



Narcotics Anonymous  
**ASIA PACIFIC FORUM**

My  
Safety,  
Our  
Responsibility  
**In and Out of Meetings**

# Everyone Has a Place in NA

*"We do our best to safeguard those who are vulnerable without making others feel unwelcome."*

**—Guiding Principles, Tradition Three.**

The creation of this pamphlet was prompted by experiences and observances of unsafe behaviours that put the recovery of both newcomers and longtime members at risk. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring an atmosphere of recovery exists not just within the meeting rooms but extends beyond, into our interactions and personal conduct outside of the rooms.

Everyone has a responsibility to keep the environment free of any form of harassment, and in particular sexual harassment. This behaviour is displayed by all genders. This issue happens across all races, cultural identities, sexual orientations, age groups, and religious beliefs. As we know, secrets and shame flourish in the dark so it's important to keep this issue out in the open.

It's about keeping the program safe and adhering to spiritual principles, holding our members accountable. NA is filled with all sorts of people just like the outside world. NA is a wonderful space, and we can choose who to rely on. Before and after meeting interactions are within our control and we can

choose who we interact with. When reaching out to members, we usually suggest seeking help from the same gender or someone who is neutral.

Listening to individuals who raise safety concerns is crucial in fostering a supportive recovery environment. By taking their worries seriously, we demonstrate our commitment to their well-being and create a recovery space where everyone feels heard and valued. Ultimately, prioritising these conversations reinforces our collective responsibility to ensure a safe and caring community for all seeking recovery.

## **Unsafe Behaviour**

Unsafe behaviour doesn't only happen in mixed groups or at meetings, it can happen everywhere – in common needs meetings, before and after the meeting, at social gatherings. Our IP #29, An Introduction to NA Meetings, states that, "We strongly discourage any harassment, threats, or disturbing behaviour before, during, and after our meetings. This includes unwelcome sexual, romantic, financial, and religious solicitation."

### **This Could Be Very Explicit Behaviour Such As:**

- ◇ Unwanted physical touching or form of unwanted contact, including sexual flirtations, touching, advances or propositions

- ◇ Verbal harassment, sexual jokes, demeaning, insulting, intimidating, lewd or sexually suggestive comments about an individual either in person, written, recorded, in a Zoom chat, phone, or on social media
- ◇ The display of demeaning, insulting, intimidating, or sexually suggestive objects during a meeting

## **This Behaviour May Also Look Like, but Not Limited To:**

- ◇ Using meetings to pick up newcomers for anything other than recovery
- ◇ Kissing, touching, hugging someone who clearly doesn't want physical contact
- ◇ Offering or asking for drugs or access to drugs
- ◇ Sharing without permission contact details, phone numbers, or social media friend requests
- ◇ Pressuring to meet one-on-one in a private space
- ◇ Sharing about intimate, inappropriate issues, violence against women, things that can be sexually suggestive, or not relevant to recovery
- ◇ Pressuring for money, work, or a place to stay

- ◇ Pressuring to attend a religious organisation
- ◇ Pressuring members into a service position, being lobbied to vote for someone, or using a service position to exert control over others
- ◇ Pressuring members into relationships, especially newcomers as those under the influence cannot consent. Our literature Living Clean in chapter four, Our Physical Selves, suggests that “we give ourselves a break for the first year, stay out of relationships, and put our recovery first.”

*You don't have to explain yourself – NO is a complete sentence!*

## **Taking Positive Action**

Unsafe behaviour is not your responsibility to hide, witness, or experience alone. You are encouraged to speak up. Any person who believes that someone's actions or words constitute unwelcome harassment has a responsibility to address the situation as soon as possible. Anyone is capable of unsafe behaviours during their recovery journey. We have a collective duty to protect each other and keep NA safe for all who need it. Not speaking up may inadvertently cause the behaviour to continue or put others at risk. It can be discussed with your sponsor, a member of your home group, a chairperson, or someone in recovery with clean time who you trust. Always ask for help when dealing

with this behaviour. Your concern will be listened to and members may help you to find the right words. Criminal Behaviour related to these issues can be reported to the authorities if needed for safety as NA is not the law.

