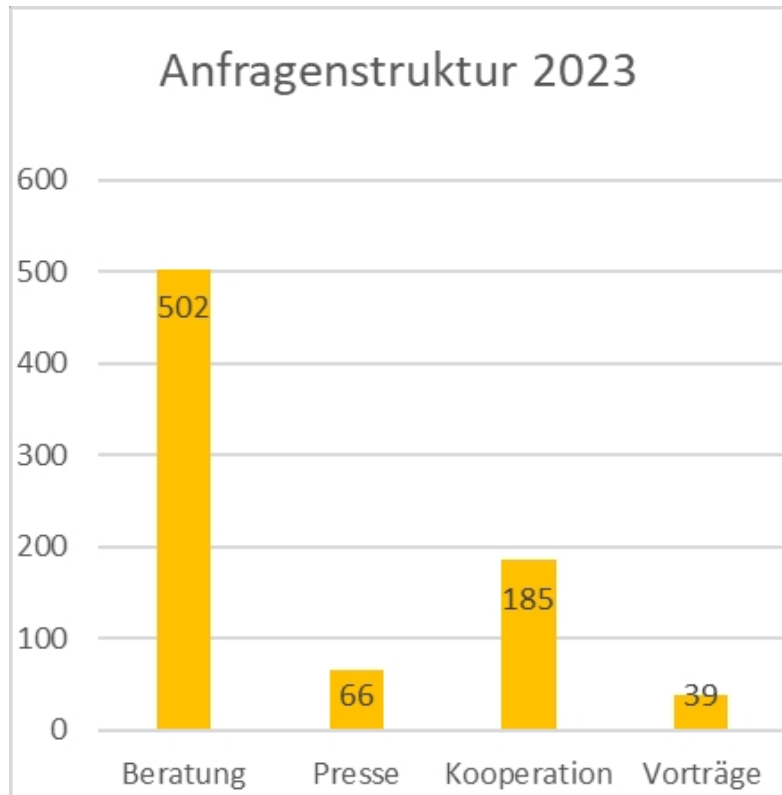
# Topics

---

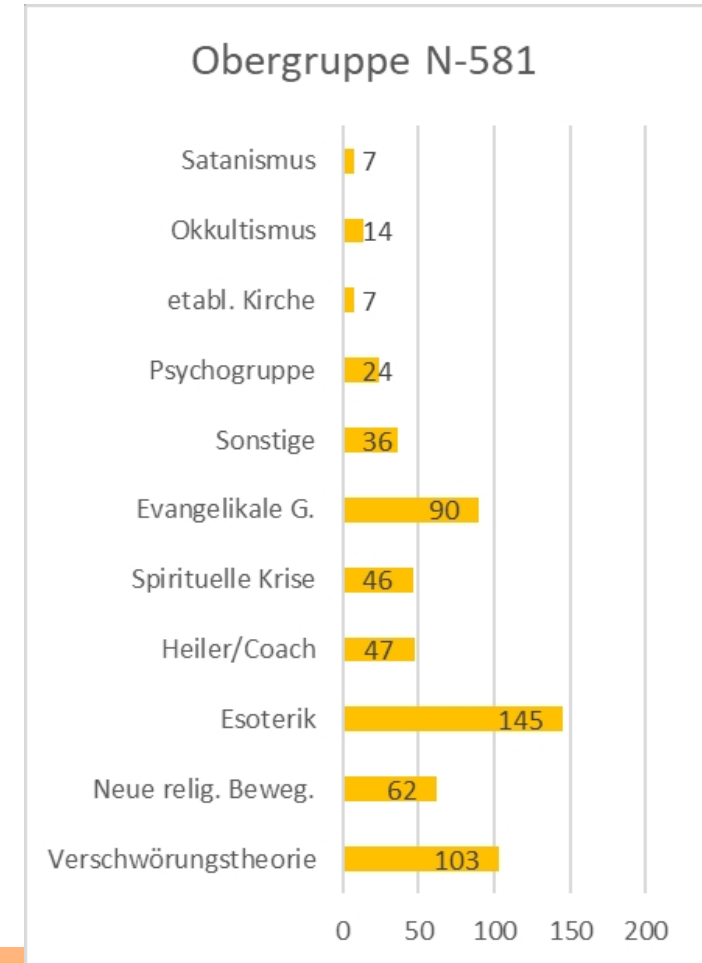
- Conspiracy theories
- Religious groups, so-called sects
- Esotericism
- Spiritual crises, general questions of worldview
- Occultism



