

Student Nightline

Two Alumni are independently involved in a Nightline. Julia F. (name has been changed) in Freiburg and Georg Wilckens in Zurich. But what exactly is a nightline? Being imported from the US and Great Britain, the nightline is a telephone line supposed to help and to advise students in their daily life, to reassure them with tests and exams, to help them to integrate more quickly into their new surrounding, in short: to make them feel more comfortable and thereby more successful in their studies.

The idea of the nightline is not yet widely spread; only the universities of Hamburg, Heidelberg and Freiburg offer this feature. In Freiburg, Julia works for the nightline together with 30 other students. The phones are open five days a week from 9pm to 1am, a time when most people start to feel lonely and stressed out about the upcoming exams.

The staff's as well as the caller's anonymity is emphasized strongly to guarantee discretion of anything that has been talked about. For the staff "It is a great opportunity to see how different people are, because they get upset about things you never even thought about," says Julia, "also we don't give advice, we are just there to listen, to calm people down and see their story from a different angle." In Zurich, Switzerland, there also does exist a nightline which was started by the assist alumnus Georg Wilckens, a scholar of electrical engineering at the ETH Zurich. He points out that people can really call for any purpose – maybe they want to know the best pizza place, or need to practise a speech they have prepared.

Of course the staff is trained to be able to deal with the situations they might be confronted with. "It's a great thing and it needs to become more popular in Germany," says Julia.

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