We can ask people in service with experience, strength, and hope to address the situation with care. If members decide to approach the person with unsafe behaviour, choose a safe space for a conversation. We need to make the person aware of their harm and let them know that amending these wrongs and changing their behaviour is needed. Be gentle, loving and firm, and choose language carefully. For example, "I've become aware of \_\_\_\_\_, do you understand that this is unacceptable? It's not ok, how can we support you to change this?" Though the behaviour will not be tolerated in NA, the person responsible for the behaviour needs to know that they are seen and can find help if they need it.

## Home Groups

Home groups can take positive actions to promote a safe recovery environment.

*Suggested positive homegroup actions*

- ◇ Read a preamble - many have been written in response to unwanted behaviours in meetings; these can be found at **na.org** under "Resources".

- ◇ Collectively take responsibility for keeping an eye on newcomers in particular
- ◇ Have a group conscience and agree on an approach towards safety
- ◇ Have a homegroup member to greet those at the door, and if possible, try to offer more than one gender for inclusivity
- ◇ Discuss and provide alternatives if there are members uneasy with touching, holding hands, circling up, or hugs
- ◇ Create an email address for confidential feedback or support so people can report their experiences
- ◇ Setting aside times during business meetings for addicts to discuss concerns
- ◇ If a member is unable to attend a physical meeting due to safety reasons, provide a list of online NA meetings at **virtual.na.org**

We acknowledge that in our Asia Pacific zone of NA, we each bring diverse life experiences, cultural traditions, languages, and belief systems to recovery. Despite these differences, we unite with a common purpose: to support one another in recovery and to help those who are still struggling with addiction. This shared commitment fosters a sense of community and understanding, allowing us to work together toward healing and growth. Some NA communities may be very proactive at creating safe spaces for recovery with frequent group inventories and

lines of communication with newcomers, while others may not yet have practices in place, others may be unaware of any unsafe situations that may be happening. This pamphlet seeks to bring this into the open, as all have responsibility to create a safe place for addicts to recover, because if we don't have a safe place to get clean, and stay clean, it may be the difference between life and death for an addict.

## Our Members Share

*Outside of a meeting room, an addict did sexually inappropriate behaviour to me. I was so shocked that I didn't want to tell anyone, especially since the person was a long-time member of the home group, and as a newcomer, I thought I wouldn't be believed. However, once I was brave enough to disclose it to other members of the home group, they took it very seriously and spoke to the addict to let the person know this was unacceptable, and physically surrounded me to make sure I was safe in and outside of the room moving forward.*

*A member of my home group had two new addicts do something to her at the parking lot after the meeting; we noticed and asked her if she needed support and discovered that they were old using partners who were harassing and threatening her outside of meetings as well. At first, we didn't know how to proceed as they identified themselves as members of NA.*

The 3rd tradition states that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using – it doesn't mention that everyone is unreservedly allowed at any meeting location. Understanding this, and seeing that the situation was so significant that she needed to obtain a restraining order, we helped support her with it based on what we saw happen so she would be safe while seeking recovery.

Though hugging is a common practice in my region, one time a member did it to me in an inappropriate manner, and I felt paralysed by unease. Another addict noticed, called it out, and apologised for not stepping in immediately the moment they saw it happening. This affirmed my feelings and flooded me with relief that I wasn't alone. Also, being told, "I support you," by others after, was powerful. Saying no to hugs when I don't feel it's right is ok.



# Narcotics Anonymous **ASIA PACIFIC FORUM**

This pamphlet was created with the experience of members within our zone, the Asia Pacific Forum of Narcotics Anonymous. We hope that no addict needs leave recovery due to feeling unsafe, harassment, or other inappropriate behaviours. It is only together that we are safe to recover both inside and outside of meetings.

## **Additional references and resources**

- ◇ [na.org](http://na.org)     ◇ [apfna.org](http://apfna.org)
- ◇ [nzna.org](http://nzna.org)   ◇ [naflorida.org/na-resources/](http://naflorida.org/na-resources/)

## **Member Phone Numbers**

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