# Annual Report 2023...



# Development





# Missio

---

n

## ***Not everything is black and white***

- Ideologically neutral counselling
- Freedom of religion and expression
- Open attitude towards offerings on the ideological market
- Assistance in making responsible decisions
- Freedom of choice always lies with the individual

# Who calls?

---

## 1. Primarily those affected

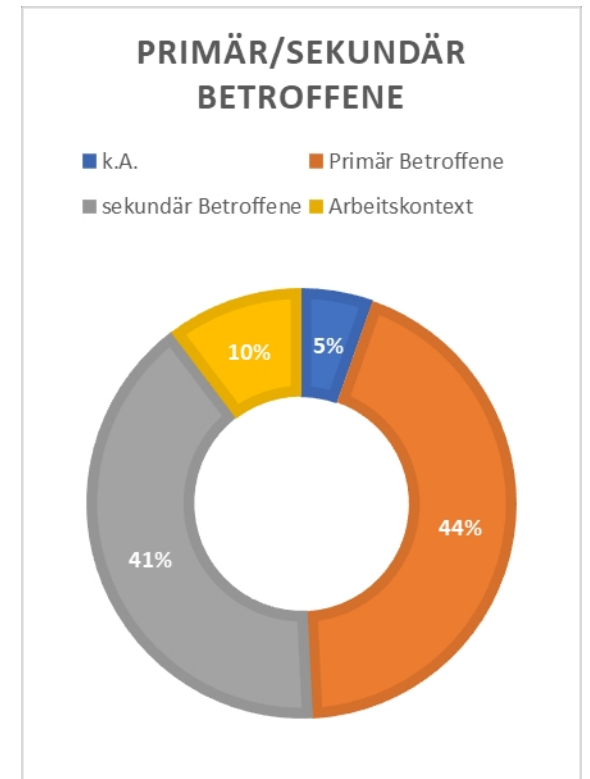
Partners, dropouts, "newcomers", uncertain consumers

## 2. Secondarily affected parties

Parents, relatives, children, friends, colleagues

## 3. Institutions

Police, youth welfare services, schools, authorities



# Case study: Dropouts (primarily affected persons)

---

**Paula, 27**

"I grew up in this group. It was years of brainwashing. My parents, my aunts and grandparents, everyone was part of the group. At some point, I realised that I could no longer believe what was being said there. I asked questions and questioned things. The process of leaving took a long time. I had no friends outside, I was facing total nothingness. You can't imagine what that's like. On top of that, I keep asking myself whether my parents and the group were right after all, whether there is a God who will punish me, whether I will go to hell... Especially when I'm not feeling well, I tend to interpret this as punishment for leaving, or when things don't go my way. I am still searching for answers. Is there a God? If so, what is he like? I only know the evil, punishing God of my parents..."

## Case study: relatives (secondarily affected)

---

### **Martina, 56**

"My daughter has recently started going to a group like this. I don't know what to make of it. She has changed completely since then. Our relationship was actually quite good most of the time. But since she started going there, she only reproaches me and says that my upbringing is to blame for all her problems. She says that I am not good for her energetically. She hardly ever calls anymore. It's all about her, her boundaries and her needs now. Sure, not everything was perfect in the past, but I've always loved her. I think this group is dubious, maybe it's a cult? Can you help me figure this out? And can you tell me how I should behave?"

# Counselling for primarily/secondarily affected persons

---

## PRIMARY

**Timing:** Usually only after leaving or during the differentiation phase

**Breaking off contact** with the environment

**Delegation of responsibility** to the group/guru

Loss of contact/dealing with mistakes and errors

## SECONDARY

**Time:** When the relative joins

**Breaking off contact** or changing contact behaviour

**Delegation of responsibility** to a group/guru

Loss of communication



# Typical patterns

---

## **Externalisation strategies:**

- ❖ "The problem has nothing to do with me, our relationship, or our family; it's the fault of the guru or the group." (primary and secondary)

## **Experience of powerlessness:**

- ❖ "I can't do anything, the group is too powerful." (primary and secondary)

## **Loss of contact**

- ❖ "The group took my daughter away from me."
- ❖ "All my contacts were limited to like-minded people."

