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# sexual predatory behavior



**Narcotiques Anonymes**  
**Région France**

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In NA, our primary purpose is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. For this reason, we want to make every effort to welcome newcomers as best as we can and to protect their well-being and sense of security in our meetings. However, sometimes our members act out on behaviors that are not in line with with our spiritual principles, which are the guiding forces behind our recovery. Unfortunately, this acting out can have dangerous consequences for our newer, more vulnerable members.

One of the problematic behaviors that we have observed in our recovery spaces is sexual predation, which because of its complexity and its delicate nature can be very difficult to address. Therefore, it is extremely important that we approach this topic with honesty, goodwill, and in the spirit of unity before implementing solutions to preserve a healthy atmosphere of recovery, which is vital for our survival.

“The Fifth Tradition gives our groups a great responsibility: to maintain our fellowship’s primary purpose. Each group is responsible to become as effective a vehicle for carrying the NA message as it can be.”

FIFTH TRADITION, IT WORKS: HOW & WHY - PAGE 164

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## What is Sexual Predation?

**Sexual predation is the exploitation of someone else's vulnerabilities through physical or emotional means, including but not limited to unwanted holding, harassment, or intimidation in the interest of gaining a sexual relation with said person, through any number of manipulative means.** A predatory situation arises when there is disequilibrium of power and authority between the parties involved and the party on the experienced side uses his/her influence over the other, less experienced party for personal gain. To give a concrete example of sexual predation in NA, it can happen when a member who has been clean for some time makes an advance on a newcomer, who has come to a meeting just looking to stop using, and our more experienced member takes advantage of the fragile state of someone just getting clean.

### **Vulnerability at the Beginning: A Fragility to be Protected**

**When we walk into an NA meeting for the first time or when we return from a relapse, we are particularly vulnerable.** We are beaten and broken from our battle with the disease of addiction. We have lost all of our self-esteem and we are often very isolated. In getting clean, we go through an enormous upheaval. Our emotions are exacerbated and we are confronted with our loss and what we later learn is a great spiritual void that we carry inside. Obsession and compulsion, which make up our disease, manifest in other areas of our lives, such as in romantic and sexual relations. Everything we think we know is turned upside down. We discover, little by little, that the behaviors that helped us to survive

while we were using are no longer appropriate in our recovery. Learning to change is a long process, which means that sometimes we go through periods where we are unable to discern for ourselves whether or not we are acting out in healthy ways in our relationships with others.

In this state of mind, especially considering that, in early recovery, there are usually financial or material difficulties in the mix, a newcomer could easily be exploited by anyone who understands the workings of the disease of addiction.

### **Serious Consequences**

**Sexual predation causes serious harm to the victims and impacts the fellowship as a whole. Our experience shows that relapse is a frequent and sometimes deadly consequence, among many that result from sexual predatory behavior.** In addition, sexual predation diminishes the atmosphere of trust and unconditional love that is necessary for carrying the message of recovery. Not only does this behavior damage our unity, it also inhibits us from carrying out our primary purpose.

### **Becoming Conscious of the Problem**

Sexual predation is not a new problem, specific to Narcotics Anonymous. All over the world, and particularly in places where those who suffer come seeking help, we might encounter sexual predation and sexual violence. **Becoming conscious of the problem and speaking openly allows for taking steps to protect our members and to reduce the risk that these predatory situations arise in our groups.** Here are some solutions based on the universal experience of our NA groups.

## Some solutions

### Breaking the Silence

We should never turn away when we witness a predatory situation, nor should we refuse to speak about it because that only increases the likelihood that it will continue and that it could potentially become a detriment to the functioning of the fellowship as a whole. In addition, if we are worried because of a situation or a behavior that we perceive to be dangerous for us or for others, **the first thing to do is to speak with our homegroup or with our sponsor**, to come together and find the best way to respond through a group conscience. We can refer to the traditions and spiritual principles of our program of recovery and then follow out the will of our collective higher power.

“In Narcotics Anonymous, we are concerned with protecting ourselves from ourselves.”

TRADITION TWO, BASIC TEXT - PAGE 63

### Acting within our Service Structures

We can contact our local service structures and ask them to organize workshops to reflect and exchange our experience, strength, and hope on the subject. This allows us to speak freely about the more difficult questions and to encourage all of our members to take part in the solution.