# Counselling goals

---



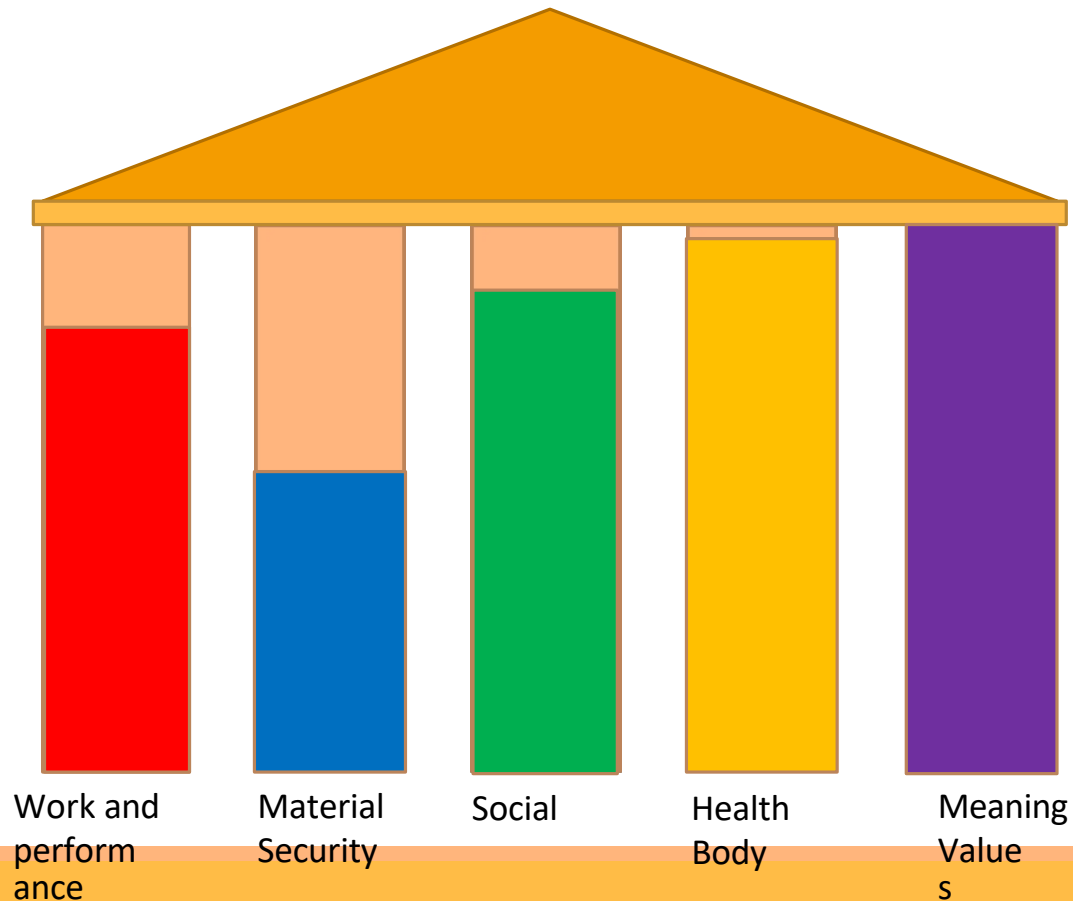
- ✓ Recognise patterns in establishing contact and later break them
- ✓ Re-learning self-confidence
- ✓ Taking personal responsibility
- ✓ Integrating biographical experience
- ✓ Dealing with the pain of separation
- ✓ Normalising the need to belong
- ✓ Getting to know your own needs and vulnerabilities

✓ Normalisierung von Zugehörigkeitsbedürfnissen

✓ Eigene Bedürfnisse und Bedürftigkeit kennenlernen

# Getting to know your needs (pillars of identity)

---



## Understanding instead of judging

Why was the group attractive to me?  
What is my relative/I looking for there? What unfulfilled needs did/do I have? Where do I stand now?

# Root cause analysis

---

1. Case-specific
2. Proxy conflicts (It had been difficult for some time,...)
3. Strong emotional involvement
4. Fear for the other person (she will get into debt, be manipulated, etc.)
5. Taking responsibility (I have to look after my parents)
6. Threat to one's own world view (the closer someone is to us, the harder it is to tolerate their differing beliefs)

# Particular challenge

---

- Often people who delegate responsibility
- People who tend towards dependent structures
- Normalisation/validation of one's own experiences is important
- People who are looking for a "leader" or interpretation
- Out of the frying pan into the fire

## **Role conflicts of the counsellor/therapist**

- The counsellor becomes the "leader", is placed on a pedestal and heavily involved in decision-making processes
- .
- Constant reflection on one's own role in the counselling process is important
- Careful handling of interpretation