“Encouraging each member to speak openly from the heart enhances our ability to work together.”

TRADITION ONE, IT WORKS: HOW & WHY - PAGE 128

### Acting within our Groups

**In our homegroups, we can adopt preventative measures that are clear and simple.** For example, a phrase that reminds members that we suggest welcoming newcomers by guiding them to members of their same sex could be added to the group's format. In cases where this is not possible for whatever reason, trusted servants can make a list of telephone numbers of other homegroup members of the same sex for the newcomer.

**We can also include a preventative text to be read at the beginning or at the end of the meeting.** Here is one example adapted from IP No.29: *An Introduction to NA Meetings*:

*“We strongly discourage any harassment, threats, or disturbing behavior before, during, and after our meetings. This includes unwelcome sexual, romantic, financial, and religious solicitation. Our meetings are for sharing NA recovery. It is the responsibility of all of our group members to help maintain an atmosphere that is safe enough for all addicts to recover.”*

## The Group: The Best Tool to Start the Conversation

If one of our members feels harassed or threatened by another, they should be able to speak about it with other addicts and be heard with goodwill and support. It is not our job to judge the reality of the threat or the wrongs that they went through, but rather to be there for them and to guide them as best as we can to help bring them back into a sense of security. In some cases, it might be necessary for the group to intervene by having a conversation with the member who has been acting out on a problematic behavior, in order to help them understand the consequences of their acts and together, to find a solution that allows everyone to recover in the best conditions.

## Personal Inventory and Asking for Help

In our personal recovery process and through working the 12-steps, every one of us is asked to examine our behaviors and our motives with rigorous honesty. In recovery, we all make mistakes and those mistakes help us to grow spiritually. If we notice that we have a tendency to act out on behaviors that cause harm to ourselves or to others, we can always ask for help from another recovering addict who has already overcome the same difficulty. In addition, if we want to change our destructive behaviors, it is important to be honest with ourselves, to ask for help, and to use all of the tools available to us to amend our past wrongs and to change our future behavior, making sure not to repeat the same mistakes.

“If we do not stay aware of our defects, they can drive us into a corner that we can't get out of clean”

10TH STEP, BASIC TEXT, SIXTH ED. - PAGE 42

## Listen and Be Supportive: Professional Help and Judicial Resources

However, in the case that one of our members suffers an act of sexual violence or another form of mistreatment as a direct result of the behavior of one of our other members and the victim confides in us, we must be prepared to listen with an open heart and to direct them towards appropriate professional organizations for further assistance. We can suggest organizations or health-care professionals that are trained in dealing with this kind of situation and who can provide adequate psychological and emotional support for the damage done. We can also remind the victim that, if they wish, they may seek justice by reporting the situation to the police and asking for compensation. Some of our members may be confused about the spiritual principle of anonymity. The pamphlet: *Violent and Disruptive Behavior* reminds us that: “While we want to respect each member's anonymity, a violent individual sacrifices his or her right to personal anonymity by their behavior. Calling law enforcement is appropriate when personal safety is at stake.” In the end, our job could be to make sure that the victim is well surrounded in the love of the fellowship and that they have all the tools of recovery necessary to deal with this unfortunate situation, which is often long and painful, in order to help them stay clean and keep their place in the fellowship.

## Together we can!

Through trusting in the traditions and applying spiritual principles such as honesty, empathy, courage, accountability, open-mindedness, and willingness, together we can face all of our difficulties as they arise. **The problem of sexual predation does not have to be a fatal one, especially if we work together to protect ourselves and take preventative measures in our group consciences.**

**Our fellowship is priceless to all of us; the responsibility to preserve its ability to function applies to all of us. Spiritual growth is a collective process and our individual recovery depends on it.**

“As each individual member relies on the support of the fellowship for survival, so NA’s survival depends on its members.”

*TRADITION ONE, IT WORKS HOW & WHY - PAGE 125*

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This document was conceived by a working group organized by NA France, in collaboration with many other NA communities, including those in Germany, the United States, Great Britain, Ireland, Israel, Poland, Switzerland, Turkey, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine, in the context of a community-wide reflection regarding sexual predation within NA.

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