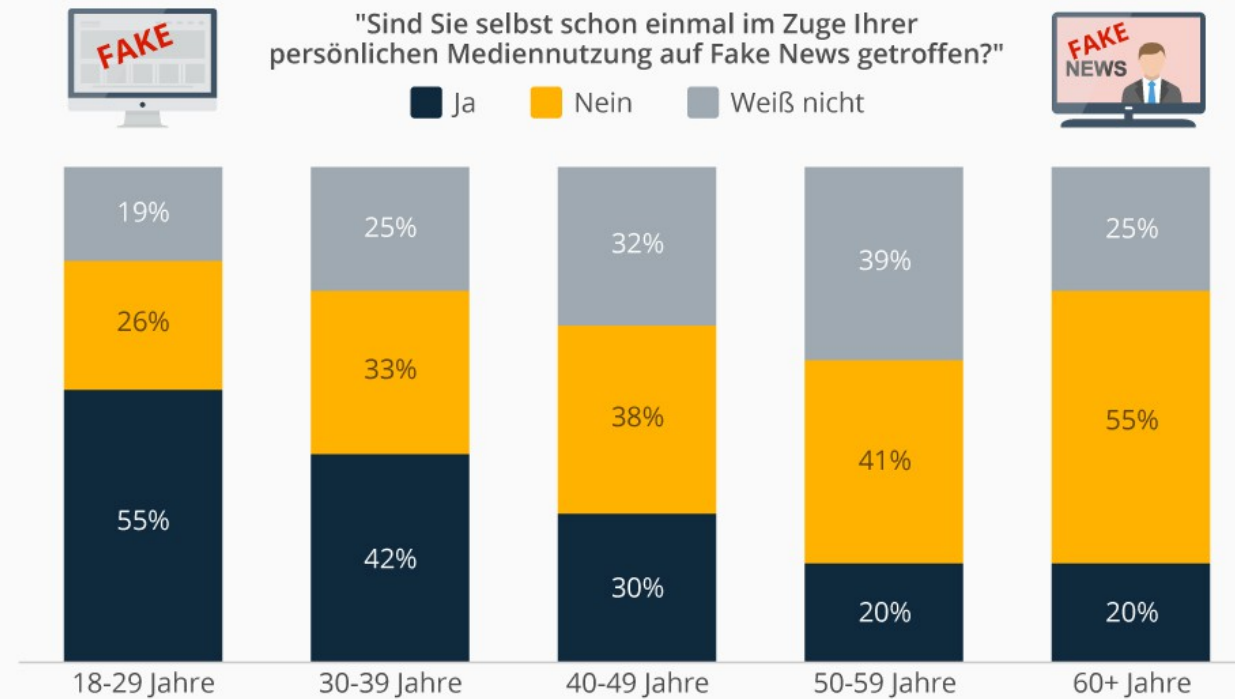
# Case: My radical mother

---

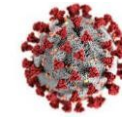
*Anne, 35 years old: "I have three small children and don't really have much time, but my mother is keeping me really busy at the moment. She is 71, still quite sprightly and in good health, but since Corona she has drifted away. She shares the most abstruse posts on Facebook. Yes, she discovered Facebook four years ago and I have to say, she is completely uncritical. She doesn't understand that some sources are more trustworthy than others. She's hooked on these conspiracy theories. She even ordered a T-shirt with 'Kill Bill' on it, which is about Gates. She wears it when she goes to the hygiene demonstrations. She's really into vaccinations and the pharmaceutical industry. Recently, she has also discovered QAnon. I am shocked and don't know what to do. Every conversation with her ends in an argument. She is like a Teflon pan; all arguments bounce off her. It makes me feel helpless and desperate, and I feel like I can't leave her alone with this. I can't let her run into her own ruin."*

# Are pensioners the "real superspreaders"?

## Wahrnehmung von Fake News hängt vom Alter ab



Facts



Facts, figures, data

Fears, experiences, needs, feelings

Relationship level



# Summary

---

- Do not judge
- Remain respectful
- Ask questions
- Look for common ground
- Take breaks from the topic
- Reflect on your own attitude
- Stay in touch if possible
- Set your boundaries





The more we listen  
to them, the more  
they will listen to us  
(M. Rosenberg)

---

[www.zebra-bw.dee](http://www.zebra-bw.dee)

0761 48898296

Email: [info@zebra-bw.de](mailto:info@zebra-bw.de)